

NEWS TODAY

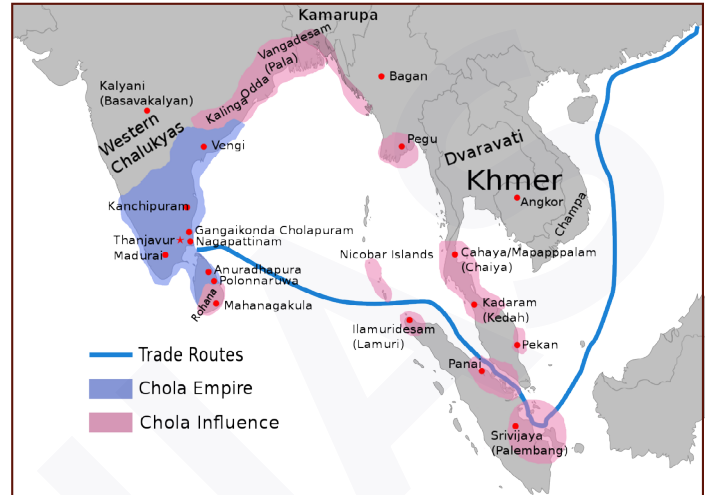
Celebration Of 1,000 Years of Rajendra Chola's Legendary Maritime Expedition

Ministry of Culture is celebrating the **Aadi Thiruvathirai Festival** to mark the **1,000th anniversary of Rajendra Chola I's maritime expedition to Southeast Asia**.

- The festival also honours **Tamil Shaiva Bhakti traditions**, especially the **63 Nayanmars**, saint-poets supported by the **Chola dynasty**.

About Rajendra Chola I (1014 to 1044 CE)

- He was **son of the Rajaraja I** the most powerful Chola ruler who became a King in 985.
- He conquered the Ganga valley earning the title **Gangaikonda Cholan** ("The Chola who conquered the Ganges").
 - ⊕ To commemorate this victory, he founded a new capital named **Gangaikonda Cholapuram**, and also built a temple of same name.
- He led successful naval expeditions against **Sri Lanka** and the powerful **Srivijaya Empire** in Southeast Asia (refer the map).
 - ⊕ The name **Sri Vijaya Puram** for the **A&N Islands' capital** is inspired by this victory.
 - ⊕ **Srivijaya** was a dominant maritime power in Southeast Asia by the 7th century.



About Chola Empire

- **Beginnings:** Started as minor **chiefs in Uraiyur** under **Pallava**, the Cholas rose to power in the 9th century under **Vijayalaya Chola**.
- **Local Governance:** Irrigation helped **Ur (settlements of peasants)** prosper. Groups of such villages formed **Nadu**, which handled **justice, and tax collection**.
- **Tax System:** Common ones include **Vetti** (forced labour), and **Kadamai** (land revenue).
- **Key inscription:** **Uttaramerur inscriptions** that detail the Chola administrative system and elections.
- **Cultural Marvels**
 - ⊕ **Splendid Temples:** The **Great Living Chola Temples** (Gangaikonda Cholapuram, Airavatesvara, and Brihadeeswara) are **UNESCO World Heritage Sites**.
 - ⊕ **Bronzes:** Known for exquisite bronze sculptures, especially the iconic **Nataraja**.

National Institute of Public Finance and Policy (NIPFP) Study calls GST Regime Progressive

In India, **consumption taxes make up over 62%** of total tax revenue (more than income and property taxes).

- Since **GST contributes half** of this, understanding its burden is crucial.

Key Findings

- **GST is Progressive:** Higher-income groups pay a larger share, reducing post-tax inequality. GST Burden:
 - ⊕ **Rural:** Bottom 50% pay 31%, **top 20% pay 37%**
 - ⊕ **Urban:** Bottom 50% pay 29%, **top 20% pay 41%**
 - ⊕ This **contradicts the 2023 Oxfam report**, which claimed the **poor paid two-thirds** of GST
- **Multiple Slabs Help:** Essential goods and services are taxed at lower rates (e.g., health, education) or are exempt (e.g., food), making GST fairer.
 - ⊕ The paper warned that **increasing the tax rate on items in the 5-12 per cent bucket** may increase the tax burden on those in lower consumption classes.
 - ◆ For simplifying GST regime, there is a proposal for removal of the 12% GST rate by shifting some items to the 5% slab and others to the 18%.

Changes in GST rate structure can **impact consumer groups differently**, depending on what goods and services they consume. Policymakers should consider these **distributional effects** while revising GST rates.

National Sports Governance Bill introduced in Lok Sabha

The Bill envisages bringing in a comprehensive legislation to improve the governance of the sports bodies and achieve better results in sports and reduce the disputes and litigation, involving sports federations.

