

7.30 ANDAMAN & NICOBAR ISLANDS

7.30.1 Introduction

The Union Territory comprises the Andaman Islands and the Nicobar Islands separated by the 10° N parallel. The Andaman Sea lies to the east and the Bay of Bengal to the west. Most of the islands (about 550) are in the Andamans group, 26 of which are inhabited. The smaller Nicobars group comprises some 22 main islands (10 inhabited). The geographical area of the territory is 8,249 km² and lies between latitude 6° to 14°N and longitude 92° to 94°E. 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.

As per Census 2001, the total population of the UT is 0.37 million, of which the rural population constitute 67.37%. The population density is 43 persons per km². The Scheduled Tribes constitute 8.3% of the population. The projected population of the UT is 0.47 million (as projected by the Office of RGI for 2009). 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 7.30.1.

7.30.2 Recorded Forest Area

The recorded forest area of the UT is 7,171 km² which is 86.93% of the geographic area of the UT. Reserved Forests constitute 40.85% and Protected Forests 59.15% of the total forest area.

7.30.3 Protected Areas

The UT has 9 National Parks and 96 Wildlife Sanctuaries covering an area of 0.15 million ha which constitutes 18.71% of the UT's geographical area. The Great Nicobar Biosphere Reserve having an area of 88,500 ha is located in the territory.

7.30.4 Forest Cover

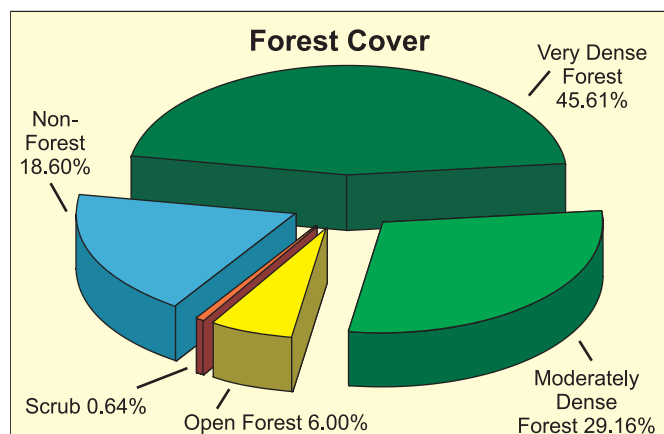
The forest cover in the UT, based on interpretation of satellite data of Jan - Mar 2007, is 6,662 km², which is 80.76% of the UT's geographical area. In terms of forest canopy density classes, the UT has 3,762 km² very dense forest, 2,405 km² moderately dense forest and 495 km² open forest. The distribution of forest cover of the UT is shown in Fig. 7.30.

Comparison of the current forest cover (satellite data of Jan - Mar 2007) with the previous assessment (satellite data of Jan - Feb 2005) shows a loss of 1 km² of forest cover.

Table 7.30.1: Land use pattern

Land Use	Area in '000 ha	Percentage
Total geographical area	825	
Reporting area for land utilization	795	100.00
Forests	717	90.19
Not available for cultivation	25	3.14
Permanent pastures and other grazing lands	6	0.75
Land under misc. tree crops & groves	18	2.26
Culturable wasteland	12	1.51
Fallow lands other than current fallows	3	0.38
Current fallows	1	0.13
Net area sown	13	1.64

Source: Land Use Statistics, Ministry of Agriculture, GOI, 2006.



The change matrix, given in Table 7.30.2, reveals that there has been a decrease of 17 km² in the very dense forest and 9 km² in moderately dense forest and an increase of 25 km² in open forest.

On the basis of ground truthing by the officials of FSI, the main reason for the net decrease in forest cover was loss in mangroves in both districts and that is due to the after-effects of tsunami. The increase in open forest is due to casuarina plantations.

District wise forest cover in different canopy density classes and scrub along with the changes compared to 2005 assessment is given in the Table 7.30.3.

