

Theme for the 16th NVD is "My India, My Vote" with the tagline of Citizens at the Heart of Indian Democracy

Since 1920s the Oldest Daily...

The Daily Telegrams

...the Largest Circulating Daily of the Islands

Partly cloudy sky with possibility of very light rain at isolated places over Sri Vijaya Puram. Maximum and Minimum temperature will be around 29.5°C and 23.0°C respectively on Wednesday 21/01/2026. Maximum Temperature (°C) of Date: 29.6 Minimum Temperature (°C) of Date: 23.2 Relative Humidity (%) at 0830 IST : 074 Relative Humidity (%) at 1730 IST : 069 Sunrise time on 21/01/2026 (in IST): 0544 Sunset time on 21/01/2026 (in IST): 1717 Rainfall upto 0830 hrs of date (last 24 hrs)- in mm: 000.1 Rainfall upto 1730 hrs of date in mm: 000.0 Rainfall (Progressive total from 1st January 2025 upto 0830 hrs (of date) in mm: 002.6



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The Andaman and Nicobar Islands: A Fulcrum of India's Pivot to the East

Andaman and Nicobar: India's String of Pearls

Throughout much of history, Asian nations have struggled to fully harness the potential of their island territories. For India, its shift from the Look East to the Act East policy in 2014 marked a transition in its Indo-Pacific outlook from what has been largely economic and diplomatic engagement to a more proactive and strategic approach across the wider region. However, massive delays to the planned 1,360-km India-Myanmar-Thailand (IMT) Trilateral Highway caused by ongoing political instability and civil war in Myanmar since 2021, have exposed the vulnerabilities of land-based connectivity. These disruptions have, in turn, accentuated the necessity of developing the geo-strategically located Andaman and Nicobar Islands (ANI) as a vital maritime and logistics hub for the Act East Policy.

The ANI offer India a natural and enduring strategic vantage point in the eastern Indian Ocean. Positioned at the mouth of the Malacca Strait, the islands have long served as silent sentinels along one of the world's busiest maritime chokepoints.

The ANI has witnessed the passage of successive maritime powers, each eager to control trade flowing through the strait. European colonisation marked a decisive phase, transforming the islands into critical hubs for securing sea routes and supporting voyages en route to

Singapore. Yet their significance extends further back in history. Jules Verne, renowned 19th-century French writer, in *Around the World in Eighty Days* (1873) describes the Andaman Islands as rich in forests of palms, areca palm, bamboo, and teak. The 1931 census of the ANI by M.C.C. Bonington indicates that as early as the 11th century, the Chola dynasty used the Nicobar Islands as a base for expeditions across littoral kingdoms near the Malacca Strait. This continuity of empires, traders, and powers engaging with the islands

underscores their enduring value as a maritime gateway.

Geologically, the ANI form part of the Southeast Asian landmass and display a distinct topography, comprising 836 islands and islets spread over 700 km from Landfall Island in the north to Indira Point in the south, thereby projecting India's sovereign reach. The islands overlook key sea passages, including the Preparis Channel, the 6° Degree channel, the 10° Degree channel, and Duncan's Passage, in addition to the Malacca Strait. These waterways

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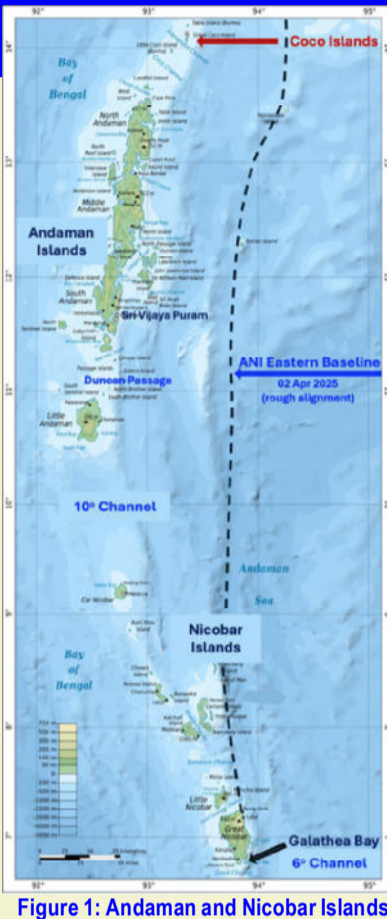


Figure 1: Andaman and Nicobar Islands

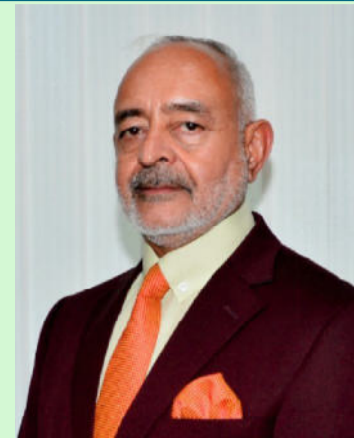
GREETINGS

On the auspicious occasion of the Foundation Day of Manipur, Meghalaya and Tripura, I extend my sincere greetings and best wishes to the people of these three distinguished states of the North Eastern region.

This day marks a historic milestone of 1972, when Manipur, Meghalaya and Tripura attained full statehood, signifying an important chapter in India's federal and democratic journey. Each of these states embodies a unique identity: Manipur with its rich civilizational heritage and natural elegance, Meghalaya with its majestic landscapes and ecological abundance and Tripura with its proud history, cultural depth and growing economic vitality.

The spirit, resilience and cultural diversity of the people of Manipur, Meghalaya and Tripura have greatly enriched the nation's social fabric and made valuable contributions to India's progress, in keeping with the vision of Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat.

On this occasion, I convey my warm wishes to all citizens of these states, including those residing in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. May this Foundation Day further strengthen unity, inspire collective endeavour and reaffirm our shared commitment towards building a Viksit Bharat.



(Admiral D K Joshi)

PVSM, AVSM, YSM, NM, VSM (Retd.)

Lieutenant Governor

Andaman & Nicobar Islands

&

Vice Chairman, Islands Development Agency

Chief Secretary virtually launches a series of high-quality Virtual Reality documentaries

Immersive VR films capture Nicobarese Tribal Life, Hodi Race Festival, Kamorta & Nancowry Harbour and Andaman archipelago



Sri Vijaya Puram, Jan. 20

In a major step towards promoting heritage-driven and technology-enabled tourism, the Andaman and Nicobar Administration, through the Directorate of Information, Publicity & Tourism (IP&T), has initiated a series of high-quality Virtual Reality (VR) documentaries, offering immersive aerial, live, and 360-degree experiences of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, including the Nicobarese tribal lifestyle, Kamorta and Nancowry Harbour, the vibrant Hodi Race Festival, and the Scenic Andaman

Archipelago.

