

New Year's Day celebrated in Kerala

People across Kerala Monday thronged temples to celebrate Vishu - New Year's Day by the Malayalam calendar. Praying on this day is believed to bring good luck and fortune for the coming year.

There were large crowds at the famous temples in Sabarimala, Guruvayoor in different parts of the state and the Sree Padmanabha Swamy temple here.

The biggest festivities were in the northern parts of the state.

Temple managements made special arrangements for the devotees to queue up and have 'Vishukani darshan' (glimpse of a deity and ritual offerings).

Devotees believe that on Vishu, people should see Vishukani - an offering - in the morning as a good omen for the entire year.

In Hindu homes, preparations for Vishukani starts the night before the New Year with 'urali' (a special vessel) cleaned and fresh farm produces collected.

Popular items that are placed in the vessel include rice, grains, cucumber, pumpkin, coconut, plantains, mangoes and areca nut.

They are then arranged in worship rooms decorated with konna flowers (cassia fistula), which blossom in the month of April across the state.

On the morning of New Year's Day, young and old come blindfolded in front of the Vishukani placed in front of the deity so that they see this before they see anything else.

'This time the spiralling price rise appears to have affected many who have been complaining. But being an auspicious day for all, everyone despite the complaints has purchased all the items,' said Sajitha Kumari, a homemaker.

For the younger ones this is the day they all wait for to get 'vishukaineetam' (gifts) from their elders for a prosperous year.

'Last year, I got Rs.1,350 and this time so far the collection has been excellent and I am waiting for a few more relatives to turn up,' said E. Suraj, a Class XII student.

'I want to buy a new mobile from what I get,' he said.

And for non-Hindus, an invitation from their Hindu friends for a traditional vegetarian lunch served on a plantain leaf is a bonus.

(© IANS / India eNews)