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# NGT Upholds Environmental Clearance for Great Nicobar Mega Project

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The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has dismissed petitions challenging the environmental clearance granted to the Great Nicobar mega infrastructure project, stating it found **“no good ground to interfere”** as **“adequate safeguards”** were included in the clearance conditions. The decision came from a six-member special bench led by Justice Prakash Shrivastava.

## About the Project

The project, valued around ₹80,000-₹90,000 crore, is planned on Great Nicobar Island, spanning about 166 sq km of land.

It includes:

Transshipment port

Integrated township

Dual-use (civil & military) airport

450-MVA gas & solar power plant

## NGT's Key Reasoning

The NGT bench said the environmental clearance (EC) already provided had adequate mitigation conditions for ecological impacts.

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It noted the strategic importance of the project in national interest, especially given the island's location near the Malacca Strait — a key global shipping route.

The Tribunal observed that previously constituted expert committees had examined concerns raised and found no violations of crucial norms like the Island Coastal Regulation Zone (ICRZ).

### **Environmental and Ecological Context**

Great Nicobar Island is part of the Sundaland biodiversity hotspot, one of the world's richest areas for endemic flora and fauna.

The mega project requires diversion of over 130 sq km of forest land and may entail felling nearly one million trees, raising concerns about biodiversity loss.

### **Impact on Indigenous Communities**

The island is home to tribal groups such as the Nicobarese and the Shompen, classified among Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) in India.

Critics have warned the project could disrupt traditional lifestyles, cultural practices and access to forest resources.

### **Legal and Policy Framework**

Environmental clearance is governed by India's Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process, which assesses ecological, social and economic impacts before approving major projects.

The Island Coastal Regulation Zone (ICRZ), 2019 protects sensitive coastal ecosystems; any violation can be legally challenged if identified.

The Great Nicobar case reflects ongoing debates over balancing development needs with environmental protection and tribal rights — a recurring theme in environmental governance in India.