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Andaman & Nicobar Guinness Records + India's Semiconductor Push

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GEOGRAPHY

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Andaman & Nicobar Guinness Records + India's Semiconductor Push

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WHY IN NEWS

Indian Navy divers set two Guinness World Records at **Swaraj Dweep (Havelock Island)**, Andaman & Nicobar Islands in early May 2026 – the largest Indian flag unfurled underwater and the tallest human stack underwater. The islands' geography and strategic role have returned to focus. Separately, India's semiconductor manufacturing push has accelerated with 12 ISM-approved units and an expanded ISM 2.0 budget.

PART I: ANDAMAN & NICOBAR – GEOGRAPHY AND STRATEGIC SIGNIFICANCE

Guinness Records (May 2026)

RECORD	DETAIL
Largest Indian flag unfurled underwater	60m x 40m flag at Radha Nagar Beach, Swaraj Dweep
Tallest human stack underwater	10-metre-high diver formation
Achievers	Indian Navy divers
Location	Swaraj Dweep (formerly Havelock Island, renamed 2018)

Geography of Andaman & Nicobar Islands

PARAMETER	DETAIL
Total islands, islets, rocks	836
Location	Bay of Bengal
Channel separating Andaman and Nicobar	Ten Degree Channel
Largest island in A&N	North Andaman (~1,375 sq km)
Largest island in Nicobar group	Great Nicobar Island (~921 sq km)
Southernmost point of India	Indira Point (Great Nicobar)
Nearest international point	~150 km from Banda Aceh/Sumatra, Indonesia
Renamed	Havelock -> Swaraj Dweep (2018); Neil -> Shaheed Dweep; Ross -> Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose Dweep

Strategic Significance

- Located near the **Strait of Malacca** – one of the world’s busiest shipping lanes
- Houses India’s only **tri-service command** – **Andaman & Nicobar Command (ANC)** (est. 2001)
- Critical for Indian Ocean Region surveillance and maritime domain awareness
- Great Nicobar: Government approved a holistic development project (2022) worth Rs 72,000 crore – including a transshipment port, international airport, township, and power plant

Tribal Groups (PVTGs)

The islands are home to **5 Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs)**:

- 1 **Sentinelese** – North Sentinel Island (no contact maintained)
- 2 **Jarawa** – South and Middle Andaman
- 3 **Onge** – Little Andaman
- 4 **Great Andamanese** – Strait Island
- 5 **Shompen** – Great Nicobar Island

PART II: INDIA'S SEMICONDUCTOR MANUFACTURING PROGRAMME

Background

India's semiconductor ecosystem is near-zero today – virtually all chips are imported. Semiconductors are critical for smartphones, EVs, defence systems, satellites, medical devices, and AI infrastructure. The India Semiconductor Mission (ISM) is India's structural response to this gap.

India Semiconductor Mission (ISM)

PARAMETER	ISM 1.0 (2021)	ISM 2.0 (BUDGET 2026-27)
Outlay	Rs 76,000 crore	Enhanced allocation (Budget 2026-27)
Approved units	12 units across multiple states	Expansion target
States covered	Gujarat, Assam, AP, UP, Odisha, Punjab	–
Ministry	MeitY	MeitY

What's Approved?

- **12 ISM-approved units** as of May 2026
- First commercial **GaN (Gallium Nitride)-based Mini/Micro-LED display facility** approved – important for next-gen display technology
- ISM covers: **semiconductor fabs, display fabs, compound semiconductors, packaging units**

Why This Matters

REASON	DETAIL
China+1 strategy	Global supply chain shift post-COVID and US-China tech war
CHIPS Act competition	US, EU, Japan all offering massive incentives – India must match
Self-reliance (Aatmanirbhar)	Defence chips, satellite systems require domestic supply
EV growth	EV power management chips currently all imported
AI infrastructure	Datacentre chips – India wants manufacturing stake

UPSC RELEVANCE

GS Paper 1 – Geography

- Andaman & Nicobar physical geography, Ten Degree Channel
- Indira Point – southernmost tip
- PVTGs of Andaman & Nicobar (5 groups)

GS Paper 2 – Polity and Governance

- Tri-service commands (ANC); India's command structure
- Island development and tribal rights balance

GS Paper 3 – Economy and Science & Technology

- India Semiconductor Mission (ISM 1.0 and 2.0)
- Semiconductor supply chain and strategic importance
- GaN technology and display manufacturing

Mains Angles

- 1 Examine the strategic importance of the Andaman & Nicobar Islands in the context of India's Indian Ocean strategy.
- 2 Critically assess India's semiconductor manufacturing ambitions. What structural challenges must be overcome?
- 3 How do tribal rights of PVTGs in the Andaman & Nicobar Islands balance against development imperatives?

FACTS CORNER – KNOWLEDGEPEDIA
A&N ISLANDS:

836 islands, islets, rocks; Bay of Bengal

Ten Degree Channel: separates Andaman and Nicobar

Indira Point: southernmost point of India (Great Nicobar)

Largest island in A&N: North Andaman (~1,375 sq km); largest in Nicobar group: Great Nicobar (~921 sq km)

Nearest international point: ~150 km from Banda Aceh, Indonesia

Swaraj Dweep: renamed from Havelock Island (2018)

5 PVTGs: Sentinelese, Jarawa, Onge, Great Andamanese, Shompen

ANC (Andaman & Nicobar Command): India's only tri-service command (2001)

Guinness Records (May 2026): 60x40m flag + 10m human stack (Indian Navy divers)

INDIA SEMICONDUCTOR MISSION:

ISM 1.0: 2021; Rs 76,000 crore outlay; 12 approved units

ISM 2.0: Budget 2026-27; enhanced allocation

Ministry: MeitY

First GaN-based Mini/Micro-LED display facility approved

Key states: Gujarat, Assam, AP, UP, Odisha, Punjab

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