

PM Modi launches 2,300-km undersea optical fibre cable for Andamans

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Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday launched a submarine optical fibre cable (OFC) connecting Andaman & Nicobar Islands to the mainland, which will allow access to cheap and better telecom connectivity in the Union Territory. The Prime Minister had laid the foundation for connecting Chennai-Andaman and Nicobar Islands (CANI) with optical fibre on December 30, 2018. As part of the project, a 2,300-km submarine cable was laid. Services began on Monday on a major chunk of the islands from Chennai to Port Blair, Port Blair to Little Andaman and Port Blair to Swaraj Island.

Key Highlights

- The Prime Minister said the Andaman & Nicobar (A&N) Islands felt the need for years but no steps were taken to fulfil it. "Providing better and cheap connectivity to the people of Andaman & Nicobar Islands is the responsibility of the country," Modi said. The PM said the government is committed to provide modern facilities to every citizen and every sector so that there can be a better ease of living.
- Meanwhile, Bharti Airtel said it has become the first mobile operator to launch 'Ultra-Fast 4G' services in A&N. Mittal further said the fibre link will be a game changer for the region and unlock the true potential of 4G and even 5G in future for customers. Airtel has been providing services in A&N since 2005.
- The PM said the submarine cable will help A&N in getting cheaper and better connectivity and all the benefits of Digital India, especially in improving online education, tele-medicine,

banking system, online trading and in boosting tourism.

- He further said the Indian Ocean has been the centre of India's trade and strategic prowess for thousands of years and that Andaman & Nicobar is an important centre for India's Economic-Strategic Cooperation.
- The Port Blair airport is being enhanced to handle a capacity of 1,200 passengers. Along with this, the airports are ready for operations in Diglipur, Car Nicobar and Campbell Bay. He said the four ships being built at Kochi shipyard will be soon delivered to improve the water connectivity between the islands and the mainland.
- The PM said the government's focus is also on promoting ease of business in the sea and simplifying maritime logistics. He referred to the construction of the deep draft inner harbor and the proposal to construct a transshipment port in Great Nicobar at an estimated cost of about Rs 10,000 crore.

SOURCE: *The Hindu, Financial Express*