This innovative initiative aimed at further boosting tourism in Islands was virtually launched by the Chief Secretary, A&N Administration, Dr. Chandra Bhushan Kumar, IAS in the presence of the senior Officers of A&N Administration in the conference hall of Secretariat here this morning.

The VR documentaries vividly capture the cultural and ethnographic significance of the Nicobar group of islands, particularly Kamorta and Nancowry Harbour, highlighting traditional



village life, indigenous architecture, maritime livelihoods and community-based social practices of the Nicobarese tribes. Special focus has also been given to the Hodi Race Festival, a vibrant traditional sporting event symbolising unity, teamwork and inherited seafaring skills of the Nicobarese community.

In addition, a 360-degree immersive VR documentary presenting the Andaman Islands' iconic beaches, lush forests and rich marine ecosystems, offering tourists a virtual exploration of the Islands'

eco-tourism potential.

For the convenience of tourists, the documentaries, produced in both Hindi and English, are being showcased through an innovative mobile VR theatre housed in a specially designed moving bus stationed in front of Govt. Girls SSS, Marina stretch. This initiative allows tourists and the general public to experience the Islands' heritage in an interactive and engaging manner.

The VR documentary initiative is expected to enhance tourist engagement, promote informed travel

(Contd. on last page)

Chief Secretary flagged off Watersports activities at Wandoor to boost Tourism in South Andaman

Launch of Watersports activities at Wandoor to enhance visitor experience & local jobs



Sri Vijaya Puram, Jan. 20

As part of its sustained efforts to promote regulated and sustainable tourism and enhance livelihood opportunities in South Andaman, the Directorate of Information, Publicity & Tourism, Andaman & Nicobar Administration, undertook measures and facilitated the introduction of regulated watersports activities at Wandoor. Pursuant to this initiative, the regulated

watersports activities were formally flagged off by the Chief Secretary, A&N Administration, Dr. Chandra Bhushan Kumar, IAS, in the presence of senior officers of the A&N Administration, Adhyaksh, ZPSA, Shri Prakash Adhikari, representatives of PRIs, tourism stakeholders, and local boat operators, thereby addressing a long-standing demand of local people and stakeholders. The initiative is based



on a comprehensive Risk Assessment Study conducted by the National Institute of Water Sports (NIWS), Goa, under the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, which recommended the introduction of Glass Bottom Boat Rides and Parasailing within duly demarcated operational zones. Permissions for operating these activities will be strictly in accordance with sustainability, and

environmental protection. This landmark achievement reflects the proactive approach of the Directorate of Information, Publicity & Tourism (IP&T), in promoting responsible and sustainable tourism in the A&N Islands.

The launch of watersports at Wandoor is expected to enhance visitor experience, generate local employment, and further

(Contd. on last page)

Union Territory-level Skill Competition inaugurated at Industrial Training Institute, Dollygunj

All aspiring youth, students & others invited to witness live demonstration of vocational skills

Sri Vijaya Puram, Jan. 20

The IndiaSkills - Andaman & Nicobar Islands 2025, the Union Territory-level Skill Competition, was inaugurated today at the Industrial Training Institute (ITI), Dollygunj. The competition which began today will continue upto 22nd January, 2026, transforming ITI Dollygunj into a centre of skill excellence, innovation, and public outreach during the event period.

The inaugural programme was graced by Dr. Sachin Shinde, IAS, Commissioner-cum-



Secretary (Labour, Employment & Training) as the chief guest along with other dignitaries. The programme formally marked the commencement of the UT-level IndiaSkills competition.

In his address, the chief guest, underscored the

importance of skill-based education in driving economic growth, employment generation, and the development of an industry-ready workforce. He emphasized the need for trainees to develop an entrepreneurial mindset and highlighted the significant demand for

skilled human resources in the Islands' potential sectors such as marine, tourism, and hospitality. He encouraged participants to demonstrate technical competence, innovation, and professional discipline, and thereafter formally declared IndiaSkills - Andaman & Nicobar Islands 2025 open. He further urged all skill competitors to work hard with sincere effort and strive to excel at the IndiaSkills Regional, National, and WorldSkills competitions, thereby bringing pride to the

(Contd. on last page)

Administration calls for water audit to promote responsible water usage amid shortfall in North East Monsoon

Sri Vijaya Puram, Jan. 20

In response to the ongoing shortage of rainfall during this year's North East Monsoon, the UT Administration has urged citizens, institutions, and businesses to take proactive steps in conserving water. The shortfall in rainfall is likely to significantly impact reservoir levels, groundwater recharge, and surface water sources for drinking water in the coming months.

With the situation becoming increasingly critical, the Administration has appealed to all sections of society to adopt responsible water usage

practices, focusing on reducing non-essential water consumption. The World Health Organization (WHO) standards suggest that an average of 55 Liters Per Capita Per Day (LPCD) is required for basic household activities. Given the current water scarcity, residents are encouraged to use potable water primarily for essential purposes such as drinking, cooking, and basic hygiene.

In addition, the Administration has called on the public to conduct a 'Water Audit' at their homes to monitor individual and family water consumption. This simple yet effective exercise will help everyone identify areas for improvement and contribute to a more sustainable usage pattern. The following format is recommended for the water audit:

Sl. No.	Activities	Consumption (Individually)	Consumption (full family)
1.	Drinking		
2.	Cooking		
3.	Bathing		
4.	Washing Utensils & others		
5.	Flushing / Sanitation		
6.	Washing cloth & Other		
7.	Overall	Less than 55 LPCD	

The Administration emphasizes that, through careful monitoring and collective effort, water usage can be minimized, ensuring that critical water resources are reserved for essential needs. Every drop saved today will have

(Contd. on last page)

Central Administrative Tribunal to hold Circuit sitting from Feb. 9 to 20

Sri Vijaya Puram, Jan. 20
All concerned have been informed that the Deputy Registrar, Central Administrative Tribunal, Kolkata Bench has informed that there shall be a Circuit Sitting at Port Blair, A&N Islands w.e.f. 09.02.2026 to 20.02.2026 (both days inclusive).
Fresh application will also be entertained. Department those who are having CAT cases have been requested to contact the Government Pleader/Panel Advocates with relevant case documents and brief them about the case in detail so as to enable the Government Counsel to defend the case on behalf of the Administration fully prepared. Head of Departments are also requested to instruct their Nodal Officers to be present in the Tribunal on the date of hearing along with relevant documents to assist the Government Pleader/Panel Advocate at the time of hearing, a press release from Deputy Secretary (Law) said.

