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Renaming has been a major instrument of the BJP's claims of seeking to end remnants of "slavery" and decolonising the country.

Written by **Vikas Pathak**

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1



Port Blair, the capital city of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. (Express Archive)

THE CENTRE on Friday renamed Port Blair, the capital of Andaman and Nicobar Islands, as Sri Vijaya Puram. Making the announcement, Union Home Minister Amit Shah said the decision was taken as part of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision to "rid the country of all symbols of slavery".

Andaman and Nicobar Islands had an "unparalleled place" in India's freedom struggle, Shah said.

He recalled that V D Savarkar had spent years in the Cellular Jail in the Andamans, and that Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose had hoisted the Tricolour on the island.

"Inspired by the resolve of Prime Minister Shri @narendramodi ji to rid the country of all symbols of slavery, today the Home Ministry has decided to rename Port Blair as 'Sri Vijaya Puram'. The name 'Sri Vijaya Puram' reflects our struggle for freedom and the contribution of Andaman and Nicobar in it," Shah said in a post on X.

"This island has a unique place in our country's independence and history. This island, which played the role of a naval base in the Chola Empire, is today ready to accelerate the country's security and development. This island is the place where the Tricolour was first hoisted by Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and where Veer

Savarkar and other freedom fighters fought for the Independence of Maa Bharati in the Cellular Jail.”

Port Blair was named after Archibald Blair, a British naval surveyor and lieutenant in the Bombay Marine, who was the first officer to carry out a thorough survey of the Andaman Islands in the late 1770s.

Srivijaya was the ancient name of an empire that had its base in Sumatra, with influence across South East Asia. It was also instrumental in the expansion of Buddhism. The empire was supposed to have declined around the 11 century AD after a series of naval raids by the Cholas on its ports.

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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.

Renaming has been a major instrument of the BJP's claims to seek to end remnants of “slavery” and decolonising the country. There are several examples of such attempts by the Modi government and BJP-led state governments.

As the BJP considers medieval India as times of “slavery”, an early decision of the Modi government was to rename Aurangzeb Road in New Delhi as A P J Abdul Kalam Road – a message that former President Kalam, seen by it as a “nationalist Muslim” involved in India's nuclear programme, was a better symbol than Mughal emperor Aurangzeb, whom many consider as bigoted.

In [Uttar Pradesh](#), Allahabad was renamed as Prayagraj in 2018. While there were competing claims whether the original name referred to Ilahi or Ila, the latter being a Sanskrit name, the new name recalls the ancient name Prayag.



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Similarly, Race Course Road, where the official residence of the Prime Minister is situated, was renamed Lok Kalyan Marg.

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