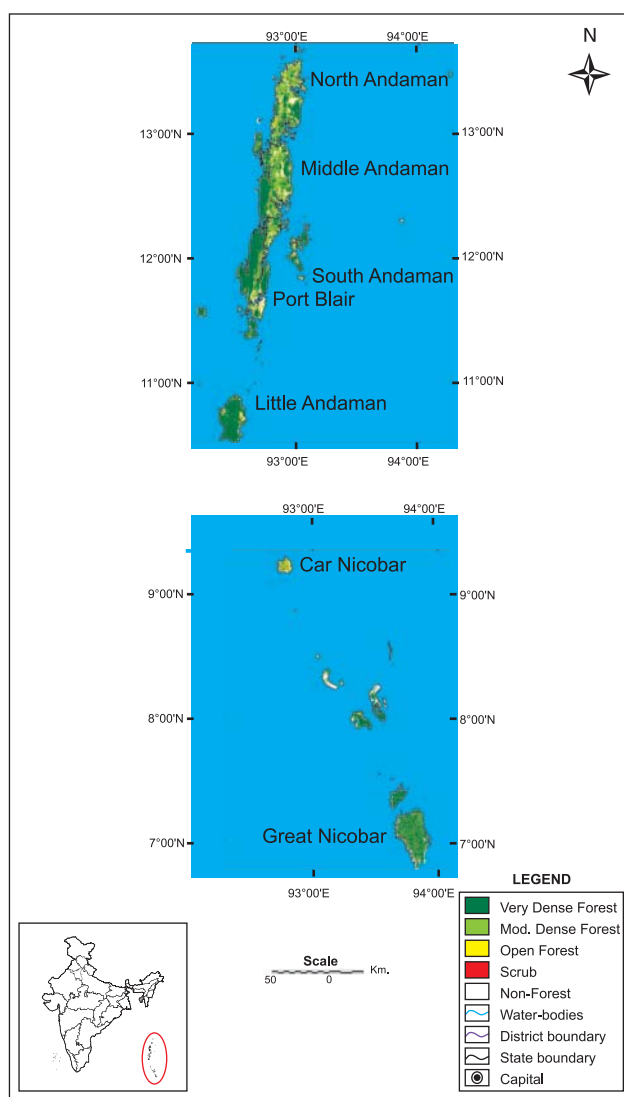


Fig. 7.30 : Forest cover map of Andaman & Nicobar Islands

Table 7.30.2: Forest cover change matrix

(area in km²)

2005 Assessment (Data of Jan - Feb 2005))	2007 (Data of Jan - Mar 2007))					Total of 2005
	VDF	MDF	OF	Scrub	NF	
Very Dense Forest	3,747	6	1	5	20	3,779
Moderately Dense Forest	6	2,377	3	2	26	2,414
Open Forest	2	4	443	4	17	470
Scrub	0	0	0	3	2	5
Non-Forest	7	18	48	39	1,469	1,581
Total of 2007	3,762	2,405	495	53	1,534	8,249
Net Change	-17	-9	25	48	-47	

Table 7.30.3: District-wise forest cover in 2007

Number of districts: 2

(area in km²)

District	Geographical area	Very dense forest	Mod. dense forest	Open forest	Total	% of G.A.	Change*	Scrub
Andaman [†]	6,408	2,938	1,984	391	5,313	82.91	5	1
Nicobar [†]	1,841	824	421	104	1,349	73.28	-6	52
Total	8,249	3,762	2,405	495	6,662	80.76	-1	53

* Change compared to 2005 assessment (revised).

7.30.5 Altitude Zone wise Forest Cover

Forest cover of the UT in different altitude zones is given in Table 7.30.4.

Table 7.30.4: Altitude zone wise forest cover

(area in km²)

Altitude Zone	VDF	MDF	OF	Total
0-500m	3,756	2,400	493	6,649
500-1000m	6	5	2	13
Total	3,762	2,405	495	6,662

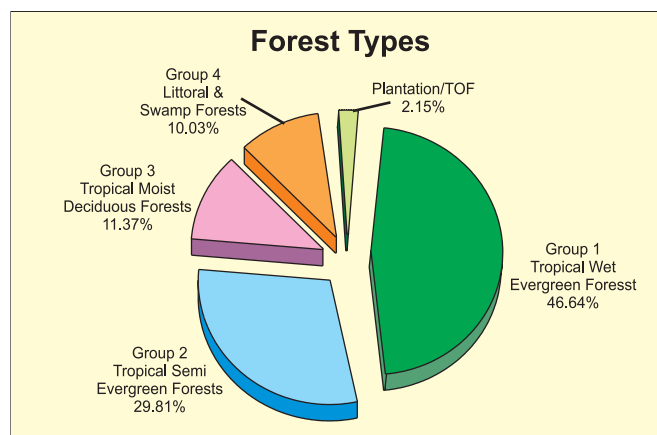
(based on SRTM Digital Elevation Model)

7.30.6 Forest Cover in different Forest Types

As per Champion & Seth Classification, the UT has 11 forest types which belong to 4 forest type groups viz Tropical Wet Evergreen, Tropical Semi Evergreen, Tropical Moist Deciduous and Littoral & Swamp Forests. Distribution of forest cover in different forest type groups found in the UT is given in the pie diagram.

7.30.7 Tree Cover

Tree cover of the UT has been estimated using sample data of TOF inventory collected over a period of six years i.e. 2002-08. The estimated tree cover in the UT is 44 km² which is 0.53% of the geographical area of



the UT. The forest and tree cover of the UT is presented in the Table 7.30.5.

Table 7.30.5: Forest & tree cover

(area in km²)

Category	Area	% of Geographical area
Tree Cover	44	0.53
Forest Cover	6,662	80.76
Forest & Tree Cover	6,706	81.29