

Sentinelese Tribe

February 8, 2021

In News: A new policy document on the isolated North Sentinel Island stresses the need to respect the territorial rights of the island's natives and protect them from interference from the outside world.

Who are Sentinelees?

- They belong to the Negrito tribe who live on the North Sentinel Island of the Andaman (50 km west of Port Blair). They are assumed to be direct descendants of the earliest humans who emerged from Africa.
- Their language is incomprehensible to even other tribes in the region.
- They have made little to no advancement in the last 60,000 years and still live very primitive lives, surviving mainly on fish and coconuts.
- They are very vulnerable to germs since they have not had contact with the outside (their isolation from) world. Even a common flu virus carried by a visitor could wipe out the entire tribe.
- They have not faced incursions and remain hostile to outsiders.
- They are connected to the Jarawas, another tribe in the Andamans on the basis of physical, as well as linguistic similarities.
- Anthropological research reveals that the tribe inhabits the island at least for the past 200 years.
- Genome studies indicate that the Andaman tribes could have been on the islands even 30,000 years ago.

Tribes of Andaman & Nicobar

- There are 6 aboriginal tribes in Andaman & Nicobar islands belonging to two broad groups of Negrito and Mongoloid.

- Except Nicobarese (Mongoloid), the rest 5 are recognized as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) i.e. Sentinelese (Negrito), Great Andamanese (Negrito), Ongs (Negrito), Jarawas (Negrito) and Shompens (Mongoloid).
- **Sentinelese:** They are the only remaining tribe in the Andamans to still maintain their isolation from the rest of the world and live like hunter gatherers.
 - o They are connected to the Jarawa on the basis of physical, as well as linguistic similarities.
 - o Both Sentinelese men and women do not wear clothes.
- **Great Andamanese:** The great Andamanese is a collective term used for 10 different tribes that lived in most of the large islands in the Andaman.
 - They are also known for their brave History where they fought with bows and arrows with the English men who tried to occupy their land (The Battle of Aberdeen).
 - Today most tribes are extinct and their cultural and linguistic identities have largely been lost. (e.g. their members now speak mostly Hindi).
- **Jarawa:** Jarawas continue to hunt and gather nomadic tribes and are often hostile to outsiders.
 - Men fish with bows and arrows in the coastal waters while women catch fish with baskets.
- **Onges:** They are a hunting and gathering tribe settled at Dugong Creek and South Bay on Little Andaman Island.
- **Shompens:** The Shompens are primarily hunter-gatherers and also practise a little bit of horticulture and pig rearing.

Nicobarese: They are the largest of tribes and are primarily horticulturalists

Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs)

Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (pvtg) – (earlier it was – Primitive Tribal Groups) was the category within

Scheduled Tribes created on recommendation of Dhebar commission.

- Presently there are 75 tribal groups categorized by Ministry of Home Affairs as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (pvtg)
 - PVTGs reside in 18 States and UT of A&N Islands.
 - The Central government reimposed the Restricted Area Permit (RAP) in the North Sentinel island where an American was killed by members of the Sentinelese tribe.
 - Government excluded the North Sentinel Island and 28 others in the union territory Andaman and Nicobar from the RAP regime till December 31, 2020.
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- **Restricted Area Permit**
 - It requires foreigners to obtain a Protected Area Permit (PAP) for visiting certain areas in the states of Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Mizoram, Uttarakhand, Jammu and Kashmir, Rajasthan, Nagaland, Andaman and Nicobar. This requirement is in addition to getting a visa for visiting India.
 - Restrictions for protected/restricted areas are in place for security reasons and to protect the culture of native people from outside influence.