Electricity Department strengthens consumer services with Centralized Control Room (CCR)

Sri Vijaya Puram, Jan. 20
In order to ensure prompt redressal of power-related issues, the Electricity Department, A&N Administration has operationalized a 24x7 Centralized Control Room (CCR) along with a dedicated Consumer Grievance Handling Mechanism (CGHM). The CCR established at the Disaster Management Building functions as a single-window platform for registration, monitoring and resolution of all power-related complaints across the A&N Islands. This initiative aims to ensure quick complaint registration, systematic tracking and timely resolution thereby improving overall service delivery to consumers.
To facilitate easy and round the clock access, a toll-free number 1800-345-1111 has been made operational. Consumers as well as the general public can lodge their power related complaints at any time without the need to visit the Electricity Department site offices. All complaints received through the Toll Free number are centrally coordinated and efficiently addressed through the CCR, ensuring faster and more effective redressal.
The department appeals to all consumers to make optimum use of this facility for prompt redressal of power related issues across the Andaman & Nicobar Islands.
"Centralized Control Room (CCR) for Power Grievance Redressal - Now Serving Consumers Across A&N Islands, 24x7", a press release from Electricity Department said.

Mini Reproductive & Child Health Camp organised at Panchayat Hall, Collinpur

Sri Vijaya Puram, Jan. 20
Under RCH Programme, a Mini Reproductive and Child Health Camp was organised at Panchayat Hall, Collinpur, under PHC Tushnabad on Jan. 17 by RCH-II, Union Territory Health Mission (UTHM) in association with Directorate of Health Services, ANIIMS and Pillar Health Centre.
In this camp, Dr. Reema Dakua, Sr. Resident, Pediatrics, Dr. Arockia Mary, OBG, & Gyneac, Dr. Guramani S., HoD, ENT,



Dr. V. Kaleshwar, Medical Officer and Dr. Alka Sharma, Dental Surgeon provided their services. Eye Check-up, Family Planning Counselling, Anaemia, NCD, TB Screenings were done. Altogether, 80 participants were benefitted, a press release from DHS said.

A&N Police showcases un-armed combat demonstration as part of 74th Raising Day celebration

Sri Vijaya Puram, Jan. 20
As part of the celebration marking the 74th Raising Day of Andaman & Nicobar Police, a spectacular and inspiring Un-Armed Combat (UAC) Demonstration was organised today at the historic Flag Point, Sri Vijaya Puram.



The event showcased the exceptional discipline, courage, physical fitness, and mental resilience of police personnel trained at the Police Training School, Prothrapur. The demonstration highlighted the philosophy of modern policing based on the principle of "Minimum Force, Maximum Control", reinforcing the humane, citizen-friendly, and professional approach of the force.
The UAC demonstration commenced with Basic Combat Techniques, including punches, blocks, kicks, and movement drills, followed by a highly synchronised KATA performance reflecting precision, balance, and control. A breathtaking Ice Breaking Demonstration illustrated the power of mental strength and determination, while a series of Mat Work Demonstrations depicted real-life defence techniques such as knife attack defence, stick attack defence, neck grip defence, arrest lock techniques, and weapon defence.
The highlight of the event was the Fire Ring Jumping Demonstration, symbolising fearlessness, confidence, and unwavering commitment to duty, which drew loud applause from the audience.
Senior officers, distinguished guests, and members of the public witnessed the programme and appreciated the high standards of training and professionalism displayed by the personnel. The demonstration reaffirmed the readiness of Andaman & Nicobar Police to effectively respond to challenges while maintaining restraint, discipline, and respect for human rights, a press release from Principal, PTS said.

N&M Andaman District Police organises Badakhana as part of Police Raising Day

Sri Vijaya Puram, Jan. 20
As part of the celebrations marking Police Raising Day, a Badakhana, a traditional get-together aimed at fostering unity and camaraderie among police personnel across all ranks was organised by N&M District Police on Jan. 17. The event reflected the spirit of togetherness and mutual respect that characterises the police force, with officers dining together irrespective of rank and role.
The programme was further enriched by a series of cultural presentations,



including thoughtfully enacted skits focusing on crime prevention and law-enforcement concerns, along with singing and dance performances presented by talented police personnel. These performances showcased the creative abilities of the force in an engaging and meaningful manner.
On the occasion, prizes and rewards were ceremoniously distributed to police personnel from all units of N&M District Police, in recognition of their exceptional dedication, professionalism, and exemplary discharge of duties, a press release from SP N&M said.

Chief Secretary
(Contd. from page 1)
experiences and contribute significantly to the preservation and global promotion of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands' unique cultural and natural heritage.
The initiative reflects the Administration's commitment to cultural preservation, sustainable tourism and adoption of modern technology for public outreach, a press release from IP&T said.

Chief Secretary flagged off Watersports.....
(Contd. from page 1)
position the Andaman & Nicobar Islands as a premier eco-tourism destination, a press release from IP&T said.



Restriction on carrying items in public functions
Sri Vijaya Puram, Jan. 20
In view of the proposed visit of the VIP to the A&N Islands for the observance of 129th birth anniversary of Netaji Subash Chandra Bose, the A&N Police has made arrangements. The VIP will be attending a function at Netaji Stadium on Jan. 23. From Security point of view, the invitees/general public have been advised not to carry items such as Garland, Bouquet, Power Bank, Battery operated Toys, Coins, Pagers, Cameras, Binocular, Cigarette, Lighters, Match Box, Hand bags, Umbrella, Water Bottle, Packets, Briefcase, Transmitter, Tiffin Box, Glass items, Sharp objects like Screw Driver etc. at the places of function which is to be attended by the VVIP, a press release from SSP (Security) said.

Polling Stations for Bye Election to GPs, ZPM & SVP/MC

Sri Vijaya Puram, Jan. 20
All the general public have been informed that the Election Commission (UTs) for the Andaman & Nicobar Islands has declared Bye-election to be held on 08.02.2026 (Sunday) to fill the casual vacancies in the Gram Panchayat Member Constituencies of Madhupur-6 of Gram Panchayat Madhupur under Diglipur Tehsil, Bakultala-3 of Gram Panchayat Bakultala under Rangat Tehsil, Mannarghat-4 of Gram Panchayat Mannarghat, and Bambooflat-1 of Gram Panchayat Hope Town under Ferrargunj Tehsil; the Zilla Parishad Member, Mayabunder, North & Middle Andaman; and the Ward Councillor of Ward No. 17, Sri Vijaya Puram Municipal Council. The details of the polling stations given below are hereby published for the information of all concerned.

