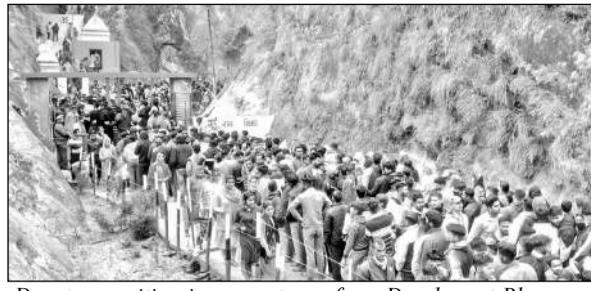


Mahashivratri Festival celebrated across Jammu region



Devotees waiting in queue to perform Darshan at Bhagwan Shiv's Mahanaal Cave at Kathua.

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

BILLAWAR: Thousands of thousands of devotees and followers from districts of Jammu, Samba and Kathua including pilgrims from Himachal Pradesh and Punjab States visited Lord Shiva's Mahanaal at Kathua District for celebration of Mahashivratri festival. The devotees were lined up to get a glimpse of Lord Shiva's Mahanaal and seek his blessings on Mahashivratri. The devotees queue up for long

Shiv Caves lies in the fact that it resembles with the Shri Amarnath Cave in appearance.

It is observed with great enthusiasm in which the people of all castes and religious participate. Fasting, prayers and vigil marked the celebrations with devotees making a beeline for Lord Shiva's Mahanaal associated with Shivaism and chants of 'Om Namah Shivaya' rent the air near Ujh river.

Hundreds of local volunteers

throng towards the Shiv temples for paying obeisance to Lord Shiva and offering water and milk on the holy Shivalingam.

The devotees especially offered Bael and Bael Patri (Golden Apple and its leaves) to Lord Shiva while chanting 'Om Namah Shivaya'.

At Bhadarwah, devotees throng towards the Historical Gupt Ganga Temple since early in the morning where main function was organized.

On the occasion, special arrangements were made in all the Shiv temples of Doda district, particularly ancient Gupt-Ganga temple near Jai Road Bhadarwah and Shiv temple Linghai Gatha, where heavy rush of devotees was

considered to be most auspicious, and is celebrated as Mahashivratri. It is considered the night when Shiva married Parvati and Shiva have defeated all his enemies on this day.

"Jaagran (nightlong vigil)

will also be observed in Gupt Ganga Temple, where a large number of devotees from whole Distt Doda will sing hymns and devotional songs, in praise of Lord Shiva," Mahan informed.

While speaking devotees from different parts of Bhadarwah said that on the occasion of Maha Shivaratri, married and unmarried women perform Puja with great faith, as Goddess Parvati who is also called 'Gauri', is regarded as the giver of 'Suhag' (good hus-

band), marital bliss and a long and prosperous married life.

The devotees, including men, women and children, were seen waiting in queues for their turn to reach near the Shivalingam for paying obeisance and offering water with flowers.

DDC Chairman Doda Dhamanter Singh and other prominent also participated in the celebration. Beside SHO Bhadarwah Jatinder Singh Rakwal also greeted people on this auspicious occasion.

Manish Anand Giri, Mahanant Gupt Ganga Temple said that the day before the Amavasya (new moon) of each lunar month is called Shivratri. Among all the Shivratri of the year, the one that falls in the lunar month of Magha in February-March each year is considered to be most auspicious, and is celebrated as Mahashivratri. It is considered the night when Shiva married Parvati and Shiva have defeated all his enemies on this day.

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band), marital bliss and a long and prosperous married life.

To facilitate the devotees, the administration had also made elaborate arrangements besides ensuring adequate security around the temples to ensure peaceful conduct of religious celebration.

Individuals and organisations had organized Bhandaras near temples where people were served sweets and light refreshment.

The reports coming from other areas of Chenab Valley said that festival was celebrated with full religious enthusiasm in Doda, Kishtwar, Ramban, Sangla, Batote, Drabshala, Nagse, Chintia, Thathri and other places as well.

UDHAMPUR: Shivseva Udhampur unit took out a grand and beautiful procession on the occasion of Mahashivratri. Beginning from Party's office Udhampur with chanting of Bhola, the procession depicting mythical scenes and events related to the marriage of Bhagwan Shiva with Parvati.

The people gave a rousing welcome with floral showers and Bhola's cheers to the holy procession. The beautiful tableau narrating the glory of Shiva remained the center of attraction of the people. On this occasion, party president UT J&K Manish Sahni was the chief guest. Sahni prayed for early passage of Corona epidemic, restoration of peace for Jammu and Kashmir and workers were present.