Key Features of the Bill

- **Establishment of the National Sports Bodies (NSBs)** for their respective recognised sports organisations:
 - ⊕ **National Olympic Committee (NOC)**: Sole governing body for Olympic sports in India.
 - ⊕ **National Paralympic Committee (NPC)**: Sole governing body for Paralympic sports.
 - ⊕ **Other Bodies**: **National Sports Federation (NSF) & Regional Sports Federation (RSF)**.
- **National Sports Board** (See box): It will have power to grant recognition to any sports organisation as a National Sports Body.
- **National Sports Election Panel**: It will oversee free and fair elections for Executive and Athletes Committees of NSBs.
- **National Sports Tribunal**: Consist of a Chairperson (Supreme Court Judge or Chief Justice of a High Court) and two members with expertise in sports, public administration, and law.
 - ⊕ It will formulate its **own procedure**, ensuring speedy resolution of sports-related disputes and expenses will be covered by the **Consolidated Fund of India**.
 - ⊕ Civil courts have **no jurisdiction over matters** under the **Tribunal's purview**.
- **Code of Ethics**: Every National Sports Body is required to formulate a Code of Ethics in line with international best practices.
- **Safe Sports Policy and Grievance Redressal**: Ensuring the protection of vulnerable groups like women and minor athletes.

National Sports Board

➤ Appointment of Chairperson and Members:

- ⊕ The Chairperson and Members will be appointed by the Central Government.
- ⊕ They must have special knowledge or practical experience in **public administration, sports governance, sports law**, or related fields.

➤ Key Functions:

- ⊕ Maintain a register of National Sports Bodies.
- ⊕ **Constitute ad hoc administrative bodies**, or direct National Sports Bodies.
- ⊕ **Collaborate with International Sports Bodies** and **National Sports Bodies** to develop sports and promote the welfare of athletes.
- ⊕ **Issue guidelines for ensuring compliance** with international standards and best practices of the Olympic and sports movement.

ICJ delivers landmark decision on Tackling Climate Change

The case on **global responsibilities toward climate action**, especially to **protect vulnerable Small Island States (SIDs)** was led by the **Pacific Island nation of Vanuatu** and supported by more than 130 countries.

- In **2023**, the **UN General Assembly** adopted a resolution requesting the ICJ to issue an advisory opinion on:
 - ⊕ States' **obligations under international law** to protect the environment
 - ⊕ **Legal consequences** for failing to meet these obligations

Key Highlights of ICJ Ruling

- **Clean, Healthy, and Sustainable Environment is Human Rights**: States are bound by treaties like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and must act on climate change to protect these rights.
- **States Obligated to Limit Emissions**: States must prevent harm from greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, and **ensure meeting the Paris Agreement target** of limiting global warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.
 - ⊕ Global temperatures have already increased by 1.3°C since pre-industrial times.
- **Consequences for Non-Compliance**: If states fail to meet obligations, they:
 - ⊕ **incur legal responsibility** and may be required to cease the wrongful conduct, and
 - ⊕ **may be required to offer guarantees** of non-repetition, and **make full reparation** depending on the circumstances.

Some countries, like the US and Russia, have opposed any court-mandated emission cuts. But ICJ's opinion adds growing legal pressure.

International Court of Justice (ICJ)

- **Genesis: Established**: In 1945 as the **main judicial body of the UN**.
- **Headquarter**: Peace Palace, Hague, Netherlands.
- **Key Function**
 - ⊕ **Settling disputes** between countries.
 - ⊕ **Provides advisory opinions** on legal questions that have been referred to it by other authorised UN organs.
- **Limitation**: Can only hear cases **when requested by states**
- **Composition**
 - ⊕ **15 judges** elected for **9-year terms** by the UN General Assembly and Security Council
 - ⊕ Judges act **independently**, not as government representatives
- **Relevance**: Known as the "**World Court**", ICJ is the **only international court** for resolving disputes among **193 UN member states**.

India Achieves 20% Ethanol Blending in Petrol Five Years Ahead of Schedule

Ethanol (C₂H₅OH) or **ethyl alcohol** is a renewable fuel made from **various plant materials** collectively known as **"biomass"** (e.g., sugarcane, maize, wheat, and other crops with high starch content).

- It is **naturally** produced by the **fermentation of sugars by yeasts** or via **petrochemical processes** such as **ethylene hydration**.

Ethanol Blended Petrol (EBP) Programme

- Genesis:** Launched in **2003** to promote **blending of ethanol in petrol**.
- Target:** National Policy on Biofuels (2018), as amended in 2022, advanced the target of **20%** blending of ethanol in petrol to **2025-26** from **2030**.
 - The Policy allowed use of:** Sugarcane Juice, Sugar Beet, Cassava, Damaged food grains, Rotten Potatoes, unfit for human consumption for ethanol production.
 - The policy allowed:** Surplus food grains to be used for ethanol production and blending with petrol, ensuring fair prices for farmers during surplus phases.
- Achievements:**
 - Ethanol production:** Surged from 38 crore litres in 2014 to **over 660 crore litres in 2025**.
 - Saved ₹1.36 lakh crore** in forex; **Paid approx. ₹1.2 lakh crore** to farmers; **Cut approx. 700 lakh tonnes** of CO₂ emissions.