Sl No.	Name of the Gram Panchayat	Name of the GPM/ZPM Constituency	P.S No.	Building in which the Polling Station is located
1	Madhupur	Madhupur-6	22	GPS, Madhupur-II
2	Mayabunder	Mayabunder	138	Office of the Assistant Engineer, ALHW Mayabunder
			139	Office of the Sr. Veterinary Officer, Mayabunder
			140	Agriculture Office, Mayabunder
			141	Govt Primary School Mayabunder
			142	Govt Primary School Mayabunder
			143	Anganwadi Center, Mayabunder
			144	Modern Gym, Mayabunder
			145	O/o JE office (Maintenance) Mayabunder
			146	Agricultural Depot, Mayabunder
			147	Anganwadi Center, Mayabunder
			148	Gram Panchayat Ghar, Mayabunder
			149	Govt Primary School, Borang
			150	JE's Office, APWD, Pokadera
			151	Govt Model Sr. Sec School Pokadera
			152	Govt Model Sr. Sec School Pokadera
			153	Govt Model Sr. Sec School Pokadera
			154	St. Xavier School, Pokadera
155	St. Xavier School, Pokadera			
156	Govt Primary School, Danapur			
157	Govt Primary School, Danapur			
158	Govt Sec. School, Webi			
159	Govt Sec. School, Webi			
160	Govt Primary School, Karmatang-9			
161	Govt Sec School, Karmatang-X			
162	Govt Sec School, Karmatang-X			
163	Govt Sec School, Karmatang-X			
164	Govt Primary School, Lucknow			
165	Office of the Executive Engineer, PRI, Lucknow			
166	Govt Primary School, Lucknow			
167	Veterinary Hospital, Webi			
168	Veterinary Hospital, Webi			
169	Govt. Middle School, Rampur			
170	Govt. Middle School, Rampur			
3	Bakultala	Bakultala-3	275	GSSS, Bakultala
4	Mannarghat	Mannarghat-4	433	Range Office, Mannarghat
5	Hope Town	Bambooflat-1	502	JE Office Electricity, Bambooflat
6	Ward No. 17	Ward No. 17-1	77	Govt. Middle School, Dollygunj-II
		Ward No. 17-2	78	Community Hall, Srinagar, Minnie Bay
		Ward No. 17-3	79	Dr. B R Ambedkar Institute of Technology, Pahargaon
		Ward No. 17-4	80	Govt. Middle School, Dollygunj-I
		Ward No. 17-5	81	Govt. Middle School, Dollygunj-I
		Ward No. 17-6	82	Govt. Middle School, Dollygunj-II
Ward No. 17-7	83	Community Hall, Srinagar, Minnie Bay		

63rd Annual Athletic Meet of GSSS Haddo held



Sri Vijaya Puram, Jan. 20
The 63rd Annual Athletic Meet of GSSS, Haddo was held today at the School premises. Shri Gyan Sheel Dubey, DDE (HoO/Acad), Directorate of Education as the chief guest declared the meet open in the presence of Shri R Sethukkarai, Principal, GSSS, Haddo. The opening ceremony was marked by march past by the students of four Houses, cultural events, display of Martial Arts, Yoga and other sports events.
Declaring the meet closed, Shri S Someswar Rao, Councillor, SVP/MC, Ward No. 2 as the chief guest emphasized the endeavors put in by the teachers behind the students for making the event a grand success was commendable, a press release from GSSS Haddo said.

NCC Cadets visit Manipur Parvat National Park during ongoing SNIC 2026



Sri Vijaya Puram, Jan. 20
As part of the ongoing Special National Integration Camp (SNIC), National Cadet Corps (NCC) cadets undertook an educational and adventurous visit to Manipur Parvat National Park. During the visit, cadets explored the rich biodiversity. The visit was conducted in the presence of the Commanding Officer NCC ARMY Unit Col K Y Singh, a press release from NCC said.

Administration calls for water audit to

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a profound impact on ensuring equitable water distribution in the months ahead.
The Administration remains committed to addressing the water crisis, and will continue to monitor the situation closely. Public cooperation is paramount in this effort. The Administration requests that all citizens adhere to these guidelines and participate in the water audit to help safeguard the region's water resources, a press release from APWD said.

Union Territory-level Skill Competition

(Contd. from page 1)
Islands.
Earlier, delivering the welcome address, Shri Venketesh Ch., Principal/Deputy Apprenticeship Advisor, ITI, highlighted the objectives of the IndiaSkills and WorldSkills competitions, emphasizing their role in promoting vocational excellence, global skill benchmarks, and enhanced employability among the youth of the Andaman & Nicobar Islands. He also highlighted the IndiaSkills competition remarkable journey of the Andaman & Nicobar Islands since 2018.
The inaugural programme concluded with the vote of thanks by Shri K. Srinivasa, Labour Commissioner & Director of Employment & Training (DET), who appreciated the efforts of all stakeholders, organizers, trainers, and participants involved in



the successful conduct of the event.
The skill competitions commenced thereafter, covering approximately 30 skill trades, with around 82 competitors participating across diverse sectors, showcasing excellence in vocational education, technical training, and industry-relevant competencies. Meritorious participants from the competition may represent the UT of Andaman & Nicobar Islands at regional and national IndiaSkills competitions, with a potential pathway leading to WorldSkills.
As part of its outreach initiative, ITI, Dollygunj is open to school students, parents, teachers, ITI alumni, and the general public throughout the event period. Visitors can witness live demonstrations of vocational skills, interact with skilled professionals, trainers, trainees, assessors, and competitors, and gain insight into the scope and future prospects of Vocational Education and Training (VET).
The event also features Try-a-Skill / Do-It-Yourself (DIY) activities for students, exposure to various ITI trades, modern training facilities, and information on employability opportunities. Early exposure to such initiatives supports career awareness, informed career choices, appreciation of the dignity of labour, and encouragement of practical, hands-on learning.
The competition is expected to witness significant footfall, serving as an effective platform for mass awareness and outreach on the skill development initiatives of the A&N Administration. It will help highlight skill excellence, promote vocational education, motivate youth towards skilled career pathways, and showcase the Government's commitment to skill development and employment generation.
All aspiring youth, students, faculty members, parents, and ITI alumni have been invited to visit ITI Dollygunj on Jan. 21 & 22 and witness IndiaSkills - Andaman & Nicobar Islands 2025, a press release from ITI said.



The Andaman and Nicobar Islands: A Fulcrum of India's Pivot to the East... (Contd. from page 01)

are vital trade routes for shipping moving between the west and the east. Located just 35 km from Myanmar's Coco Islands and 150 km from Indonesia's Banda Aceh, the ANI also form a natural arc from Cape Negrais to Sumatra, offering valuable surveillance coverage extending over 1,200 km from the mainland.

