World Tsunami Awareness Day – 5 November

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News

Under UN General Assembly resolution 70/203 of 22 Dec 2015, 5 November is observed every year as World Tsunami Awareness Day; Japan proposed it. The date honours Japan's 'Inamura-no-hi' (burning of the rice sheaves) story. The UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) coordinates the campaign. The 2025 theme was 'Be Tsunami Ready: Invest in Tsunami Preparedness'.

Key facts

Date	5 November – observed since 2016
Designation	UNGA resolution 70/203, 22 Dec 2015; proposed by Japan
Coordinator	UNDRR (UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction), Geneva
2025 theme	'Be Tsunami Ready: Invest in Tsunami Preparedness'
Story	'Inamura-no-hi' – 1854, Hiro village, Japan; Hamaguchi Goryo
Indian warning centre	ITEWC – INCOIS, Hyderabad (Ministry of Earth Sciences); since Oct 2007; first advisory about 10 minutes after a quake

Background

- History: as a tsunami approached after the 1854 Nankai earthquake, Hamaguchi Goryo of Hiro village (in today's Wakayama Prefecture), Japan, set fire to his harvested rice sheaves to warn villagers and

guide them to high ground. He later hired tsunami victims to build a 5-metre seawall, which protected the village from the tsunami after the 1946 Nankai earthquake.

- Science: 'tsunami' is Japanese for 'harbour wave' (tsu = harbour, nami = wave). Most are caused by undersea earthquakes, some by volcanic eruptions or submarine landslides; they have nothing to do with tides. In the deep ocean the wavelength runs to hundreds of km, the height is small and the speed matches a jet aircraft; near the coast it slows and grows in height.
- Indian system: after the 26 Dec 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, the Indian Tsunami Early Warning Centre (ITEWC) was set up at INCOIS, Hyderabad, under the Ministry of Earth Sciences, and has been operational since Oct 2007. On 12 Oct 2011 UNESCO's Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) designated it a Tsunami Service Provider for the Indian Ocean; it sends advisories to 25 Indian Ocean Rim countries.
- Disaster management: the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 is in its final stretch; UNESCO-IOC's 'Tsunami Ready' Recognition Programme rates the preparedness of coastal communities.

Tamil Nadu link: the Tamil epic 'Manimekalai' says the ancient Chola port and capital Kaveripoompattinam (Puhar, now in Mayiladuthurai district) was swallowed by the sea; 'Silappathikaram' describes Puhar's streets, its Maruvurpakkam and Pattinappakkam quarters and its harbour. National Institute of Oceanography (NIO) researchers have found submerged structures off Poompuhar, possibly due to sea-level rise and coastal erosion. Tamil Nadu's coast was badly hit by the 2004 tsunami.

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