



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](#).

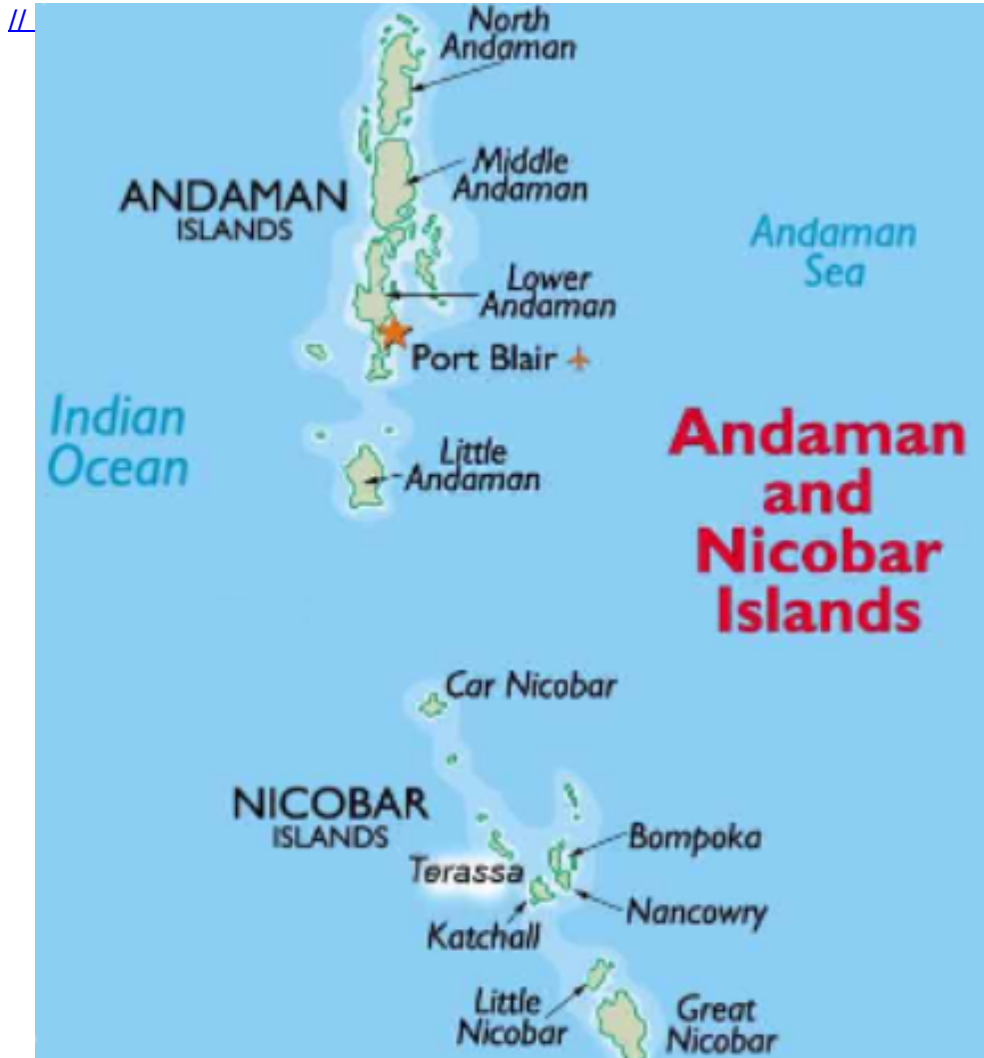
What is the Significance of ANI for India?

- **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)

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