Springboard to Strategic Outpost

Key milestones in the development of the ANI include the establishment of India's first Joint Services Andaman and Nicobar Command (ANC) in 2001, followed by sustained impetus from the Government of India through the Island Development Agency. The ANC has acted as a catalyst for infrastructure development and the plough-back of funds into the local economy, driven by the dispersion of military personnel and facilities across the islands. This has translated into improved healthcare, employment opportunities, access to quality education, effective disaster response, most notably during the 2004 tsunami, and an overall improvement in Human Development Indices (HDI), especially in remote areas.

In this context, streamlined environmental clearances for enhancing military capabilities are critical to ensure that strategic infrastructure for the ANI aligns with the national priority to Act East, akin to exemptions granted for highways within 100 km of land borders. Further, under the UDAN regional connectivity scheme (UDAN RCS), launched in October 2016, military airstrips in the ANC including Car Nicobar, Campbell Bay, and Diglipur have been designated for dual-use activation to expand civilian air services across the archipelago, thus reflecting a model of symbiotic civil-military growth. A phased transformation of the ANC from a springboard into a strategic outpost would strengthen India's image as a preferred security partner among Indian Ocean littorals.

Across India, the establishment of military facilities has catalysed broader regional transformation. The Indian Navy's Seabird Project at Karwar, for instance, transformed a modest fishing town into a growing urban centre, generating employment and improving healthcare access, connectivity, and civic amenities. Similarly, the Indian Coast Guard's expansion at Okha and Paradip has uplifted local economies while enhancing maritime safety. Inland, the Indian Air Force's Hindon Air Base and the Indian Army's cantonments have driven infrastructure growth, educational outreach, and community engagement in surrounding areas. These examples underscore the potential of defence-led infrastructure as a strategic tool for development. Applying this model to the ANI, particularly in areas such as Car Nicobar (Carnic), could unlock socio-economic gains, improve HDI outcomes in remote regions, integrate the islands more deeply into India's national security architecture, and reinforce the country's maritime posture in the Indo-Pacific.

China's economic and strategic engagement with Bangladesh, Myanmar, Thailand, and Malaysia in the eastern Indian Ocean has grown significantly. As India's foremost strategic asset in the Far East, the ANI has the potential to support New Delhi's Indo-Pacific engagement and lend diplomatic credibility to the Act East policy. Thus, India's development of the ANI, the establishment of the ANC, and constant engagement with Andaman Sea littorals have progressively emerged as pillars of India's maritime diplomacy in the eastern IOR.

Engagement through BIMSTEC and the QUAD, alongside the provision of Operational Turnaround (OTR) facilities to friendly navies and the undertaking of Coordinated Patrols (CORPATs), can further promote regional order and cooperation. As a responsible, rules-based actor, India has also settled maritime boundaries with all friendly neighbours, at times making concessions to achieve consensus. Additionally, the ANC's assistance to littoral nations during natural calamities such as the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami and the 2025 Myanmar earthquake also strengthened people-to-people ties. Collectively, these opportunities could catalyse the evolution of the Act East policy into a broader Indo-Pacific economic, strategic, and cultural collaboration under the MAHASAGAR (Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions), building on the SAGAR construct for engagement with the Global South, unveiled by Hon'ble Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi in Mauritius in 2025.

The ANC, Extra-Regional Forces, and the Eastern IOR

With a substantial share of global trade transiting the IOR, forays by Extra-Regional Forces (ERFs) to safeguard economic and strategic interests are unsurprising. What is notable, however, is the unprecedented growth in both their capabilities and frequency of presence over the past decade. Beyond developing ports and maintaining permanent warship deployments under the guise of anti-piracy operations, China's growing influence has begun reshaping regional politics and is challenging India's diplomatic space across the IOR. This impact is evident in the Maldives, Seychelles, and several African nations, where Beijing's engagement has altered established maritime partnerships. China's approach blends arms sales, military diplomacy, preferential relations with IOR littorals, and large-scale real estate and infrastructure investments, collectively aimed at eroding India's position as the preferred regional partner. The deployment of Chinese research vessels in the Bay of Bengal, especially along the submerged 85 Degree and 90 Degree East Ridges areas rich in polymetallic nodules, further signals strategic intent. Countering the development of multiple ERF havens and lines of effort in the IOR therefore requires sustained Indian naval presence and stringent access monitoring at the Malacca Strait, staged through the ANI, to enable timely responses to potential military build-ups. This will also preclude Pakistan's growing attempt to collude and build a nexus with inimical states and non-state actors on the eastern periphery of India taking advantage of instability.

Surveillance of extra-regional warships, deep-sea fishing fleets, "dark shipping", illegal activities, and research vessels along key chokepoints is essential and the ANI offer distinct advantages in facilitating this task. Threats from illegal immigration, drug and arms trafficking, poaching of genetic resources and Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing have escalated in the eastern IOR, driven in part by instability in Bangladesh and Myanmar. A surge in poaching and smuggling attempts including during the harsh monsoon season around the ANI, with recent apprehensions of multiple groups of poachers of Myanmar origin, underscores the growing operational push by foreign-based actors. If left unchecked, the growing sophistication and reach of such inimical elements risk evolving into organised, terrorism-linked activity, necessitating proactive surveillance, interdiction and coordinated regional countermeasures. This places greater responsibility on the ANC to safeguard India's maritime security in coordination with local administration and central and state agencies, including the marine police.

The ANI also serve as a launchpad for monitoring maritime traffic through the Malacca, Sunda, and other regional straits. To this end, the Indian Armed Forces in the ANI have established a balanced posture and area-monitoring framework focused on the so-called "Malacca Dilemma", supported by white-shipping agreements with like-minded partners and operational turn-around (OTR) facilities at remote locations such as the Cocos (Keeling) Islands in the north-eastern IOR and Réunion Island.

The three island chains articulated by the US also shape how China perceives its seaward strategic space, reinforcing a geo-historical urge to break free from perceived maritime confinement. It is proposed that India can also adopt an island-chain strategy in the Indian Ocean Region to shape connectivity and partnerships through two arcs anchored in its geography and interests. The Eastern Island Chain, referred to as YANI, extends from Yangon through the ANI to Sabang in Indonesia, forming a continuous corridor that secures approaches to the Bay of Bengal and the western gateway to the Malacca Strait where dense maritime traffic and strategic competition intersect. This configuration would also enable monitoring and influence over initiatives such as the proposed Kra Canal and the Yunnan-Indian Ocean Freight Corridor (Zheng He), thereby reinforcing the Malacca dilemma. The Western Island Chain, LMD, extends from Lakshadweep across the Maldives to Diego Garcia, shaping central Indian Ocean sea lanes, the approaches to the Arabian Sea and traffic toward the Mozambique Channel. Together, YANI and LMD could convert dispersed island territories into a coherent theatre design that secures chokepoints, protects sea lanes, and enables partnered operations through shared awareness, access, and logistics.

