

## AIR Spotlight: Naming 21 Islands of Andaman & Nicobar Islands

AIR Spotlight is an insightful program featured daily on the All India Radio News on air. In this program, many eminent panellists discuss issues of importance which can be quite helpful in [IAS exam](#) preparation.

This article is about the discussion on: **Significance of naming 21 islands of Andaman & Nicobar Islands after 21 Param Vir Chakra Awardees.**

### Participants -

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**Context** - On Parakram Diwas Shri Narendra Modi virtually participated in a ceremony to name the 21 largest unnamed islands of Andaman & Nicobar Islands after 21 Param Vir Chakra awardees. Param Vir Chakra is the country's highest wartime gallantry award.

### Strategic importance of Andaman & Nicobar islands

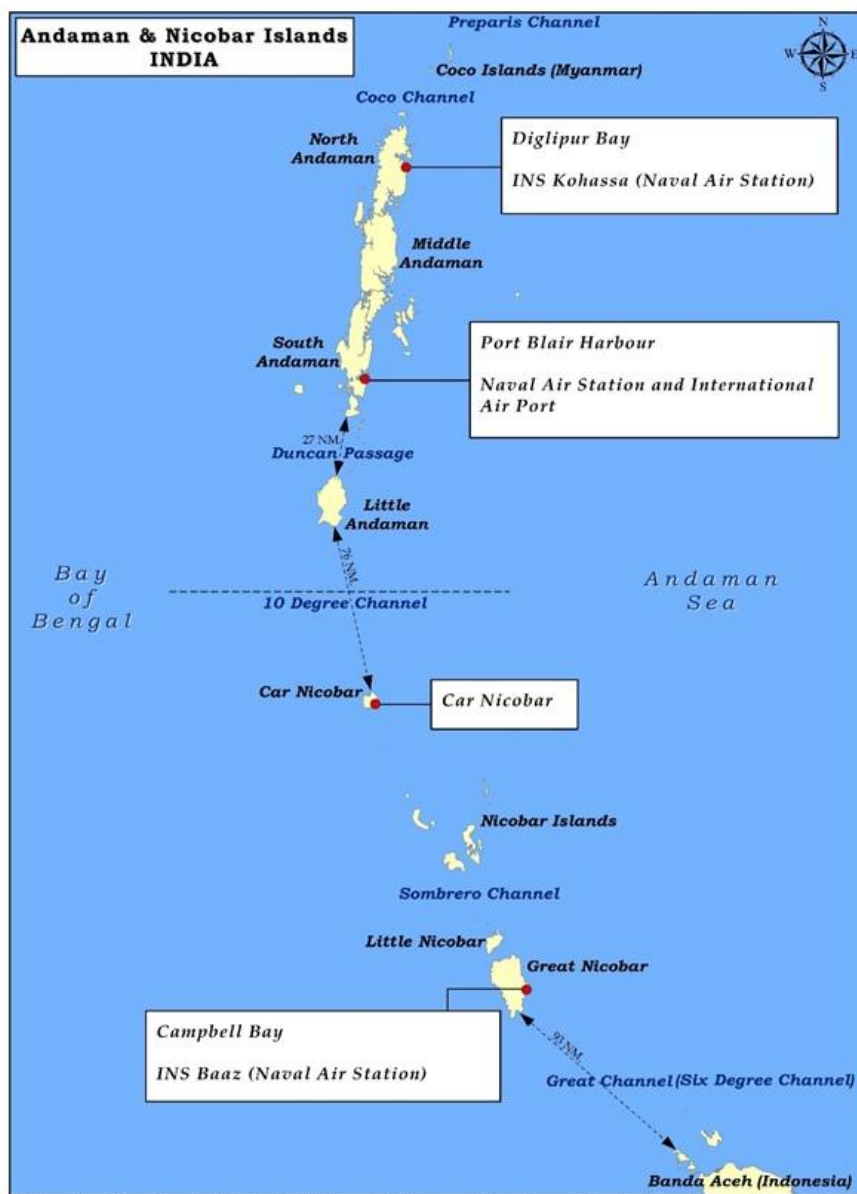
The Andaman and Nicobar Islands consist of 572 islands, of which 37 are inhabited, at the junction of Bay of Bengal and the Andaman Sea. There are around four lakh inhabitants and population density of 47 persons per sq.km.

