# Port Blair Renamed As Sri Vijaya Puram

## Why In News

- **Port Blair,** the capital city of **Andaman and Nicobar Islands**, will now be known as 'Sri Vijaya Puram', Union Minister Amit Shah said in a post on X. He said the decision of changing the name was inspired by the vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, "to free the nation from colonial imprints".



- Shah added that **"while the earlier name had a colonial legacy**, Sri Vijaya Puram symbolises the victory achieved in our freedom struggle and the A&N Islands' unique role in the same."



Narendra Modi
@narendramodi · Follow

The name Sri Vijaya Puram honours the rich history and heroic people of Andaman and Nicobar islands. It also reflects our commitment to break free from the colonial mindset and celebrate our heritage.

Amit Shah @AmitShah

Inspired by the vision of PM @narendramodi Ji, to free the nation from the colonial imprints, today we have decided to rename Port Blair as "Sri Vijaya Puram."
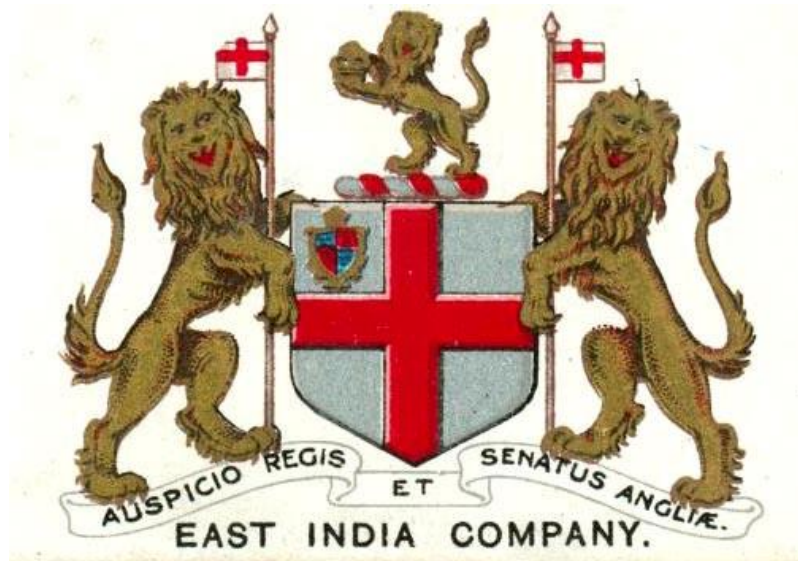
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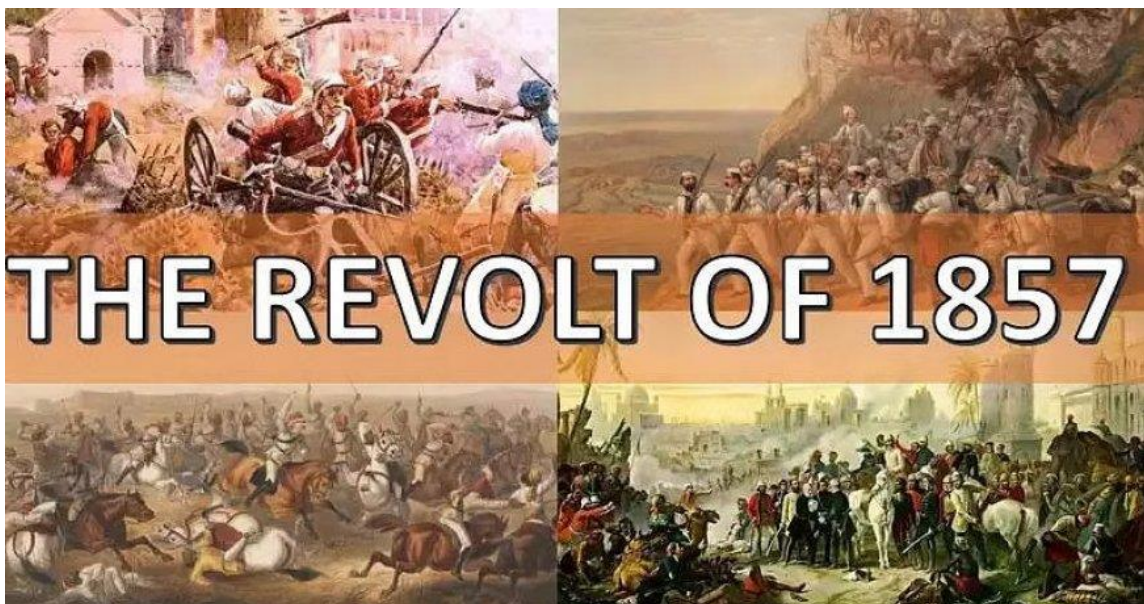
# Who Is The Blair Of Port Blair

- **City of Port Blair** is the entry point of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. It was named after **Archibald Blair**, a **naval surveyor and lieutenant** in the Bombay Marine.
- **Blair was the first officer** to carry out a thorough survey of the Andaman Islands. After joining the **Bombay Marine in 1771**, Blair set out on a survey mission along the coasts of India, Iran, and Arabia next year.