With focused development and military empowerment, the ANI and the ANC are on a trajectory to emerge as India's strategic fulcrum against misadventures along its Northern borders. The ANC continues to train and equip for operations in the "grey zone", a domain that also requires effective narrative management at the strategic level to ensure calibrated signalling in the Andaman Sea. In this context, the Indian Armed Forces regularly conduct long-range missile and precision-weapons trials from the ANI. The permanent deployment of a warship at the exit of the Malacca Strait under the Malacca Deployment (MALDEP) enables monitoring of extra-regional forces transiting the area, while simultaneously reassuring global commerce through the principle of *mare liberum* (freedom of the seas). Further, it is also imperative to develop underwater domain awareness in the region especially along the straits providing access to the IOR.

Integrating Economy, Ecology, and Security in ANI

Historically, the balance between ecology, protection of indigenous tribes, national security, and development has tilted towards isolating the ANI, largely due to ecological and cultural considerations. The revision in April 2025 of India's coastline—from 7,516.6 km to 11,098.81 km—and the formulation of the ANI archipelago's eastern baseline (see Figure 1 for a rough alignment) have significantly expanded the maritime zones of India, including the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). Notably, a third of the coastline belongs to ANI (3,083.50km), thereby securing more than one-third of India's EEZ. With around 6,60,000km² of EEZ rich in under-exploited sea resources, ANI have unmatched potential to contribute to India's Blue Economy. The discovery of oil and gas in the North Andaman Basin has further added both strategic and economic dimensions to the security calculus of the ANC, which now carries the added responsibility of protecting valuable drilling and processing assets at sea located close to threats emanating from the Coco Islands and instabilities in Bangladesh and Myanmar.

The ANI lie close to important East-West shipping lanes and near Indonesia, Thailand, and Myanmar, giving them a clear geographic advantage as a regional logistics hub. With deep-draft port capacity at Great Nicobar and improved internal links, the islands could host feeder and transshipment services that shorten supply chains and reclaim value now routed through foreign hubs. A functioning transshipment node would attract integrated logistics parks and cold-chain facilities, enabling direct exports of higher-value seafood, horticulture, and processed goods to ASEAN markets. This would also support a maritime services cluster, growth in mariculture and post-harvest processing, adding local value and jobs. Niche eco- and cruise tourism tied to Southeast Asian circuits could diversify incomes and increase port calls. Improved submarine cable connectivity would enable telemedicine, e-education, and cross-border SME platforms, strengthening the digital economy. Together, these changes would position ANI as a multifunctional node for container trade, cold-chain exports, maritime services, and digital commerce, creating steady demand for feeder services, warehousing, and skilled local employment while deepening India's integration with Bay of Bengal littorals and ASEAN supply chains.

Cognisant of the economic potential of ANI, the Government of India has constituted the Island Development Agency to spearhead the archipelago's infrastructure development. Pivotal to establishing the ANI as a fulcrum of India's eastern strategy is the development of the International Container Transshipment Port (ICTP) at Galathea Bay on Great Nicobar Island, located just 75 km from the mouth of the Malacca Strait. Kamarajar Port Ltd (KPL) has been asked to lead and structure the International Container Transshipment Port (ICTP) at Galathea Bay under a Build-Operate-Transfer (BOT)/public-private partnership (PPP) model.

The proposed ICTP is widely seen as a potential game-changer due to its natural deep draft (>20 m), direct access to the East-West shipping route, and a phased capacity plan targeting 4 million twenty-foot equivalent container units (TEUs) in Phase I, rising to ~16 million TEUs at maturity. Government analysts estimate potential annual savings of US\$200-220 million for Indian ports by reducing reliance on overseas transshipment hubs. In parallel, India's proposed development of the Sabang port in Sumatra, Indonesia, also at the entrance to the Malacca Strait, could reinforce the ANI's role as an economic gateway to the region. Additionally, despite being located around 1,200 km from the mainland, the islands' digital connectivity has received a boost through the completion of the Chennai-ANI submarine cable (CANI), laying a strong foundation for sustained future growth.

While the scale of investment and development envisaged for the ANI adds substantial military and economic value and strengthens India's strategic signalling, it also carries an equally important responsibility to safeguard fragile ecosystems, preserve indigenous cultures, and protect the archipelago's heritage. The ANI are home to several Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs), including the Great Andamanese, Onges, Jarawas, Nicobarese, Sentinelese, and Shompens. Their customs and ways of life have endured for centuries, sustained by a delicate balance between carefully managed development and the preservation of indigenous traditions and identities. The islands also have an exceptionally high forest share at 86.93 percent of the Union Territory's geographical area, low population density (46/sq km), and high rainfall (1,400-3,000 mm)- conditions that allow for tightly regulated, compact development supported by ecological buffers and water self-sufficiency measures. With deliberate planning that enables strategic infrastructure and ecological integrity to advance in tandem, the ANI can emerge as a model for sustainable development in sensitive maritime regions.

Strategic Outpost to Unsinkable Pivot

Overseeing a substantial share of global trade routes, including crude oil flows, the ANI have the potential to be critical to the functioning of global economies. Viewing the ANI as an intersection of the Indian Ocean, the South China Sea, and the Pacific Ocean underscores their role as the fulcrum of India's eastward and Indo-Pacific pivot. Described as 'India's unsinkable aircraft carriers' by former Chief of Defence Staff General Bipin Rawat, these islands form a bulwark against conventional and non-conventional threats in the IOR. Recent Chinese maritime activity in the South China Sea, coupled with delays to the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway (IMT) due to Myanmar's security situation, has renewed strategic focus on the ANI.

Further, the growing tendency of revisionist powers to erode the international rules-based order necessitates the calibrated use of both military and non-military means. Accordingly, plurilateral and extra-regional partnerships with friendly foreign nations and strategic signalling at the apex level need to be leveraged to India's benefit. The bargain would most certainly be tilted towards India, given the ANI's strategic geography and India's balanced diplomacy and political stability.

Policy Proposals for ANI's Leverage in India's Eastern Maritime Strategy

The Andaman and Nicobar Islands are no longer a peripheral outpost. They are the hinge on which India's eastern maritime strategy can turn. Positioned astride the approaches to the Malacca Strait, they provide India with a rare strategic advantage: the ability to observe, influence and help secure one of the world's busiest and most vital sea lanes. The challenge now is to move beyond recognising this potential and towards acting on it with urgency and precision.

