'PANI' undersea cable proposed to link eight Andaman & Nicobar islands

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News

Reports of 22–23 November 2026 say the Centre has proposed the 'PANI' (Port Alternative Network for Islands) project to link eight islands of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands through a submarine optical-fibre cable network. It was discussed at a meeting of Union Telecom Secretary Amit Agrawal and Andaman and Nicobar Lieutenant Governor Dinesh Sharma; the release was issued on Saturday, 21 November 2026, by Lok Niwas, the Lt Governor's residence. Diglipur, Mayabunder, Shaheed Dweep, Chowra, Teressa, Katchal, Nancowry and Little Nicobar would be linked, with the network starting from Puri in Odisha. It would be an alternative route to the existing Chennai–Andaman and Nicobar Islands (CANI) cable, keeping internet services running if that cable is disrupted. Also proposed are 4G for 87 uncovered villages under the 4G saturation scheme of Digital Bharat Nidhi and fibre-to-the-home for 174 villages under BharatNet; the Lt Governor suggested a cable landing station at Dugong Creek. So far 70 gram panchayats are covered under BharatNet, and four of the seven tribal council areas are connected, with work planned for the other three. The project is still at the proposal stage; its cost and length have not been announced.

Key facts for the exam

Point	Details
Project	PANI – Port Alternative Network for Islands

Point	Details
Status	Proposed (23.11.2026)
Starts from	Puri, Odisha
Islands	Diglipur, Mayabunder, Shaheed Dweep, Chowra, Teressa, Katchal, Nancowry, Little Nicobar
Purpose	Back-up route to the CANI cable
4G	87 villages – Digital Bharat Nidhi
BharatNet	FTTH for 174 villages
Meeting	Telecom Secy Amit Agrawal – Lt Gov Dinesh Sharma

Background

- Geography: the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, a Union Territory of about 836 islands in the Bay of Bengal, has its capital at Sri Vijaya Puram (formerly Port Blair, renamed in 2024). Saddle Peak (about 732 m) near Diglipur in North Andaman is the islands' highest point. Nicobar islands such as Katchal and Nancowry were badly hit by the 2004 tsunami.
- Ecology and people: the Great Nicobar Biosphere Reserve joined UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere (MAB) world network in 2013. The islands are home to Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) – the Jarawa, Onge, Sentinelese, Shompen and Great Andamanese.
- Defence and telecom: the Andaman and Nicobar Command, set up in 2001, is India's first integrated tri-service command. Under the Telecommunications Act, 2023, the old Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) became 'Digital Bharat Nidhi', with rules in force from 30 August 2024.

Tamil Nadu link: The CANI cable (2,312 km, ₹1,224 crore, executed by BSNL), opened by the PM on 10 August 2020, runs from Chennai to Sri Vijaya Puram and seven other islands – Swaraj Dweep, Long Island, Rangat, Little Andaman, Kamorta, Car Nicobar and Great Nicobar; the new PANI would give an alternative route from Puri. Tamil Nadu's Gulf of Mannar Biosphere Reserve (2001), like Great Nicobar, is in UNESCO's MAB network.

Frequently asked questions

What is this news about?

Reports of 22–23 November 2026 say the Centre has proposed the 'PANI' (Port Alternative Network for Islands) project to link eight islands of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands through a submarine optical-fibre cable network.

What are the key facts to remember for the exam?

Project: PANI – Port Alternative Network for Islands; Status: Proposed (23.11.2026); Starts from: Puri, Odisha; Islands: Diglipur, Mayabunder, Shaheed Dweep, Chowra, Teressa, Katchal, Nancowry, Little Nicobar.

What is the background to this news?

Geography: the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, a Union Territory of about 836 islands in the Bay of Bengal, has its capital at Sri Vijaya Puram (formerly Port Blair, renamed in 2024).

Practice questions (with answers)

1. Like Tamil Nadu's Gulf of Mannar, which biosphere reserve of the Andaman & Nicobar Islands is in UNESCO's MAB network?

A) Saddle Peak

B) Rani Jhansi

C) Great Nicobar

D) Mahatma Gandhi

Answer: C – Explanation: Great Nicobar – listed by UNESCO in 2013; Gulf of Mannar in 2001. The others are national parks.

2. Which channel separates the Andaman group of islands from the Nicobar group?

A) Ten Degree Channel

B) Duncan Passage

C) Coco Channel

D) Nine Degree Channel

Answer: A – Explanation: Ten Degree Channel – between Little Andaman and Car Nicobar. Duncan Passage lies between South Andaman and Little Andaman; Coco Channel between North Andaman and Myanmar's Coco Islands; the Nine Degree Channel is in Lakshadweep.

3. Which public sector company executed the Chennai–Andaman & Nicobar Islands submarine optical fibre cable (CANI, 2020)?

A) RailTel Corporation

B) Bharat Electronics Ltd

C) Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd (BSNL)

D) Power Grid Corporation

Answer: C – Explanation: BSNL – about 2,312 km of cable including Chennai–Port Blair; TCIL was the technical consultant; inaugurated by the PM on 10.08.2020.

4. Which Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG) lives in isolation on North Sentinel Island, avoiding outside contact?

A) Jarawa

B) Sentinelese

C) Onge

D) Nicobarese

Answer: B – Explanation: Sentinelese – the island is a restricted area. Onge – Little Andaman; Jarawa – western South and Middle Andaman.

5. Where is the headquarters of the Andaman and Nicobar Command, India's first integrated tri-service command?

A) Car Nicobar

B) Diglipur

C) Campbell Bay

D) Sri Vijaya Puram

Answer: D – Explanation: Sri Vijaya Puram (formerly Port Blair) – set up in 2001 after the Kargil Review Committee process.