



Uttarakhand Creates New Record on Harela Festival

Why in News?

Uttarakhand created a new record by **planting over 8.13 lakh saplings** across the state on the occasion of the [Harela festival](#), with the [Chief Minister](#) launching the campaign by planting a **Rudraksh sapling**.

Key Points

About Harela Festival

- **Overview:** It is the **traditional festival** of Uttarakhand and marks the beginning of the [monsoon season](#) and the **sowing cycle** in the Hindu month of Shravan.
 - Widely observed in the **Kumaon region** and **parts of Garhwal**, it is both a **religious and agrarian festival**, rooted in reverence for nature and agriculture.
- **Agricultural Significance:** Households across the state prepare for the occasion by sowing seeds such as [barley](#), [maize](#), and [mustard](#) ten days in advance. These sprout into green shoots called **harela**, which are **symbolically cut and placed** on the heads of family members as a blessing for prosperity and good health.
- **Religious and Cultural Observance:** The festival also commemorates the **divine marriage of Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvati**, with many homes and temples setting up clay idols for ritual worship. Devotees offer prayers for a good harvest, environmental harmony, and community well-being.
- **Celebrations and Events:** Traditional **folk songs**, [dances](#), and local fairs are celebrated in towns and villages, including events like the Harela Mela in Almora and Nainital.
 - Children participate in **bamboo-stilt games called Gedi**, while elders uphold age-old customs to commemorate the festival.
- **Significance in Modern Times:** Celebrated primarily by Hindu communities in the hills, it serves as a reminder of the deep bond between humans and nature.
 - With its blend of agricultural, religious, and ecological themes, the festival has grown in significance over the years, both as a **cultural tradition and a public [environmental movement](#)**.



About Plantation Drive

- The **"Celebrate Harela, Repay the Debt of Mother Earth"** plantation campaign saw the planting of over 8.13 lakh saplings **across 13 districts**, marking the largest plantation effort in the state during a single festival, aligned with the [Prime Minister's "Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam" initiative](#).
- The plantation effort involved active participation from the local administration, forest department, [NGOs](#), women's groups, and youth, spreading across villages, towns, cities, schools, and [Anganwadi centers](#).

About Prime Minister's "Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam" Initiative

- **Launch:** On [World Environment Day](#) (5 June 2024), the **Prime Minister** launched the 'Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam' campaign, combining environmental responsibility with a tribute to mothers.
 - The campaign was inaugurated with the planting of a **Peepal tree** at [Buddha Jayanti Park](#) in Delhi.
- **Symbolic Gesture of Tree Planting:** The campaign encourages individuals to plant a tree in the name of their mother, symbolizing a **heartfelt tribute to mothers'** nurturing roles while contributing to **environmental preservation**. Trees are vital for sustenance, protection, and future generations, much like mothers.

- **Contribution to Sustainable Development:** The initiative aligns with **India's broader quest for sustainable development**, emphasizing the need for both individual actions and collective efforts in promoting environmental conservation and creating lasting legacies for future generations.

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