

Military Infrastructure Upgrade in Andaman & Nicobar Islands

written by iasexam.com | 11/04/2024



Context

Recently, a **major military infrastructure** with a robust surveillance infrastructure was upgraded in the **Andaman and Nicobar Islands**.

Significance of Andaman and Nicobar Islands

- The islands' strategic location permits India to play an essential position in the region, both in disaster situations and in managing maritime security threats.
 - With these islands as their base, India, in concert with other countries, can be a net security provider to the area and the **Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs)**.
 - The islands give India a commanding position over the considerable traffic that flows to and fro between the Andaman Sea (Indian Ocean) and South China Sea (Pacific Ocean) via the Malacca Strait.
 - The **Andaman and Nicobar Command (ANC)** is the primary and best tri-service command in the islands and was established in 2001.
- **Economic Potential:**
 - The Andaman and Nicobar Islands constitute only 0.2% of India's landmass but account for 30% of the country's 200-nautical-mile **Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)**.

- The blue economy of this island can have a critical contribution to the development of India's economy.

Strategic Military Infrastructure Upgrade

- **Revamped Airfields and Jetties:** Work on increasing the length of an airstrip at a critical naval air station is being performed in phases to permit landing of large aircraft like P8Is and fighter jets.
 - The jetty at this area is likewise being enlarged to house larger ships.
- **Additional Logistics and Storage Facilities:** The developed infrastructure is aimed to facilitate deployment of additional military forces, facilities for larger and more warships, aircraft, missile batteries, and troops.
 - It consists of plans to extend the runway to almost 3,000 metres and creation of infrastructure for maintenance of assets.
- **Habitat for Troops:** There are plans to significantly beautify the surveillance infrastructure at one of the northern islands of A&N, and to assemble a permanent habitat for troops in the Islands.
- **Robust Surveillance Infrastructure:** The ongoing large-scale construction activities come amid developing Chinese attempts to expand its influence in the region, which includes construction of a military facility at Myanmar's Coco Islands lying 55 km north of A&N Islands.

Major Challenges and Issues

- **Ecological Impact of Development Projects:** Developmental Projects pose a grave hazard to the islands' fragile atmosphere and the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) inhabiting those islands.
- **Protection of Indigenous Tribes:** Protecting indigenous tribes, preserving the fragile ecology, providing basic amenities including drinking water, and preventing illegal migration and encroachments are some of the major challenges confronting Andaman & Nicobar Islands.
- **Infrastructure and Industrialisation Challenges:** The islands face infrastructure demanding situations, along with slow and interrupted internet speed, transportation bottlenecks, loss of skilled manpower, low population density, scattering of population in scattered islands, lack of market, and absence of raw materials.
- **Climate Change Vulnerability:** The islands' unique ecosystems are liable to climate change events and anthropogenic tendencies.
 - Key sectors which include forests and biodiversity, coastal ecosystem and marine sources, agriculture and animal husbandry, fisheries, water assets, and energy are all at risk of climate change.

Conclusion

- The Andaman and Nicobar Islands are of terrific strategic importance to India, serving as a tremendous factor for trade, commerce, and strategic cooperation.
- These are a major issue of India's **Act East Policy** that aims to promote economic cooperation, cultural ties, and broaden strategic relationships with countries in the

Asia-Pacific region through non-stop engagement at bilateral, nearby, and multilateral stages.

- The strategic military infrastructure upgrade in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands is a large step toward strengthening India's defence capabilities and retaining a strong presence in the region.
- The development of these islands should be achieved responsibly, keeping in mind the need to defend their unique ecology and indigenous populations.

Source: [The Indian Express](#)

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Q.As China projects its military power into the Indian Ocean, any development strategy for regional balance by the government in India would necessarily involve the military development of the Andaman & Nicobar Islands. Examine. (250 words)