



## Internet Connectivity in Andaman and Nicobar Islands

**For Prelims:** Chennai-Andaman & Nicobar Islands (CANI), Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF), Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups, Coral reefs, Submarine Optical Fibre Cable (OFC).

**For Mains:** Significance of ANI for India, Recent Developmental Plans for ANI, Challenges Related to ANI.

### Why in News?

**Port Blair** has seen significant improvements in [Internet Connectivity](#) since August 2020, when the **Chennai-Andaman & Nicobar Islands (CANI)** cable was inaugurated.

- However, Andaman & Nicobar Islands (ANI) is currently encountering a **number of challenges that necessitate the adoption of an objective viewpoint** in order to ensure the comprehensive and enduring progress of ANI towards **inclusivity and sustainability**.

### What are the Recent Developments in Internet Connectivity in ANI?

- The undersea cable between **the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Chennai**, i.e., CANI, connecting the Union Territory to the global Internet, has seen a **reasonable level of interest from telecom operators**.
- The [Universal Service Obligation Fund \(USOF\)](#) provided information that telecom operators have purchased over **70 GBPS of bandwidth for internet connectivity in Andaman and Nicobar Islands (ANI)**.
- Airtel and BSNL account for the lion's share of the purchased bandwidth, with 60 GBPS being allocated to the two telcos. Airtel even launched [5G services in Port Blair](#).

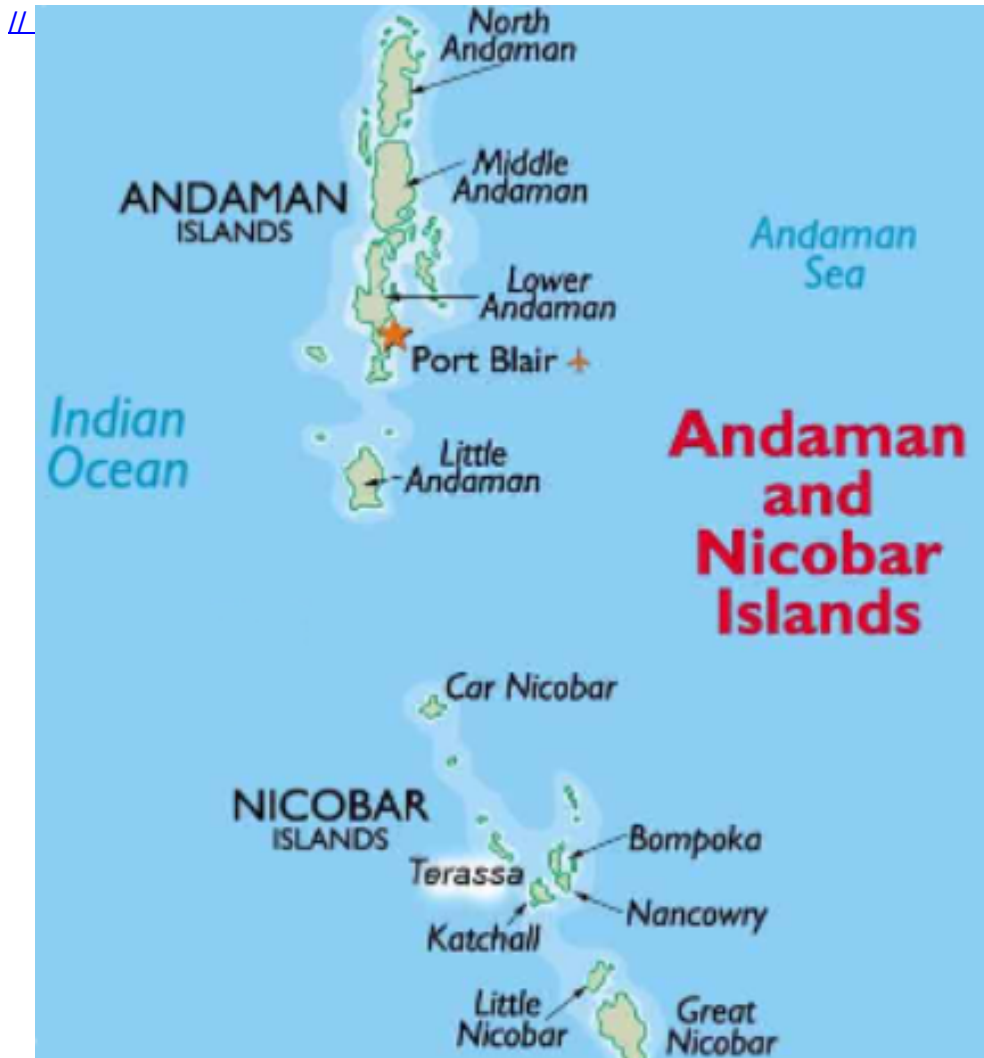
### What is the Significance of ANI for India?

