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Restricted Area Permit Eased for Foreigners Visiting Andaman Islands

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In a bid to boost tourism prospects of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, the Central government has decided to ease restrictions which will allow the foreigners to visit 29 inhabited islands without the Restricted Areas Permit (RAP).

- The 29 inhabited islands have been excluded from the restricted area permit (RAP) notified under the Foreigners (Restricted Areas) Order, 1963, till December 31, 2022, subject to certain conditions.
- Among the de-notified islands are Havelock Island, Neil Island, Little Andaman, Baratang Island and Katchal Island.
- As per the Government, Citizens of Afghanistan, China, Pakistan and foreign nationals having their origin in these countries would continue to require RAP to visit Andaman and Nicobar Islands.
- Similarly for visiting Mayabunder and Diglipur, citizens of Myanmar will continue to require RAP, which shall be issued only with the prior approval of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA).
- Separate approvals of a competent authority would continue to be required for visiting reserved forests, wildlife sanctuaries and tribal reserves.
- Foreigners will also be allowed to have day visits to another 11 uninhabited Islands, to be notified separately by Andaman and Nicobar Islands Administration.

What is a Protected Area

- Under the Foreigners (Protected Areas) Order, 1958, all areas falling between the 'Inner line' and the "International Border of the State" have been declared as Protected Area.

- Protected areas are located in the following states:
 - Whole of Arunachal Pradesh.
 - Parts of Himachal Pradesh.
 - Parts of Jammu and Kashmir.
 - Parts of Rajasthan.
 - Whole of Sikkim (partly in Protected Area and partly in Restricted Area) Further, under the Foreigners (Restricted Areas) Order, 1963, the following areas have been declared as 'Restricted Areas':
 - Andaman & Nicobar Islands (reserved areas)
 - Sikkim - Part of the State.
- Every foreigner, except a citizen of Bhutan, who desires to enter and stay in a Protected or Restricted Area, is required to obtain a special permit from a competent authority delegated with powers to issue such a special permit to a foreigner.
- In cases where the powers have not been delegated to any subordinate authority by the Government of India, the application for special permit should be referred to the Ministry of Home Affairs for prior approval.
- Indian citizens who are not residents of those areas require an Inner Line Permit (ILP) to enter these places.