

### **Uttarakhand Creates New Record on Harela Festival**

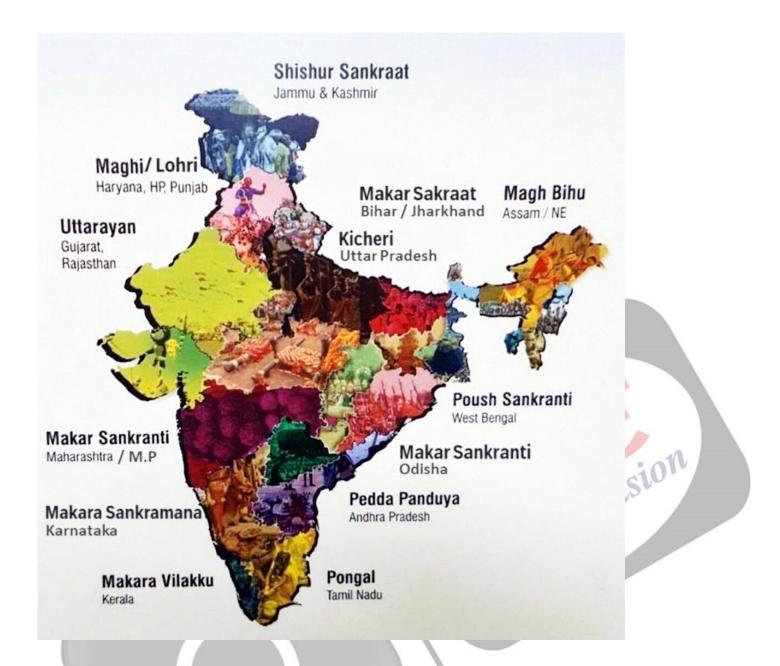
# Why in News?

Uttarakhand created a new record by **planting over 8.13 lakh saplings** across the state on the occasion of the <u>Harela festival</u>, with the <u>Chief Minister</u> 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 wellbeing.
- **Celebrations and Events:** Traditional **folk songs,** <u>dances</u>, 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 <a href="Prime Minister's">Prime Minister's</a> "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 <u>Buddha Jayanti</u> 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 <u>sustainable development</u>, 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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