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# Pune: Blue flags flutter across Nagar Road

Bhim Sainiks converge at Vijay Stambh to pay obeisance on 206th anniversary of the Battle of Koregaon Bhima

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Amidst elaborate security arrangements, thousands of Bhim Sainiks assembled to pay homage at the historic Vijay Stambh (victory pillar) on Monday, marking the 206th anniversary of the Battle of Koregaon Bhima.

The Pune-Ahmednagar highway from Wagholi to Perne Phata was painted in blue, as participants held blue flags bearing the

inscription 'Jai Bhima' on it. One could also see the flags fluttering on vehicles and on the roadside.

A robust security presence of 5,000 policemen was made to keep a strict vigil during the celebrations. Besides, drones were utilised for surveillance. A strategic plan for parking lots and buses was made. In addition, the disciplined support from the attendees added to the success of the event.

Coupled with the aerial shower of flowers from helicopters, the vibrant decoration of the Vijayastambha heightened the celebratory atmosphere.

It may be mentioned that thousands of followers of the Ambedkari movement gather to pay homage to the Vijayastambha on January 1 every year. Over the past few years, there has been a notable surge in the number of people participating in the event. The trend continued this year, with a record-breaking crowd.

To accommodate the growing number of followers, unprecedented arrangements were in place, including the deployment of police forces and barriers from Wagholi to Vijayastambha. The entire area resembled a police camp, as followers reached Koregaon Bhima via public transport buses, private vehicles and two-wheelers.

Many participants, holding blue flags and donning blue caps, transformed the road into a sea of blue. Special provisions such as toilets, water facilities, free food, Hirkani rooms (breastfeeding rooms) and medical aid were available to assist attendees.

The historic war memorial was adorned with attractive flowers, creating a captivating sight. However, to prevent rumours, internet services were temporarily suspended, causing minor inconveniences for some attendees.

Speaking to Mirror, additional commissioner of police (crime) Ramnath Pokhale said, "A team of 5,000 personnel, including three Additional CPs, 11 DCPs, 32 ACPs, 250 police personnel ranging from inspectors to sub-inspectors, 3,200 policemen, 100 home guards, a quick response team, six companies of the state reserve police force and others were deployed."

He emphasised that the collective efforts of the team ensured the

smooth execution of the event while pointing out that the temporary closure of internet services was a preventive measure against the spread of rumours.

### **Significant participation of women, youth and elderly**

Children, old people, youth, students and women in large numbers participated in the celebrations. Suvarna Kamble, who came from Nagpur via bus, appreciated the arrangements for the occasion. She said, "We alighted at Wagholi from the bus. Several buses and other modes of transportation had been lined up at this location. We boarded a public bus, which was operating free of cost, to reach our destination."

Meanwhile, Mayur Sarode recounted the inconvenience he faced due to the internet shutdown. He said, "I was carrying very little money. Unfortunately, the lack of internet connectivity in this area prevented me from buying books available for sale by BARTI. I also encountered difficulties when trying to make a transaction with a local shopkeeper to purchase a water bottle for drinking, due to the internet closure."

Union minister Ramdas Athawale, deputy chief minister Ajit Pawar, Vanchit Bahujan Aghadi leader Prakash Ambedkar also paid tributes at Vijaystambh. Collector Rajesh Deshmukh supervised the arrangements during the occasion.

### **Inauguration of book exhibition**

Meanwhile, sports and youth welfare minister Sanjay Bansode inaugurated the book exhibition organised by BARTI on the occasion of the centenary year of the book 'The Problem of Rupee' written by Bharat Ratna Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar.



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