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Draft Lakshadweep Development Authority Regulation, 2021

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Why in News

The latest **Draft Lakshadweep Development Authority Regulation, 2021**, for the creation of a Lakshadweep Development Authority (LDA) is widely resented by the people of Lakshadweep.

Key Points

- **About:**

- **Constitution of Lakshadweep Development Authority:**

- It empowers the government, identified as the administrator, to constitute **Planning and Development Authorities** under it to plan the development of any area identified as having “bad layout or obsolete development”.

The authority would be a **body corporate with a government-appointed chairman**, a town planning officer and three ‘expert’ government nominees besides two local authority representatives.

- These **authorities are to prepare land use maps, carry out zonation for type of land use** and indicate areas for proposed national highways, arterial roads, ring roads, major streets, railways, tramways, airports, theatres, museums etc.
- Only **cantonment areas are exempted** from this.

- **Defines ‘Development’:**

It defines development **as the carrying out of building, engineering, mining, quarrying or other operations in, on, over or under land**, the cutting of a hill or any portion thereof or the making of any material change in any building or land or in the use of any building or land.

- **Fees for Changing Zones:**

- It stipulates that islanders must **pay a processing fee for zone changes**.
- It implies that **localities would be required to pay fees to gain approval to alter zones as per the development plan**, as well as fees for permission to develop their own land.

- **Penalties:**

It establishes penalties such as **imprisonment** for obstructing the development plan’s work or workers.

- **People's Concern:**

- **Real Estate Interests:**

- People suspect that this might have been issued **at the behest of 'real estate interests' seeking to usurp the small holdings** of property owned by the islanders, a majority of them (**94.8% as per the 2011 census**) belonging to the **Scheduled Tribes (ST)**.
- Proposals to bring **real estate development concepts** such as **'transferable development rights'** to the island have raised people's fear of **forced migration en masse**.

- **Forcible Relocation & Eviction:**

- It vests such powers with the authority that it can prepare comprehensive development plans for any area and **relocate people regardless of their will**.
- It **provides for forcible eviction**, puts the **onus on the owner** to develop his holding as per the plan prepared by the authority as also to heavily penalise them in the event of non-compliance.

- **Destruction of Culture:**

The island community is a **close-knit group with families living in close proximity**. The regulation will destroy the way of life practised by them for generations.

- **Ecological Concerns:**

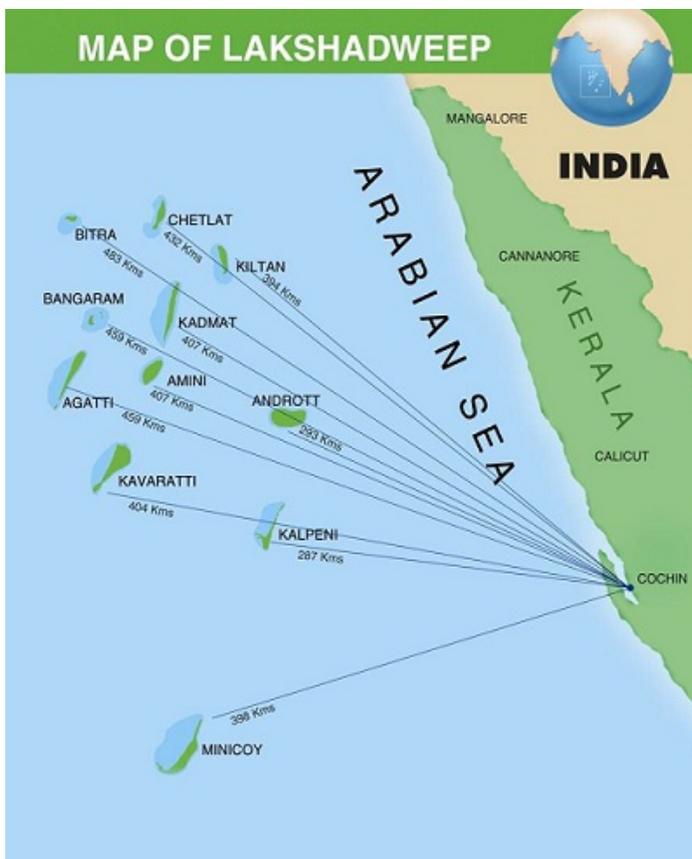
It is **neither ecologically sustainable nor socially viable** and the **people's representatives were not consulted before drafting it**.

Lakshadweep

- **About:**

- India's **smallest Union Territory**, Lakshadweep is an archipelago consisting of 36 islands with an area of 32 sq km.
- It is directly under the **control of the Centre through an administrator**.
- There are **three main group of islands:**
 - Amindivi Islands
 - Laccadive Islands
 - Minicoy Island.
- **Amindivi Islands** are the **northernmost** while **Minicoy island** is the **southernmost**.
- All are tiny islands of **coral origin (Atoll)** and are **surrounded by fringing reefs**.
- The **Capital is Kavaratti** and it is also the principal town of the UT.
- **Pitti island**, which is uninhabited, has a bird sanctuary.

- **Population:**
 - More than 93% of the population who are indigenous, are Muslims and majority of them **belong to the Shafi School of the Sunni Sect.**
 - **Malayalam** is spoken in all the islands **except Minicoy** where people **speak Mahl** which is written in Divehi script and is spoken in Maldives also.
 - The **entire indigenous population has been classified as Scheduled Tribes** because of their economic and social backwardness. There are **no Scheduled Castes** in this Union Territory.
 - The **main occupation** of the people is fishing, coconut cultivation and coir twisting. Tourism is an emerging industry.
- **Organic Agricultural Area:** Recently, the entire Lakshadweep group of islands has been declared as an **organic agricultural area** under the **Participatory Guarantee System (PGS) of India.**



Source: TH