



drishti

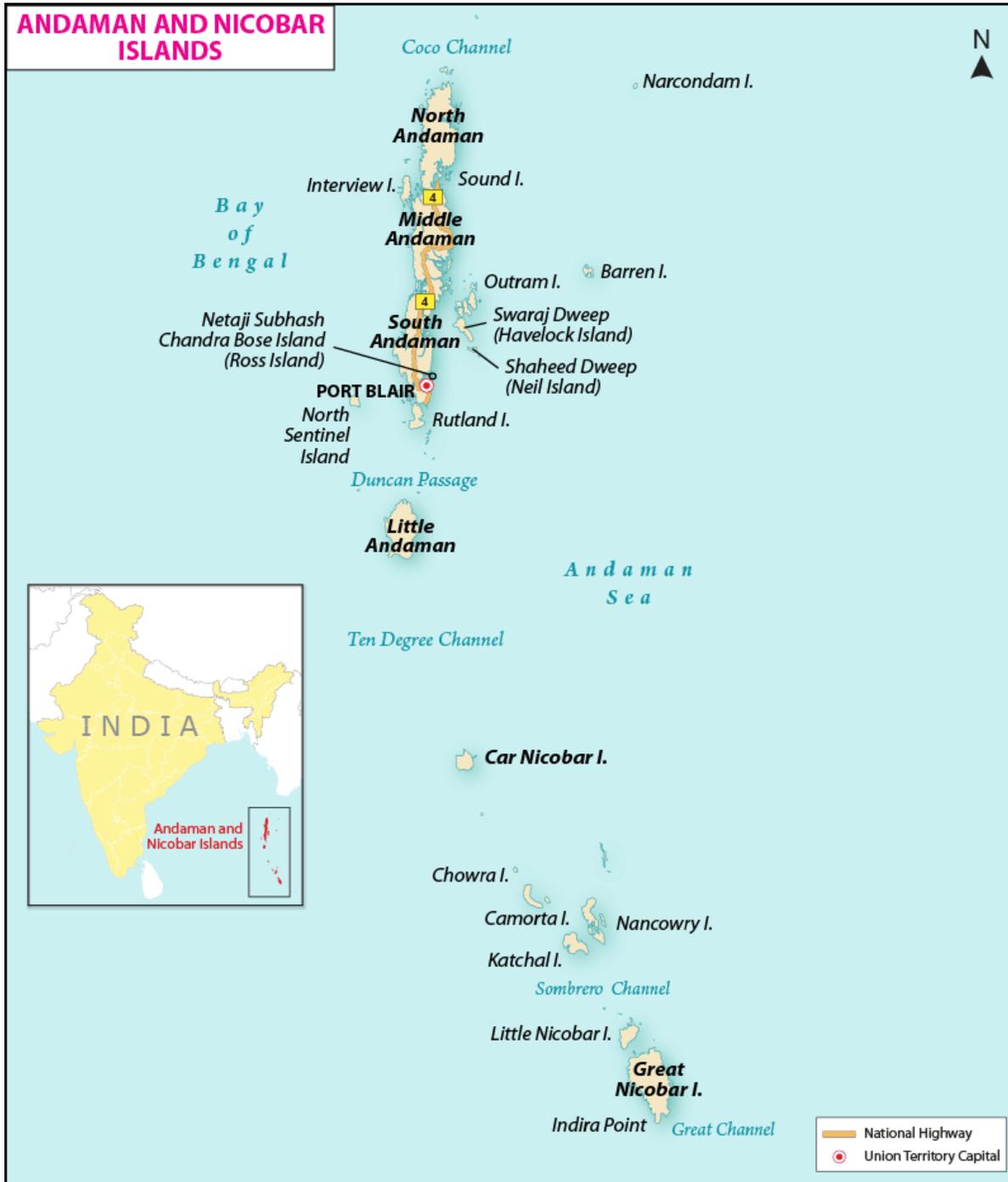
NITI Aayog's Proposal for Little Andaman

 drishtias.com/printpdf/niti-aayog-s-proposal-for-little-andaman

Why in News

Recently, a plan named the **Sustainable Development of Little Andaman Island Vision Document** by NITI Aayog for the sustainable and holistic development of the 680 sq km, **fragile Little Andaman Island** in the Andaman and Nicobar island group has raised alarm among conservationists.

Earlier in 2020, the Prime Minister declared that the Andaman and Nicobar islands will be developed as a "maritime and startup hub".



Key Points

- **Purpose:**

To leverage the **strategic location** and natural features of the island.

