Andaman & Nicobar declares its first public holiday for Chhath Puja

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News

The Union Territory administration of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands declared a public holiday on Monday, 16 November 2026, for government offices, schools and PSUs on account of Chhath Puja. PTI reported it as the islands' first-ever public holiday for the festival. At Corbyn's Cove beach in the capital Sri Vijaya Puram, devotees offered 'Sandhya Arghya' to the setting sun on the evening of 15 November and 'Usha Arghya' to the rising sun on the morning of 16 November. The Lieutenant Governor was chief guest; police used a drone unit to watch over devotees at sea. Delhi (NCT) also declares a Chhath holiday; the 'first' here applies to Andaman and Nicobar only.

Key facts for the exam

Point	Details
Holiday	16 Nov 2026 (Mon) – offices, schools, PSUs
'First'	A&N's first public holiday for Chhath (PTI)
Note	Not the first UT – Delhi has declared it earlier too
Venue	Corbyn's Cove beach, Sri Vijaya Puram
Worship of	Surya (Sun) and Chhathi Maiya

Point	Details
Timing	Kartika Shukla Shashthi – four-day festival
Mainly in	Bihar, Jharkhand, eastern UP, Nepal
Administration	Lt Governor appointed by the President (Art. 239)

Background

- Chhath Puja is a festival of thanksgiving to the Sun god and Chhathi Maiya. Over four days – 'Nahay Khay', 'Kharna', the evening and the morning arghya – devotees fast and make offerings to the sun while standing in water. It is a major festival in Bihar, Jharkhand, eastern Uttar Pradesh and Nepal's Madhesh region.
- Under Article 239 the President administers each Union Territory through an administrator he appoints – in A&N, the Lieutenant Governor. A&N has no legislature; under Article 240 the President may make regulations for it. It sends one member to the Lok Sabha.
- The capital Port Blair was renamed 'Sri Vijaya Puram' in September 2024. In December 2018 Ross Island became 'Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose Dweep', Neil Island 'Shaheed Dweep' and Havelock Island 'Swaraj Dweep' – marking 75 years of Netaji hoisting the tricolour at Port Blair in 1943.
- Geography: Barren Island in the Andaman Sea is India's only active volcano; nearby Narcondam is dormant. The Ten Degree Channel separates the Andaman and Nicobar groups. India's southernmost point, Indira Point, is on Great Nicobar.

Tamil Nadu link: Tamil Nadu's Thai Pongal (first day of the month of Thai) is a harvest festival of thanks to the Sun; Chhath too is a festival of thanks to the Sun. Ilango Adigal's Silappathikaram opens by praising the Moon, the Sun and the rain ('Thingalai potruthum', 'Gnayiru potruthum', 'Maamazhai potruthum'). Suryanar Kovil near Kumbakonam (Kulothunga Chola I's time) is the State's Sun shrine. Chennai is linked to Sri Vijaya Puram by passenger ships and, since 2020, by the Chennai–Andaman undersea optical-fibre cable.

Frequently asked questions

What is this news about?

The Union Territory administration of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands declared a public holiday on Monday, 16 November 2026, for government offices, schools and PSUs on account of Chhath Puja.

What are the key facts to remember for the exam?

Holiday: 16 Nov 2026 (Mon) – offices, schools, PSUs; 'First': A&N's first public holiday for Chhath (PTI); Note: Not the first UT – Delhi has declared it earlier too; Venue: Corbyn's Cove beach, Sri Vijaya Puram.

What is the background to this news?

Chhath Puja is a festival of thanksgiving to the Sun god and Chhathi Maiya. Over four days – 'Nahay Khay', 'Kharna', the evening and the morning arghya – devotees fast and make offerings to the sun while standing in water.

Practice questions (with answers)

1. Chhath Puja is chiefly a festival of thanksgiving to which deity?

A) Vishnu

B) Shiva

C) Durga

D) Surya (Sun god)

Answer: D – Explanation: The Sun god and Chhathi Maiya. Devotees offer arghya to the setting and rising sun while standing in water.

2. In December 2018, Andaman's Ross Island was renamed as what?

A) Shaheed Dweep

B) Netaji Bose Dweep

C) Swaraj Dweep

D) Sri Vijaya Puram

Answer: B – Explanation: Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose Dweep. Neil became Shaheed Dweep, Havelock Swaraj Dweep; Port Blair is Sri Vijaya Puram (2024).

3. Which Article lets the President administer Union Territories through an administrator he appoints?

A) Article 239

B) Article 356

C) Article 244

D) Article 370

Answer: A – Explanation: Article 239. For A&N, which has no legislature, the President may make regulations under Article 240.

4. India's only active volcano is on which island of Andaman and Nicobar?

A) Barren Island

B) Narcondam Island

C) Great Nicobar

D) Little Andaman

Answer: A – Explanation: Barren Island (Andaman Sea). Narcondam is dormant; Indira Point is on Great Nicobar.

5. Which Tamil epic opens by praising the Moon and the Sun ('Thingalai potruthum', 'Gnayiru potruthum')?

A) Manimekalai

B) Seevaka Chintamani

C) Silappathikaram

D) Kundalakesi

Answer: C – Explanation: Silappathikaram (Ilango Adigal) – its Mangala Vazhthu; it goes on to praise the great rain and Puhar.

Sources: PTI (via Outlook); ThePrint (Delhi Chhath holiday, 2024); Business Standard (PTI, island renaming 2018); Constitution of India; Silappathikaram, Mangala Vazhthu (Tamil Virtual Academy – tamilvu.org). © Shanmugam IAS Academy.