8.30 ANDAMAN & NICOBAR ISLANDS

8.30.1 Introduction

The Union Territory of Andaman and Nicobar Islands is a chain of more than 500 islands and islets situated in the southeastern part of Bay of Bengal. The geographical area of the territory is 0.82 million ha and lies between lat 6° to 14°N and long 92° to 94°E. The islands form two broad groups, namely, the Andamans and the Nicobars. The Andamans account for 0.64 million ha, and the Nicobars, 0.18 million ha. Coral reefs surround most of the islands of the Nicobar group. Port Blair, the capital of the territory is about 1,200 km from the mainland coast.

The climate is humid tropical. The average annual rainfall varies from 1,400 mm to 3,000 mm and average annual temperature varies from 24° C to 28° C.

The population is 0.37 million, comprising 67.37 % rural, and 32.63 % urban *(Census 2001)*. The population density is 43 persons per km^2. Of the total population, 88% inhabit Andaman Islands and the rest, Nicobar Islands. About 8.3 % people belong to Scheduled Tribes. Four aboriginal tribes namely Andamanese, Jarwas, Onges and Sentenalese inhabit the Andaman group; Nicobaris and Shompens are in the Nicobar group. The livestock population is 0.20 million *(Livestock Census 2003)*, which has increased by nearly 30% since the census of 1992. Land use pattern of the Union Territory is given in Table 8.30a.

8.30.2 Forest Resources

The recorded forest area is 7,171 km^2, which is 86.93 % of the geographic area of the UT. By legal status, Reserved Forests constitute 40.85 %, and Protected Forests, 59.15 %.

Major forest types occurring in the Union Territory are Tropical Wet Evergreen, Tropical Semi-evergreen, Tropical Moist Deciduous and Littoral & Swamp Forests. The famous Dipterocarps species (Gurjan) having lofty size is typical to the Andaman group of islands.

8.30.3 Protected Areas

There are 9 National Parks and 96 Wildlife Sanctuaries most of which are small in size cover an area of 0.15 million ha, which is 18.75 % of the total land area. The Great Nicobar Biosphere Reserve having an area of 88,500 ha is located in the territory.

8.30.4 Forest Cover

The forest cover of the UT, based on satellite data of January-February 2005, is 6,629 km^2, which is 80.36 % of the geographic area. Very dense forest is 3,359 km^2, moderately dense forest, 2,646 km^2, and open forest, 624 km^2. The forest cover of the UT is shown in Fig. 8.30.

A decrease of 178 km^2 of forest cover has been assessed in the present assessment as compared to the previous assessment (based on satellite data of September 2002 and January-February & April-May 2003).

The change matrix, given in Table 8.30b reveals that there has been a decrease of 38 km^2 in very dense forest, 131 km^2 in moderately dense forest, and 9 km^2 in open forest. Scrub has increased by 2 km^2.

The loss in forest cover has occurred due to tsunami, which struck the island territory on December 26, 2004. The

Table 8.30a: Land use pattern

Land Use	Area in '000 ha	Percentage
Total geographical area	825	
Reporting area for land utilization	793	100.00
Forests	695	87.64
Not available for cultivation	24	3.03
Permanent pastures and other grazing lands	4	0.50
Land under misc. tree crops & groves	16	2.02
Culturable wasteland	12	1.51
Fallow lands other than current fallows	3	0.38
Current Fallows	1	0.13
Net area sown (Relates to the year 1994-95)	38	4.79

Source: Land Use Statistics, Ministry of Agriculture, GOI, 2005.