- **In December 1778**, Blair left for his first surveying voyage to the Andamans from Calcutta, along with two ships, Elizabeth and Viper.
- The **expedition, which lasted till April 1779**, took him around the west coast of the island, thereby sailing north along the eastern coast he reached the natural harbour which he initially **named as Port Cornwallis** (after Commodore William Cornwallis, Commander-in-chief of the British Indian Army).
- Later the **island was renamed** after him. EIC decided to colonise the islands, mainly to establish as a safe harbour from which it could check the activities of the Malay pirates.
- The island was also to serve as a refuge for shipwrecked people and a place where their **officers could take shelter in** case of hostilities with other powers. With several convicts being transported to the islands to serve unpaid labour, the island soon became a penal colony.
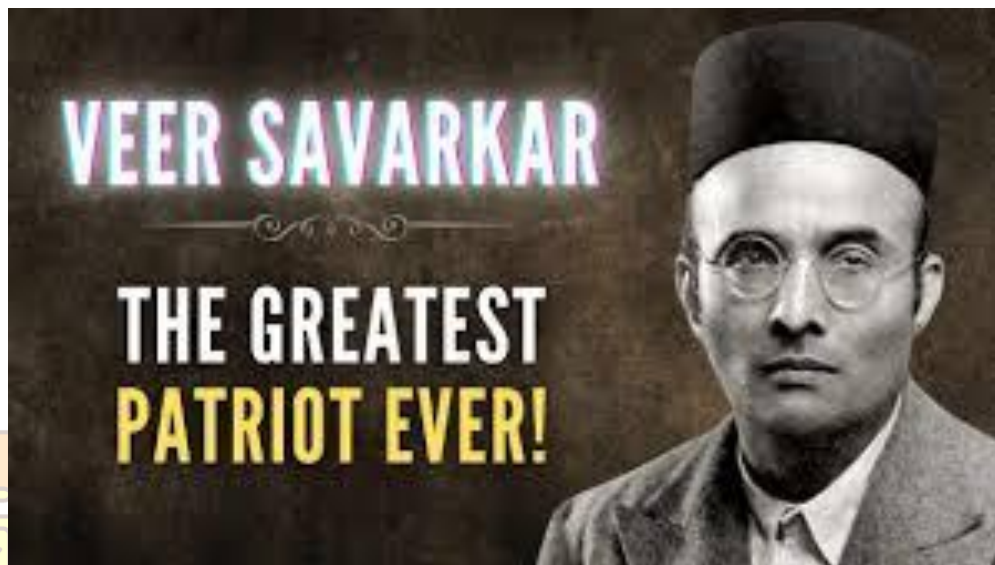
EAST INDIA COMPANY.

- **In December 1792, however**, the colony was shifted to the north east part of Andaman to the newly established Port Cornwallis for purely strategic reasons.
- But the new colony could not sustain for too long on account of severe disease and death there. The **EIC stopped operating it in 1796.**
- **Revolt of 1857 resulted in a large number** of prisoners for the British, prompting the immediate renovation and resettlement of Port Blair as a penal colony.
- Most of the convicts received life imprisonment at Port Blair. Several of them were hanged, while many died due to disease and the degrading conditions in the region.

- **With the strengthening of the Indian Independence Movement** in the late 19th century, a huge cellular jail was established here by 1906. Popularly known as **Kaala Paani,** it housed several freedom fighters, including Veer Damodar Savarkar.
- Meanwhile, Blair had already returned to England in 1795 and is known to have read an account of the Andaman Islands before the Royal Society of London in 1799.



# Port Blair's Connection With Imperial Cholas And Srivijaya

- Some historical records suggest that the **Andaman Islands were used as a strategic naval base** by the 11th century *Chola emperor, Rajendra I* to carry out an **attack on Srivijaya**, which is in present day Indonesia.
- As per an inscription found at **Thanjavur dated to 1050 CE**, the Cholas referred to the island as **Ma-Nakkavaram land** (great open/ naked land), which possibly led to the modern name of Nicobar under the British.

- As noted by **historian Herman Kulke** in his co-edited edited book, **Nagapattinam to Suvarnadwipa**: Reflections on the Chola Naval Expeditions to Southeast Asia (2010), the Chola invasion of Srivijaya was a unique event in the history of India and "its otherwise peaceful relations with the states of Southeast Asia which had come under India's strong cultural influence for about a millennium."



- Several scholars have speculated about the reason for the attack on Srivijaya.
- **Nilakanta Sastri, in his work** on the Cholas had suggested that "we have to assume either some attempt on the part of Srivijaya to throw obstacles in the way of the Chola trade with the East, or more probably, simply a desire on the part of Rajendra to extend his digvijaya to the countries across the sea, so well known to his subjects at home, and add luster to his crown."

- **Others like the American historian G W Spencer interprets** the Srivijaya expedition as to be part of the Chola expansionism which had been ongoing for decades culminating in wars with other empires of South India and Sri Lanka.
- According to inscriptional records, after **attacking Srivijaya, Rajendra I captured** king **Sangrama Vijayottunggavarman,** and looted a large amount of treasures from the Buddhist Empire, including the Vidhyadara Torana, the jewelled war gate of Srivijaya.

## Other Changed Names

- Allahabad to Prayagraj
- Faizabad to Ayodhya
- Rajpath to Kartavyapath
- Mughal Garden to Amrit Udyan
- Rajpath to Kartavyapath
- Gurgaon to Gurugram
- Neil Island and Havelock Island to Shaheed Dweep and Swaraj Dweep