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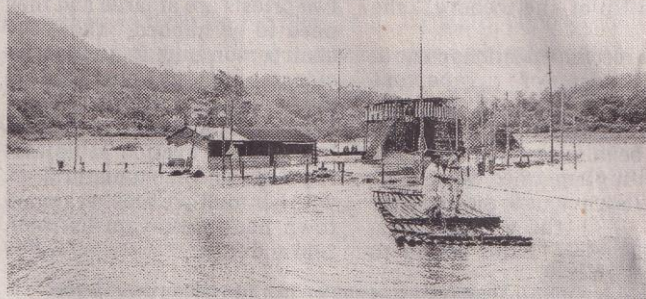
**Idukki; Flood, Temple goes Under water**

*Ayyappancoil temple goes under water*

**NEJMA SULAIMAN @ Idukki**

THE historic Sastha temple at Ayyappancoil here has been all but submerged for the past one month after remaining accessible to devotees for three months since re-emerging from the Idukki reservoir in March. It is the increased inflow into the reservoir which resulted in the dam water entering the temple, marking the commencement of the annual cyclical process.

Despite the paths to the temple becoming inundated, devotees' can take heart in the fact they can indeed reach Malikappuram by taking the suspension bridge across the reservoir and then trekking along the Kovilmala route. The temple authorities are concerned whether they will be able to



perform the ritual if there is no let-up in the showers battering the region. KSEB authorities monitoring the dam's water level said the reservoir now has nearly 39.35 mm cub of water and any further increase is likely to totally submerge the temple. For over four months, there has been a steady flow of devotees and

rituals were regularly performed at the temple, with special pujas every Monday.

However, with the water which has entered the temple rising to a height of six feet, the idol of Nagaraja and three steps of the temple have already been submerged and the priest and devotees reach the temple on bamboo rafts.