Beyond ASEAN, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands should be woven into wider Indo-Pacific security architectures. Leveraging ANI's forward location, India can participate or develop complementary frameworks alongside the Quad Plus and the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI). As a regional fusion point for maritime intelligence, the ANI can link the Information Fusion Centre - Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR) with partner networks, enabling real-time sharing of data on shipping, illegal fishing and emerging threats, fostering coordinated responses across a broad coalition. The recent revitalisation of the Five Power Defence Arrangements (FPDA), marked by expanded exercises and a renewed strategic roadmap, underscores growing regional attention. Leveraging its location, the ANI can act as BIMSTEC's maritime node, host disaster management initiatives, and provide OTR facilities to friendly navies. By institutionalising regular multilateral defence diplomacy and pairing it with concrete capacity-building measures such as shared radar networks, enhanced maritime domain awareness (MDA), coordinated disaster relief and defence scholarships while integrating with the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), Indian Ocean Region States (IORS), Indo-Pacific MDA (IP-MDA), the Indo-Pacific Maritime Cooperation Centre (IP-MCC) and the Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal (BBIN) frameworks, the ANC can become the Indo-Pacific's central hub for information sharing and rapid, unified responses to both conventional and grey-zone threats. Standard Operating Procedures for grey-zone scenarios will ensure readiness against blockades, disinformation, maritime militia activity, and hostile research activities.

A clear starting point is to enhance India's influence in the Malacca Strait which opens into the Indian Ocean and carries more than half of India's trade. Singapore's recent public recognition of India's interest in the Malacca Strait Patrol (MSP) offers a timely opening. While full membership may take time due to the preference of littoral states for exclusive control, India can credibly pursue a formal coordination role at the Indian Ocean approaches to the Strait. Anchored by the tri-service ANC, India brings together persistent MDA, rapid-response capabilities and proven interoperability developed through years of coordinated patrols with Indonesia, Thailand, and Myanmar. These capabilities provide a strong foundation for a structured role in the MSP through observer status, joint surveillance, and real-time information exchange, enhancing security at the strait's western gateway while deepening trust with littoral partners.

Alongside this, the islands should become a regular base for high-level multinational exercises, expanding scope, complexity and diplomatic reach. Hosting high-visibility maritime exercises like Malabar, an expanded MILAN, ASEAN-India Maritime Exercises (AIME), amphibious drills, and humanitarian operations from the ANI would strengthen interoperability and signal India's commitment to regional security. Designating Sri Vijaya Puram and Campbell Bay as permanent venues for key multilateral naval exercises would leverage the islands' geography and infrastructure while deepening India's integration with Southeast and East Asian partners. This would require targeted upgrades to berthing, logistics and airfields to support visiting forces without straining local resources and to ensure that exercise objectives directly reinforce surveillance and coordination requirements along the Malacca front.

The Andaman and Nicobar Islands can be transformed into a premium eco-tourism and Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions (MICE) hub through high-end eco-luxury resorts at Smith-Ross, Long Island, Shaheed Dweep, and Great Nicobar, complemented by cruise connectivity with Southeast Asia. Creating a maritime industrial cluster, connectivity upgrades, expanded airstrips, ferries, seaplanes, heliports, and the Andaman Trunk Road will integrate civilian and military mobility. Digital resilience should be built by adding the CANI submarine cable, branch links to Great Nicobar and satellite-based systems to ensure disaster warnings and secure communications as part of the islands' development architecture. Defence-led development models from the mainland offer a tested template demonstrating how military infrastructure can catalyse economic activity while supporting environmental regeneration and civilian prosperity. Applying this approach in ANI, particularly through the Galathea Bay project and initiatives such as Kamorta in Car Nicobar, could extend employment, healthcare, education and transport access to remote islands while enhancing operational readiness.

The development of the Great Nicobar Transshipment Port must be prioritised as a strategic initiative anchoring India's maritime ambitions in the eastern Indian Ocean. Policy measures including exemptions from environmental, forest and coastal regulation zone clearances for strategic defence projects in the ANI are essential to advance the blue economy agenda and execute Vision 2030 in the region. Strategic road and highway projects in the islands should be accorded priority under PM Gati Shakti and cleared expeditiously without lengthy clearance procedures. As border roads within 100 km of India's frontiers are fast-tracked for defence imperatives, connectivity in the islands would accelerate critical connectivity while maintaining environmental safeguards through standard operating procedures, ensuring timely delivery of military and dual-use infrastructure. India must counter the narrative that development must come at the expense of the environment.

The ANC's unique mix of Army, Navy, Air Force and Coast Guard assets positions it as an ideal "sandbox" for testing theatre command concepts, joint operational doctrines and indigenous technologies. Security planning in the ANI therefore integrates civil and military requirements, ensuring that critical infrastructure ports, airports, telecommunications, and power follows a dual-use design philosophy. Regular military capability enhancements in all domains, including underwater domain awareness and enhanced air operations with all kinds of aircraft, need to be continued on mission mode.

In parallel, India should advance its submissions for an extended continental shelf in the Bay of Bengal and the Andaman Sea in line with provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), while promoting marine biosphere reserves and strengthened high-seas monitoring to protect legitimate resource rights and counter IUU fishing, unauthorised research and grey-zone activities. Establishing multi-institutional ocean e-stations equipped with oceanographic, seismic and biosecurity sensors would enable rapid hazard warnings, ecological assessments, and disaster response while also supporting sustainable tourism.

If India can align security, connectivity, human progress and ecological balance, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands will do more than guard the eastern gateway of the Indian Ocean. They will serve as a living demonstration of how strategic geography when matched with strategic vision can shape the Indo-Pacific balance of power for times to come.

Conclusion

India stands at a crossroads shaped by dynamic geopolitical shifts and the ANI has evolved from a strategic outpost into an unsinkable hub of the Act East policy, overlooking vital sea lines of communication and generating strategic leverage on an increasingly complex Indian Ocean chessboard. The ANI and the ANC should therefore be further developed as India's forward base in the Indo-Pacific, realising its true maritime potential and shedding a long-standing continental outlook. This role depends less on troop numbers or runways and more on an integrated mix of strategy, economy, infrastructure, law, environment, and diplomacy.

If the ANC is fully integrated into national and regional defence plans, coordinates with friendly countries, protects biosecurity, speeds up infrastructure, and promotes sustainable growth, the islands can move from a remote outpost to a central player in India's Act East policy and regional maritime affairs. Making the ANI and the ANC a strategic and economic heart of Act East is not optional but essential for India's regional standing. The success will come from combining security with prosperity, environmental care, and cooperative leadership so that the islands can take their place at the centre of India's Indo-Pacific role.