Measures taken to boost Ethanol Blending Programme

- Interest Subvention Scheme** to improve and increase ethanol production capacity in the Country (2018).
- GST on Ethanol lowered from 18% to 5% (2018)**.
- New sources**, sugar and sugar syrup, introduced for ethanol production at **fixed remunerative price (2019)**.
- Industries (Development and Regulation) or IDR Act** amended in 2016 to clarify on the roles of Central and State Government for continuous supply of ethanol to be blended with petrol.
- Approval of National Biofuels Coordination Committee (NBCC)** to utilize maize for ethanol production (2020).

Also In News



Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM)

The European Commission will **introduce a new measure to address the risk of carbon leakage** for EU-produced goods produced in **CBAM sectors**.

- Carbon leakage** is the **shifting of greenhouse gas emitting industries** outside the country with stringent norms (in this case EU) to countries with lesser stringent norms to avoid tighter standards.

About the CBAM

- It is being rolled out, **requiring importers to pay for the carbon emissions embedded in specific goods across 6 CBAM sectors**.
 - These CBAM sectors include **cement, aluminium, fertilisers, iron and steel, hydrogen and electricity**.
- This move is a **crucial step in promoting a sustainable and low-carbon economy**.



India Skills Accelerator initiative

The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (**MSDE**), in collaboration with the **World Economic Forum (WEF)**, **deliberated on the "India Skills Accelerator"**

About the Skills Accelerator initiative

Key Objectives

- Enable **agile career transitions**
- Promote **scalable training**
- Align **education with industry needs**, particularly in sectors such as **AI, robotics, advanced manufacturing, and clean energy**.
- Platform Structure:** A public-private collaboration platform for cross-sector innovation
- Part of the WEF's Reskilling Revolution:** It **incentivises governments** to provide **upskilling and reskilling to all workers**, regardless of education levels or employment status.



Financial Conditions Index (FCI)

A study of RBI has proposed the construction of a FCI for India to track market trends with daily frequency.

About Financial Conditions Index (FCI)

- It assesses the **degree of relatively tight or easy** financial market conditions with reference to its historical average since 2012.
- The chosen indicators represent five market segments: **money market, G-sec market, corporate bond market, forex market,** and equity market.
- A **higher positive value** of the FCI indicates **tighter financial conditions**.



Chikungunya

The World Health Organization warned that a major chikungunya virus epidemic risks sweeping around the globe, calling for urgent action to prevent it.

About Chikungunya

- Type:** It's a **mosquito-borne viral disease** caused by the chikungunya virus.
- Transmission:** Transmitted by infected female mosquitoes, most commonly Aedes aegypti and Aedes albopictus, which can also transmit **dengue and Zika viruses**.
- Treatment:** No specific antiviral drug treatment.
- Indian Govt Initiative:** **National Vector Borne Disease Control Programme (NVBDCP)** is a comprehensive programme for prevention and control of vector borne diseases namely Dengue, Chikungunya etc.



AI for India 2.0 Programme

Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) informed that **AI for India 2.0 Programme enabled tech learning in 9 vernacular languages** (e.g., Hindi, Telugu, Kannada) **empowering the youth**.

About the AI for India 2.0

- Purpose:** To make tech skills accessible and inclusive for India's youth.
- Target group:** College students, fresh graduates, and early-career professionals, especially from **rural or non-English-speaking** backgrounds.
- Programme offers:** **Free online training** in Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning.



National Crisis Management Committee (NCMC)

The Ministry of Home Affairs Notified the **Disaster Management National Crisis Management Committee (Procedure) Rules, 2025**.

About NCMC

- Background:** The Disaster Management Act (Amendment) Act, 2025, **granted statutory status to NCMC**.
- Composition:** Headed by the **Cabinet Secretary**, with members including the Home Secretary, Defence Secretary, etc.
- Powers and Functions**
 - Act as the **nodal body** to deal with the major disasters which have serious or national ramifications.
 - Can evaluate **preparedness** for any disaster or emergency situation.
 - Coordinates and monitors** national disaster response efforts.



Henley Passport Index 2025

India's ranking in **Henley Passport Index** jumps from **85 (2024) to 77 (2025)**.

- Indian citizens can now travel to **59 destinations** without needing to secure a visa beforehand.

About Henley Passport Index

- It is the **original, authoritative ranking** of all the world's passports according to the number of destinations their holders can access without a **prior visa**.
- It is based on exclusive data from the **International Air Transport Association (IATA)**.
- Singapore** holds the top spot in the Index.



Power Market Coupling

Central Electricity Regulatory Commission directed that Power market coupling will begin with the Day-Ahead Market (DAM) from January 2026.

- DAM is a physical electricity trading market** which allows market participants to **buy and sell electricity for the next day**.

About Power Market Coupling

- Market coupling** refers to the process where **orders from all power exchanges are aggregated** and then matched to determine a **uniform market-clearing price**.
- Market coupling **helps achieve price convergence** between different electricity markets.



AHMEDABAD



BENGALURU



BHOPAL



CHANDIGARH



DELHI



GUWAHATI



HYDERABAD



JAIPUR



JODHPUR



LUCKNOW



PRAYAGRAJ



PUNE



RANCHI