

## The Lakshadweep Administration is Planning to Acquire Bitra Island

The Lakshadweep administration is exploring the acquisition of Bitra Island for defence purposes due to its strategic location in the Arabian Sea. The plan has triggered opposition from local residents and political representatives who cite concerns about displacement and the impact on traditional livelihoods.

### Strategic importance for national security

- **Location:** Bitra is situated along key international shipping lanes in the Arabian Sea, including the routes near the Strait of Hormuz and the Malacca route.
- **Maritime surveillance:** Its position makes it ideal for enhancing India's maritime surveillance capabilities and monitoring military and civilian traffic in the region.
- **Regional presence:** The move is part of India's broader effort to increase its defense presence in its critical island territories and counter growing maritime activity from other nations, such as China.
- **Expanded defense network:** Acquiring Bitra would make it the third island in Lakshadweep with a defense establishment, complementing existing naval bases like INS Dweeprakshak in Kavaratti and INS Jatayu in Minicoy.

### Administrative process and justification

- **Notification:** The Lakshadweep administration issued a notification on July 11, 2025, to begin the land acquisition process.
- **Social Impact Assessment (SIA):** An SIA has been initiated under the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition Act, 2013.
- **Rationale:** The administration cited the island's "strategic location," "national security relevance," and "logistical and administrative challenges" associated with civilian habitation as justification.
- **Non-mandatory consent:** While the law requires consultation with stakeholders like local governing bodies, the administration clarified that their consent is not mandatory for the acquisition.

## Local and political opposition

- **Fear of displacement:** The 350 residents fear being displaced from their homes and losing access to the island and its vital 45-square-kilometer lagoon, which is a key fishing area.
- **Threat to livelihoods:** Fishermen from neighbouring islands also rely on Bitra's abundant lagoon fish, and they fear the acquisition could destroy their traditional livelihoods.
- **Lack of consultation:** Critics, including local MP Hamdullah Sayeed, allege that the administration failed to consult the local community or follow democratic norms.

## Explanation of Exam Oriented Key Terms

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### Bitra Island

Bitra Island is the smallest inhabited island in Lakshadweep, known for its large lagoon and shrine of Malik Mulla. A key feature is the rich marine biodiversity within its 45 sq km lagoon, supporting local fishing and coconut cultivation.

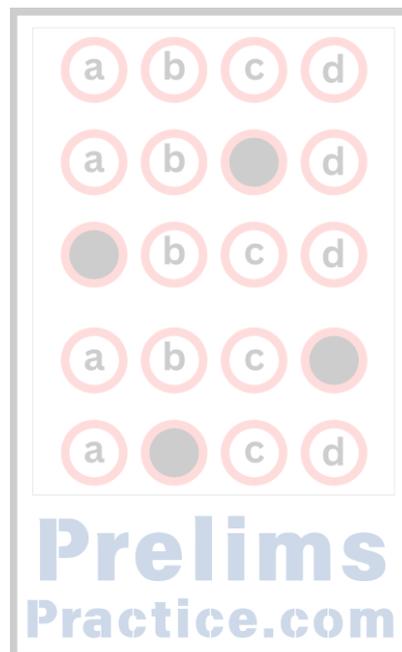
### Geography & Environment

- **Smallest Inhabited Island:** Bitra is the smallest inhabited island in the Lakshadweep archipelago, with a length of about 0.57 km.
- **Largest Lagoon:** Despite its small size, it boasts a large lagoon of approximately 45 sq km, supporting rich marine life.
- **Marine Biodiversity:** The lagoon is rich in marine biodiversity, making the island a significant area for conservation and fishing.
- **Tropical Climate:** Like Kerala, it experiences a tropical climate with high temperatures and humidity, along with monsoon rains.



### Culture and Economy

- **Malik Mulla Shrine:** The island is home to a small shrine to Malik Mulla, an Arab saint, which is a pilgrimage site for people from other islands.
- **Population & Livelihood:** Home to a small population (around 270-300 people), its economy relies on fishing and coconut cultivation.
- **Marine Conservation Efforts:** The island has seen efforts to protect marine life, such as the declaration of a temporary "floating reserve" in 2014 to protect spawning groupers.



## Practice Questions:

### 1. Consider the following statements about Bitra Island:

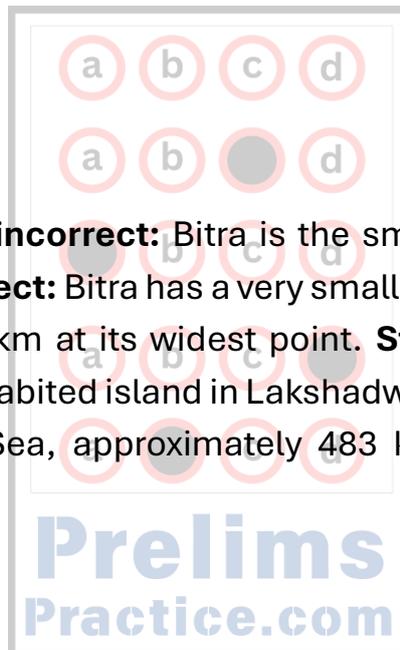
- I. It is the largest inhabited island in Lakshadweep
- II. It is known for its vast land area
- III. It is the smallest inhabited island in the archipelago
- IV. It is located near the coast of mainland India.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) I and II only
- b) III only
- c) IV only
- d) I, II, and IV only

**Answer: b**

**Explanation:** **Statement I is incorrect:** Bitra is the smallest inhabited island, not the largest. **Statement II is incorrect:** Bitra has a very small land area, with a length of about 0.57 km and a width of 0.28 km at its widest point. **Statement III is correct:** Bitra is recognized as the smallest inhabited island in Lakshadweep. **Statement IV is incorrect:** It is located in the Arabian Sea, approximately 483 km from Kochi, a considerable distance from mainland India.

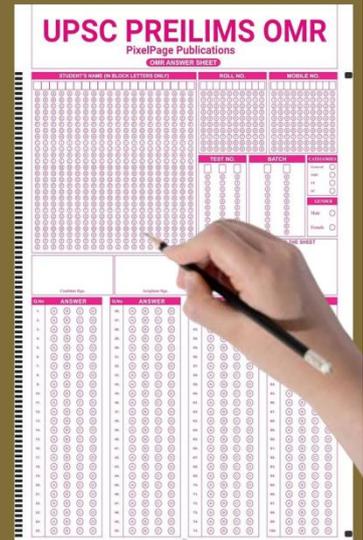


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a	●	c	d

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