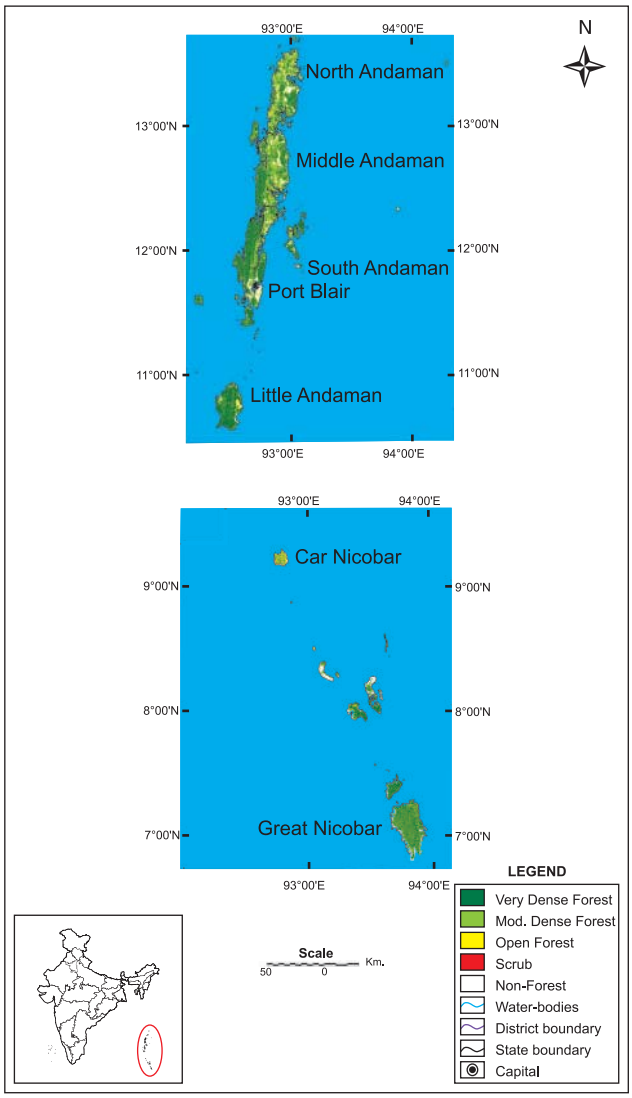
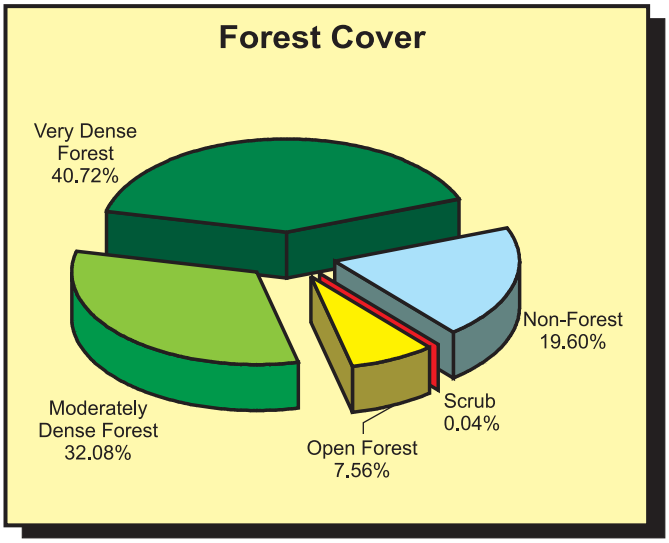


Fig. 8.30 : Forest Cover Map of Andaman & Nicobar Islands

Table 8.30b: Forest cover change matrix

(area in km^2)

2003 Assessment(Data of Sept.-2002 & Jan.-Feb, April-May 2003)	2005 Assessment (Data of Jan.-Feb. 2005)					Total 2003
	VDF	MDF	OF	Scrub	NF	
Very Dense Forest	3,359	0	5	0	33	3,397
Moderately Dense Forest	0	2,646	6	0	125	2,777
Open Forest	0	0	607	2	24	633
Scrub	0	0	0	1	0	1
Non-Forest	0	0	6	0	1,435	1,441
Total 2005	**3,359**	**2,646**	**624**	**3**	**1,617**	**8,249**
Net Change	-38	-131	-9	2	176	



same was observed by the FSI officials during ground verification. The major loss was observed in the Nicobar group of Islands.

The district wise details of very dense forest, moderately dense forest, open forest and scrub, along with the changes compared to 2003 assessment, have been provided in Table 8.30c.

Table 8.30c: District-wise forest cover
Number of Districts: 2

(area in km^2)

District	Geographic area	2005 Assessment				Percent of G.A.	Change	Scrub
		Very dense forest	Mod. dense forest	Open forest	Total			
Andaman[T]	6,408	2,572	2,185	508	5,265	82.16	-32	1
Nicobar[T]	1,841	787	461	116	1,364	74.09	-146	2
Total	**8,249**	**3,359**	**2,646**	**624**	**6,629**	**80.36**	**-178**	**3**

8.30.5 Tree Cover

Tree cover of Andaman & Nicobar Islands has been estimated following a sampling based approach. A separate exercise was carried out where high resolution satellite data (5.8m) has been used for identification of tree patches for field inventory. The estimated tree cover in the UT is 53 km^2. Being a forest rich territory, there is a limited scope of expanding tree cover outside the forest areas.

The forest and tree cover of the UT is presented in the Table 8.30d.

Table 8.30d: Forest & tree cover

(area in km^2)

Category	Area	% of Geographical Area
Tree Cover	53	0.64
Forest Cover	6,629	80.36
Forest & Tree Cover	**6,682**	**81.00**