Maha Shivratri was celebrated at different places in Udhampur with great gaiety. To celebrate Maha Shivratri all temples of the entire city were fully decorated. People setup a stalls of sweets and Prasad at various Chowk in Udhampur. Volunteers distributed Prasad to passenger traveling in different vehicles and passerby. Besides this number of stalls at different places in Udhampur and its outskirts locality with great deal and served the eatables to the people. Late evening traditional Puja was performed at Aap Shambu temple till mid night. At century old Aap Shambu temple Lord Shiva's marriage was celebrated where Jangam presented Shiv Vivah in tra-



Devotees paying obeisance in a temple at Bhadarwah.

hours, just for one glance of the lingam of Lord Shiva's Mahanaal as mark of their reverence for the deity. Mahashivratri hold religious importance in Kathua District and the unique importance of the Mahanaal

teer's organizations including the prominent social-work umbrella of Mahanaal Vikas Samithi (MVS) from areas of Jakhola, Baktha and Jasrota routes organized lancers and bhandaras to the devotees who performed their

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DFO Nowshera conducts series of plantation drives



Forest officials and others planting a sapling.

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

NOWSHERA: A series of plantation drives under Har Gaon Hariyali were conducted by Divisional Forest Officer Nowshera on the occasion of Shivratri. She planted Bel and Palash plants at Dharpur Temple Makol along with distribution of 370 plants among the devotees present on the occasion. While speaking

on the occasion Neelima Shah Divisional Forest Officer Nowshera said that Nowshera Forest Division is conducting plantation drives across the jurisdiction by involving members of Panchayat Raj system as well as locals. Rajeev Dhaman Divisional Forest Officer Rishikesh also participated in the plantation drive at Dharpur Temple

Complex. Another plantation drives were held at Shiv mandir Bagnoti, shiv mandir Deeng, Shiv Mandir Lamberi, Shiv Mandir Chingus, Shiv Madir Nowshera, Shiv Mandir Ramsoo and Shiv Mandir zero point Kalsian, Bargad, Peepal, Bel and Palash plants were planted during the plantation drives. The plantation drives at Sunderbani Range were organised by Rakesh Verma Range Officer Sunderbani along with Ved Parkash Block Officer Devak and the plantation drives at Nowshera were organised by Sudesh Kumar Range Officer Nowshera. The plantation drives were conducted under the direct supervision of Vivek Verma Conservator of Forests West Circle Rajouri.

On the occasion, National Conference leader and District President Ramban Mir Sajid Shaheen on Tuesday while expressing deep concern over power crisis in Banihal and its peripheral areas said that unscheduled power cuts have aggravated woes of people in district Ramban including Gool particularly in Banihal constituency. Despite a load-shedding schedule announced by the government, unscheduled and frequent power cuts continue unabated and people are facing massive inconvenience due to power cuts. He said power cuts are randomised in the entire district & PDD has totally failed to implement its own given schedule. It is preposterous that people have been forced to go without electricity for days together even in the metered areas. The power crises is worse in hilly and remote areas where people are rendered helpless in the absence of electricity.

Shaheen during his day long tour to various villages of Banihal that include Nowshera,

He appealed to the administration to expedite the restoration work in the affected areas on war footing and restore the utility services in all the effected villages particularly in remote areas. Shaheen was accompanied by block president Banihal Abdul Ahad Shah besides Mohd Akram Bhat, Gulam Mohd Naik, Naseer Ahmed Naik, Abdul Rashid Malik, Firdos Ahmed Ganai, Abdul Latif Shah and others.

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■ STATE TIMES NEWS

AKHNOOR: India celebrates "National Science Day" to commemorate the discovery of the 'Raman Effect' discovered by Indian Physicist Sir C.V. Raman for which he was awarded Nobel Prize in 1930. Army organised a lecture for the youth of Border Areas of Akhnoor at Village Sainth. The aim of the lecture was to educate growing minds about the

DDC member, Sardar Sarabjit Singh Johal, in his address, said that the first objective of the Modi led government at the Centre is all round development of every nook and corner of the nation, especially that of far flung and remote areas of rural India. As part of the same objective, we are executing the development works in Samba, he asserted. He informed that this under construction pond at the Ramkund Temple will be entirely a concrete structure and is estimated to be completed at a cost of about Rs. 8 lakh. He said that due care shall be taken of the aesthetic aspect as well as the religious significance of the pond while building the same. He said that

District Executive Member, Parveen Sharma in his address

though a large number of people

visit this temple Ramkund

temple to pay their obeisance,

yet the completion of this work

of construction is expected to

attract more devotees thus

increasing their footfall in the

area.

Parveen Sharma in his address

said that it is because of the

BJP Govt and the LG Manoj

Sinha led UT administration

that Jammu and Kashmir

Union Territory is witnessing

drastic transformation with

the BJP leaders, workers and

activists putting in their best

right from the grass roots level

to the top. Moreover, the de-