PANI Project – A Second Digital Lifeline for the Andaman and Nicobar Islands

Prelims: *Current events of National and International Importance | Science and Technology*

Why in News?

*The Centre is considering the **Port Alternative Network for Islands (PANI) project**, an undersea optical fibre cable network to link eight Andaman and Nicobar Islands.*

- It was discussed in a meeting between the Union Telecom Secretary and the Lieutenant Governor of the islands (reported on November 22, 2026).

About the PANI Project

- **Background** – The islands depend on the ***Chennai-Andaman and Nicobar Islands (CANI) submarine cable***, a 2,312 km link that connects Port Blair and seven other islands. A single cable is a single point of failure.
- **Scope** – A new network starting at Puri, Odisha, as an alternative route to CANI, linking Diglipur, Mayabunder, Shaheed Dweep, Chowra, Teressa, Katchal, Nancowry and Little Nicobar. The Lieutenant Governor suggested a cable landing station at Dugong Creek.
- **Targets** – Keep internet services running if CANI is damaged. Related plans: 4G for 87 uncovered villages (Digital Bharat Nidhi) and fibre-to-the-home under revised BharatNet for 174 villages.
- **Status** – Under consideration; reports give no cost or timeline.

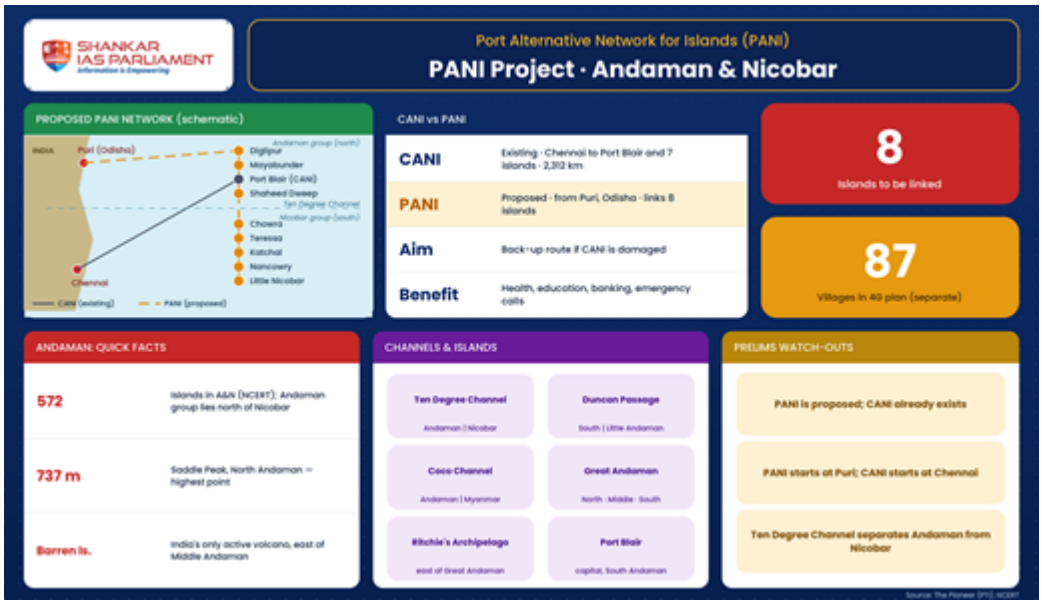
Significance

- **Resilience** – Protects services during cable cuts and disasters in a cyclone- and earthquake-prone region.
- **For islanders** – Telemedicine, online education, banking, e-governance and emergency communication in scattered islands.
- **For tribal communities** – Four of seven tribal council areas are already connected under BharatNet; the rest are planned. Works near tribal areas must respect reserve rules.
- **Strategic** – Secure links for a region close to the Malacca Strait.

Quick facts

Andaman Islands

• **Group** – The Andaman group lies north of the Nicobar group; the Union Territory has about 572 islands (NCERT).
• **Major islands** – North, Middle and South Andaman (Great Andaman), Baratang, Rutland, Little Andaman and Ritchie's Archipelago.
• **Channels** – Ten Degree Channel separates Andaman from Nicobar; Duncan Passage separates South Andaman from Little Andaman; Coco Channel separates it from Myanmar's Coco Islands.
• **Features** – Saddle Peak (737 m) is the highest point; Barren Island is India's only active volcano; Port Blair is the capital.



Reference

[The Pioneer | Centre considers new undersea cable link for remote Andaman Islands]