- **About:**
  - The Andaman and Nicobar Islands are a group of islands at the **southeastern edge of the Bay of Bengal**.
  - They are part of the **union territory of India** and are **situated approximately 1,400 km from the Indian mainland**.
- **Significance:**
  - **Treasure of Tribes:** The Andaman and Nicobar Islands are home to 5 [Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups](#): **Great Andamanese, Jarwas, Onges, Shompens and North Sentinelese**.
  - **Strategic Location:** They give India a commanding position over the **Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs)** and the considerable traffic that flows to and fro between the **Indian and Pacific Oceans through the Malacca Strait**.
  - **Space for Maritime Partners:** India's key maritime partners such as the **US, Japan, Australia and France** acknowledge and recognise the strategic location of the Andaman and Nicobar.
    - These islands not only provide India with a **key maritime space** but also carry

significant potential in shaping the strategic and military dynamics of the [Indian Ocean region](#).

▪ **Recent Developmental Plans for ANI:**

- **Japan's Overseas Development Assistance:** Japan approved a **USD 265 crore grant aid for ANI** development projects in 2021.
- **NITI Aayog's Project for Great Nicobar:** It includes an international container transshipment terminal, an airport, a power plant, and a township.
- **NITI Aayog's Proposal for Little Andaman:** The plan calls for the development of a new [greenfield coastal city](#) to compete with **Singapore and Hong Kong**.



**What are the Challenges Related to ANI?**

- **Unsustainable Development:** Andaman and Nicobar have become a major [tourist attraction](#), and this has resulted in **many development projects being initiated in this region**.
  - While at one side it will transform the islands substantially, **it would also cause loss of ecological stability**.
  - Developmental activities are also **impacting the coral reefs in the area**, which are already under threat from warming oceans, and are of enormous ecological importance.
  - Environmentalists have also flagged the **loss of mangroves on the island as a result of the development project**.
- **Geological Volatility:** The Andaman and Nicobar island's groups lie in a **seismically highly active zone**. Due to this, the region is prone to a number of natural disasters.
  - For instance, in 2004 an earthquake and **accompanying tsunami devastated large parts of the island chain**.
    - [Nicobar and Car Nicobar](#) (northernmost Nicobar Island) lost almost one-fifth of

its population and close to 90% of its mangroves.

- **Geo-Political Instability:** Andaman and Nicobar Islands are part of the Indo-Pacific geopolitical theatre, where **China is actively trying to expand its influence, potentially posing a threat to India's [blue economy](#) and maritime security.**
- **Encroachment in Tribal Space:** While **PVTGs** are accorded the highest level of protection by local administration, they still face numerous challenges **due to encroachment into their areas in the name of development**, and lack of effective rehabilitation program.

## Way Forward

- **Sustainable Island Development Framework:** Infrastructure and developmental projects in Andaman and Nicobar will no doubt aid India's strategic and maritime capabilities, but **such development should not come at the cost of the exploitation of the ecosystem that the Andaman and Nicobar offers.**
  - Prior to any development activity in this region, an **[Environmental and Social Impact Assessment](#)** should be made mandatory.
  - A **Sustainable Island Development framework** is not only important for the Andaman and Nicobar but **should also be applicable to other Indian islands as well.**
- **Developing Island Security Model:** There is a need for India to **invest in capacity building in maritime security and incentivize research**, to develop an Island Security Model, and to equip its Navy with the latest technology to track any infiltration attempt.
- **Revitalising Linking Projects:** There is a need to revitalise the plan of linking the Andaman and Nicobar Islands to the mainland through **[Submarine Optical Fibre Cable \(OFC\)](#).**
  - Submarine Cable will also assist A&N in providing cheaper and better connectivity and all of Digital India's advantages, especially in **improving online education, [telemedicine](#), banking and online trading.**

## UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

**Q1. Which one of the following pairs of islands is separated from each other by the 'Ten Degree Channel'? (2014)**

- (a) Andaman and Nicobar
- (b) Nicobar and Sumatra
- (c) Maldives and Lakshadweep
- (d) Sumatra and Java

**Ans: (a)**

**Q2. Which of the following have coral reefs? (2014)**

1. Andaman and Nicobar Islands
2. Gulf of Kachchh
3. Gulf of Mannar
4. Sunderbans

**Select the correct answer using the code given below:**

- (a) 1, 2 and 3 only
- (b) 2 and 4 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

**Ans: (a)**

**Q3. In which one of the following places is the Shompen tribe found? (2009)**

- (a) Nilgiri Hills
- (b) Nicobar Islands

- (c) Spiti Valley  
(d) Lakshadweep Islands

**Ans: (b)**

**Source: TH**

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