



Harvest Festivals in India

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Why in News

The harvest festivals like **Lohri, Makar Sankranti and Pongal** have recently been **celebrated all across the country.**

Key Points

- **Makar Sankranti:**

- Makar Sankranti denotes the entry of the sun into the zodiac sign of Makara (Capricorn) as it travels on its celestial path.
- The day marks the onset of summer and the **six months auspicious period for Hindus known as Uttarayan**, the northward movement of the sun.
- As a part of the official celebration of '**Uttarayan**', the Gujarat government has been hosting the **International Kite Festival since 1989.**
- The festivities associated with the day are known by different names in different parts of the country - **Lohri by north Indian Hindus and Sikhs, Sukarat in central India, Bhogali Bihu by Assamese Hindus, and Pongal by Tamil and other South Indian Hindus.**

- **Lohri:**

- Lohri is primarily celebrated by **Sikhs and Hindus.**
- It marks the end of the winter season and is traditionally believed to welcome the sun to the northern hemisphere.
- It is observed **a night before Makar Sankranti**, this occasion involves a **Puja Parikrama (revolve)** around the bonfire with prasad.
- It is essentially termed as the festival of the farmers and harvest, whereby, the farmers thank the Supreme Being.

- **Pongal**

- The word Pongal means ‘**overflow**’ or ‘**boiling over**’.
- Also known as Thai Pongal, the four-day occasion is **observed in the month of Thai**, when crops such as rice are harvested and people show their gratitude to the almighty and the generosity of the land.
- Tamilians celebrate the occasion by making **traditional designs known as kolams** in their homes with rice powder.

- **Bihu**

- It is celebrated when the **annual harvest takes place in Assam**. People celebrate **Rongali/Magh Bihu** to mark the **beginning of the Assamese new year**.
- It is believed that the festival started from the time when people of the valley **started tilling the land**. Bihu is believed to be as old as **river Brahmaputra**.

- **Makaravilakku festival in Sabarimala:**

- It is celebrated at the sacred grove of Lord Ayyappa at Sabarimala.
- It is an **annual seven-day festival**, beginning on the day of Makar Sankranti when the sun is in the summer solstice.
- The highlight of the festival is the appearance of Makarajyothi- a celestial star which appears on the day of Makar Sankranti on top of **Kantamala Hills**.
- Makara Vilakku ends with the ritual called '**Guruthi**', an offering made to appease the god and goddesses of the wilderness.