- The territory is about 150 km north of Aceh in Indonesia and separated from Thailand and Myanmar by the Andaman Sea.
- It comprises two island groups, the Andaman Islands and the Nicobar Islands, separated by the 150 km wide Ten Degree Channel, with the Andaman islands to the north of this latitude, and the Nicobar islands to the south.
- The Andaman Sea lies to the east and the Bay of Bengal to the west. The island chains are thought to be a submerged extension of the Arakan Mountains.
- The island chain sits on the mouth of the Malacca straits and Ten Degree Channel through which trillion- US dollar worth trade passes through to southeast and north Asia, bisects little Andaman and Car Nicobar islands.
- The strait of Malacca plays a key geographical role for the entire Indo-Pacific region. At present, the strait of Malacca serves as the main transit routes supplying vital goods to fuel the rapidly growing economies in Asia.
- In Malacca Strait region, there is rivalry between two Asian powers - India and China, also known as "Malaccan Dilemma". Due to China's increasing interest in the Indian

Ocean and its influence in the region, India has started to take steps to balance China and expand its influence from the east coast to the strait of Malacca.

- Besides being a military asset, the island chain provides maximum opportunities for eco-tourism and sea sports while keeping tribal areas out of bounds for the visitors.
- In 2020, the Chennai-andaman and Nicobar undersea internet cable was inaugurated to provide high speed internet connectivity to seven remote islands of Andaman and Nicobar islands .

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Image source - Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analysis

## Historical Importance of Andaman & Nicobar Islands

The Andaman and Nicobar group of islands played a crucial role in the freedom movement of India. This is the land (Ross island) where the tricolour flag was first unfurled by Subhash Chandra Bose in 1943.

- The Government had declared January 23 as Parakram Diwas in 2021 to commemorate the birth anniversary of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose.
- Keeping in mind the historical significance of the Andaman & Nicobar Islands and to honour the memory of Netaji, Ross Islands was renamed as Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose Dweep by the Prime Minister during his visit to the Island in 2018. Neil Island and Havelock Island were also renamed as Shaheed Dweep and Swaraj Dweep.
- The Andamans in general and the Cellular Jail (Port Blair) in particular played a prominent part in the history of India's freedom struggle. People who took part in various anti-British movements such as the [Revolt of 1857](#), the Wahhabi Movement, and the Burmese Rebellion were deported to the Andamans where they lived there under barbaric conditions. Great stalwarts of the freedom struggle were confined in the solitary cells of the Cellular Jail.
- On [Parakram Diwas](#), the Prime Minister virtually participated in a ceremony to name the 21 largest unnamed islands of Andaman & Nicobar Islands after 21 Param Vir Chakra awardees. The Prime Minister also unveiled the model of the National Memorial dedicated to Netaji to be built on Netaji [Subhash Chandra Bose](#) Dweep (island where Netaji stayed during the freedom movement).
- Param Vir Chakra is the highest military decoration, awarded for showing distinguished valour during times of war. The islands will be named in chronological order, i.e. the largest island will be named after the first Param Vir Chakra awardee and the second largest after the second, and so on.

## Transshipment port project in Great Nicobar Islands -

The proposed port in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands will have the capacity to handle 16 million containers per year and in the first phase to be commissioned by 2028 at a cost of Rs 18,000 crore will handle above 4 million containers.

- Other projects planned around the transshipment port include airport, township and power plant.
- The project focuses on three key drivers which can result in making it a leading container transshipment port, i.e. strategic location in terms of proximity (40 nautical miles) with the international shipping trade route, availability of natural water depth of over 20m and carrying capacity of transshipment cargo from all the Ports in the proximity including Indian ports.

**Conclusion** - The Andaman and Nicobar islands are a strategic asset for India to assert its dominance on the major East-West maritime trade route that passes through the Malacca strait. It has often been referred to as India's "unsinkable aircraft carrier" to the East.

Most of the islands have not been explored, the region has tremendous potential which needs to be harnessed. There is huge potential in terms of rare earth elements, tourism, raw materials, oil, cargo which can help the Indian economy to grow at a much faster pace.