The Article has been written by Lt Gen DS Rana, PVSM, AVSM, YSM, SM, PhD who is a serving Commander-in-Chief in Indian Defence Forces. He was former Commander-in-Chief of Andaman Nicobar Command and Director General, Defence Intelligence Agency. It was published in Observer Research Foundation (Source: <https://www.orfonline.org/>)

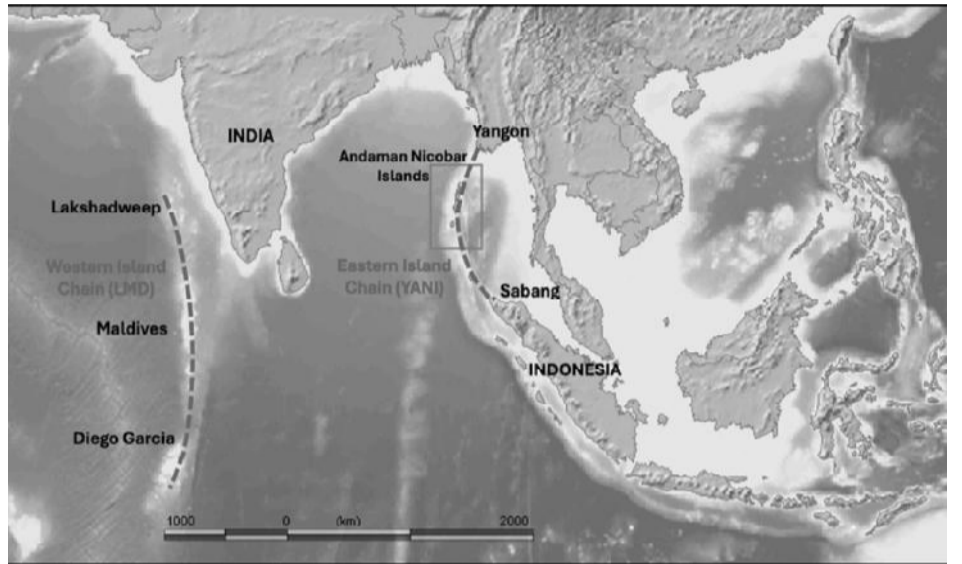


Figure 2: Proposed Eastern and Western Island Chain in IOR



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The Executive Engineer, Panchayati Raj Institution, South Andaman Division-I on behalf of the Pradhan, Gram Panchayat, Chouldari invites online item rate tender (in CPWD form-8) from bonafide and experienced contractors for the below mentioned work:
1. NIT No. EE/PRI/SAD-I/GEN/2025-26/190 Name of Work: Construction of 1st Floor of the existing Community Hall at Chouldari-04 under Gram Panchayat Chouldari. Estimated Cost: Rs. 70,35,850/-, Earnest Money Deposit: Rs. 1,40,717/-, Time of Completion: Ten (10) Months. Tender Fee: Rs.1000/- & last date & time of submission of bid: 22/01/2026 (1500 hrs.)
The tender forms and other details can be obtained from the website <https://eprocure.andamannicobar.gov.in>.
Tender ID: 2026 RDPRI 21503 1

Executive Engineer
Panchayati Raj Institution
South Andaman Division-I
Junglighat, Sri Vijaya Puram
South Andaman

I.D. No. 11949

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PRESS NOTE

It is hereby informed that the Inland Vessels (IV) Act, 2021 has been notified by Govt. of India. Accordingly, for any new Inland Vessel to be constructed after 01.02.2026, consent will have to be obtained from the Chief Port Administrator, Port Management Board (PMB), A & N Administration. Any vessel application received for survey after 01.02.2026 which does not have the Consent of Chief Port Administrator for its construction will not be entertained by PMB for Initial survey of the vessel itself. Also, failure to comply with this directive will tantamount to levy of penalty/action as per provision contained in Inland Vessel Act, 2021.

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AFFIDAVIT

I, Sitara Begum, D/o Late Faryad Hussain, R/o Mithakhari, Ograbarj, Ferrargunj Tehsil, Sri Vijaya Puram, South Andaman, having Aadhaar No. 7843 0422 2018, do hereby solemnly affirm and say as follows: -
1. That the name of my Father in the Local Category Certificate and in 10th Marksheets issued by National Institute of Open Schooling has been wrongly entered as Fariyad Hussain and in my Birth Certificate and in other documents the name of my Father is correctly entered as FARYAD HUSSAIN.
2. That the correct and actual name of my Father is FARYAD HUSSAIN.
3. That in my Birth Certificate, PAN Card and Bank Pass Book the name of my Father has been correctly entered as FARYAD HUSSAIN.
4. That Fariyad Hussain and FARYAD HUSSAIN is one and the identical person.
5. That henceforth for all purposes the name of my Father shall be read as FARYAD HUSSAIN instead of Fariyad Hussain.
6. That this affidavit is sworn before the Notary Public for the correction of name of my Father as FARYAD HUSSAIN instead of Fariyad Hussain in Local Category Certificate and in 10th Marksheets issued by National Institute of Open Schooling.
That above stated are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.
Place: Sri Vijaya Puram
Date: 12/01/2026
DEPONENT

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AFFIDAVIT

I, Smti. MONICA BILUNG Wife of Late A. Basant Kumar, aged about 57 years, residing at C/o Abhishek Shop, Near APWD Panchayat Ground, Wimberly Gunj - 744206, under Ferraj Gunj Tehsil, South Andaman District, A & N Islands, do hereby solemnly affirm and state as under:
1. That I am the Lawful Wife of deceased Sergeant A. Basant Kumar (Ex-Serviceman) Indian Air Force.
2. That after marriage I have changed my name from MONICA JANE BASANT KUMAR to MONICA BILUNG and the same is mentioned in all documents pertains to me.
3. That I further say that both the names belong to me and me only.
4. That I say that I swear this affidavit for the purpose of making my aforesaid declaration on oath before all Govt. Authorities concerned, general public that my name is "MONICA BILUNG" and the same shall be used for all official purpose and correspondence.
The contents made herein above in Paragraph 1 to 4 are true and correct to the best of my personal knowledge and belief and I have not concealed anything hereinabove.
Place: Sri Vijaya Puram
Date: 16.01.2026
DEPONENT

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On 21-01-2026

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Fondly remembered by:
Wife and all family members.

3rd Year Death Anniversary

On 21-01-2026



M. THAVASI

Retd. PC, A & N Police
08-06-1943 to 21-01-2023
Fondly Remembered by: Smti. T. Indrani (Wife), T. Murugeswari (Daughter), Murugan (Son-in-Law), Daughters, Son-in-Laws, Grand Sons and Grand Daughter