- The islands are critical for India's security because of their strategic location in the **Indian Ocean Region** (IOR).
- Better infrastructure and connectivity will help India enhance its military and naval strength in the islands.

- **Plan:**
 - Building a new **greenfield coastal city**, that will be **developed as a free trade zone** and will **compete with Singapore and Hong Kong**.
- **Three Zones:** It has divided the development in **three zones**:
 - **Zone 1 :**
 - Spread over **102 sq km alongside the east coast of Little Andaman**.
 - It would be the monetary district and medi metropolis and can embody an aerocity, and a tourism and hospital district.
 - **Zone 2:**
 - Spread over **85 sq km** of pristine forest.
 - It is the leisure zone, can have a movie metropolis, **a residential district and a tourism Special Economic Zone (SEZ)**.
 - **Zone 3 :**
 - Spread over **52 sq km** of pristine forest.
 - It shall be a **nature zone**, additional categorized into three districts: an unique forest resort, a nature therapeutic district and a nature retreat, all on the western coast.
- **Transport Development:**
 - A **worldwide airport** able to deal with all varieties of plane is central to the plan as a global airport is vital for growth.
 - The solely **jetty on the island might be expanded** and a marina might be developed subsequent to the tourist entertainment district.
 - A 100 km **greenfield ring highway** might be constructed parallel to the shoreline from east to west and might be supplemented with a mass fast transit community with stations at common intervals.
- **Bottlenecks:**
 - **Lack of fine connectivity** with Indian mainland and world cities.
 - **Fragile biodiversity** and natural ecosystems and certain **Supreme Court** notifications that pose an obstacle to development.
 - Another key issue is the **presence of indigenous tribes** and concerns for their welfare.
 - 95% of Little Andaman is covered in forest, a big part of it the pristine evergreen sort. Some 640 sq km of the island is **Reserve Forest** under the **Indian Forest Act 1927**, and almost 450 sq km is protected because of the **Onge Tribal Reserve**, creating a singular and uncommon socio-ecological-historical complex of high importance.
- **Solution Proposed in the Plan:**
 - The proposal wants 240 sq km (35%) of this land and the options are:
 - **De-reserve 32%** of the reserved forest and **de-notify 138 sq km or 31% of the tribal reserve**.
 - If the tribals develop into an obstacle, the proposal says that they can be relocated to other parts of the island.

- **Flaws in the Proposal:**

- It talks of conservation of nationwide park/wildlife sanctuary on Little Andaman when none exist right here and it has **no mention of the geological vulnerability of the place**, which was amongst the worst-affected within the **earthquake-tsunami** combination in 2004.

The waves hit Little Andaman so hard that the **breakwater there was not just breached, it was physically displaced** and its orientation changed. Ships couldn't berth for weeks thereafter.

- The plan has **no financial details, no budgeting, or inventorisation of forests** and ecological wealth and **no particulars of any impact assessment**.
- The nature resort proposed at West Bay on the western coast is to have theme resorts, floating/underwater resorts, seaside inns, and high-end residential villas. It is today a secluded and difficult to reach part and one of the most vital nesting sites of the **Giant Leatherback sea turtle**.

- **Forest Department's Concern:**

- In a note, Divisional Forest Officer, Little Andaman, raised severe considerations about this proposal on grounds of **ecological fragility, indigenous rights and vulnerability to earthquakes and tsunamis**.
- It mentioned that such a large diversion of forest land would **cause environmental loss leading to irreversible damage**.
- **Habitats of various wild animals** will be affected.
- The proposal couldn't even be assessed as a result of there being **no environment impact assessment report** and neither had there been any detailed site layout plans for the proposed diversion.

Little Andaman Island

- **About:**

- This island is **part of the Little Andaman Group** (Little Andaman is the counterpart of Great Andamans). This island is the **fourth largest island in Andamans**.
- It is famous by the name of its main village and the largest settlement – **Hut Bay** (rarely known by its other name **Kwate-tu-kwage**).

- **Tribes:**

- At a distance of about 120 Kilometers by sea from the capital town of Port Blair, this island has become a **tribal reserve from sometime near to 1957**.
- This is considered **home to the Onge Tribes**, even though there are **multilingual settlers of Bengali, Tamil, Telugu, and Ranchi communities**.

- **Location and Transport:**

- Lying at the **southern end of the archipelago, Hut Bay Jetty is the only harbor for ships or boats** coming into this island from the capital town –Port Blair.
- Little Andamans is less explored due to the **limited mode of connection** with the capital town of Port Blair.

Source:TH