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PRESS RELEASE

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It's e- kanikka at Sabarimala

Sabarimala: The Travancore Devaswom Board has introduced an electronic system in Sabarimala for offering kanikka to Lord Ayyappa. Pilgrims can again offer kanikka by using their debit or credit cards, by swiping it on the machines installed by Dhanalaxmi Bank. Alappuzha SubCollector S.Chandrasekhar inaugurated the machine in the presence of board member Ajay Tharayil. The machine has been installed to ease the woes of pilgrims, especially from other States, in the wake of demonetisation, Ajay Tharayil said.

The machine has been installed at the left side of the counter near the Sopanam. There is no restriction on the maximum amount that could be deposited using the cards. The minimum using debit card is Rs.10 and that using credit card has been fixed at Re.1. All cards can be used for the purpose. The slip produced by the swiping machine should be deposited in the kanikka container kept near the counter. The ekanika facility would be operational only when the sanctum sanctorum is open.

This would also mitigate the woes in bringing coins and currency of smaller denominations and also counting and accounting them. Providing details of the income of the temple too would be easy. At present there is only one counter, but more would be installed soon, the devaswom authorities said.

Annadanam attracts huge crowds.

The Annadana Pura, hall set up for providing food to devotees that functions round the clock is turning out to be a big draw. The hall could accommodate 2,000 persons at one go. Once work on the second phase of the hall is completed, it would be able to seat

5,000 persons at a time. This would be attained during the next festival season, Devaswom Executive Officer R.Ravisankar said.

The hall becomes active by serving breakfast at 12 a.m. and extends up to 5 a.m. After one hour break for cleaning, the hall would again be opened from 6 a.m. to 10 a.m. Uppuma and coffee are served in the morning. Meals are served from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m about 60 cooks are working in four shifts to cook the food. About 200 devaswom employees led by special officer D.Sudhish Kumar are involved in serving food.

32 shops raided :

A squad led by Sannidhanam executive magistrate raided 32 shops between Apachimedu and Sannidhanam. A snack outlet at Apachimedu was closed by the squad for two hours for levying excessive price for soft drinks. A fine of Rs.5, 000 was also levied. A hotel at Sannidhanam which stored food in unhygienic conditions was also closed for two hours and was allowed to open only after ensuring hygiene. A sum of Rs.27,500 was levied as fine so far in seven cases.

3,198 pilgrims seek medical assistance

As many as 3,198 pilgrims sought medical assistance at various hospitals in and around the Sannidhanam and Pamba. This included 369 persons, including 354 men, 10 children and five women, at Pamba Government dispensary. About 97 persons had cardiac ailments. At Neelimala Dispensary, 152 men, 11 women and 11 kids turned up for treatment and 59 had heartrelated ailments. Sannidhanam dispensary received 1,357 persons, including 1,287 men, 31 women and 39 kids. Apachimedu hospital had 220 patients, including 186 men, six women, and 28 children. At Nilakkal there were 150 persons, including 127 men, 17 women and six children. Ten among them had cardiac complaints.

Foolproof security

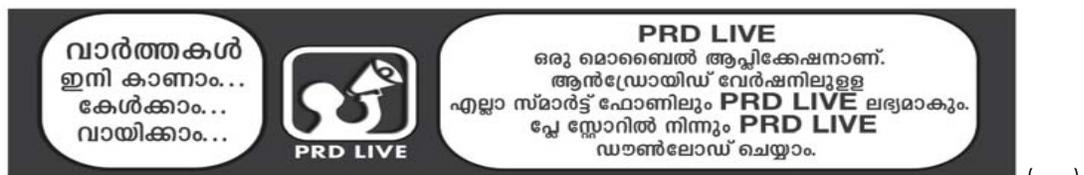
Foolproof security arrangements have been made for a safe darshan at Sabarimala, Police Special Officer P.N.Ramesh Kumar said. The police personnel led by ADGP (Battalion) are focussing on crowd control and ensuring a safe darshan and return for the pilgrims. The team has two IGs and a DIG. The Special office is coordinating the movements. Teams have been formed for Marakkootam, Saramkuthi, UTurn, Nadapanthal, Pathinettam Padi (Holy Steps), Sopanam, Kodimaram, Malikapuram and Pandithavalam, among other places. As many as 1,000 police officers are functioning in three shifts.

Ten DySPs are in charge of each location. Below them there are 25 circle inspectors, 55 subinspectors and 780 constables. Kerala Police and Central forces have been deployed. As many as 40 personnel from Thunderbolt of Kerala Police, 120 from Rapid Action Force, and 40 from NDRF are also there. Ten pistol wielding policemen has also been deployed to handle emergencies. Focus is on Pandithavalam and Marakkootam and security has been stepped up at these spots. Pilgrims are being frisked using metal detector and XRay scanning machine without causing any inconvenience to them.

CCTV cameras have been installed at 22 places between Sannidhanam and Marakkoottam. They would start functioning from next week. Their control room is in Pamba, Mr.Ramesh Kumar said.

Chappathi Maker:

Board member inaugurated the functioning of the chappathi maker installed at the mess at Sannidhana; It could make 3,000 chappathis in an hour. The machine has been installed by Vesta Engineers who installed the machine at prisons too.



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