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# The Great Nicobar project and a Ministry in knots

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In an important submission made before the National Green Tribunal (NGT) on October 30, 2025, the Union Environment Ministry admitted that the Great Nicobar mega infrastructure project will have a significant impact on this biodiversity and forest-rich island located at the extreme south of the Andaman and Nicobar chain.

The project that envisages an investment of ₹92,000 crore (₹72,000 crore in 2021) includes a transshipment port, an airport, a power plant and a greenfield tourism project and township.

## About Great Nicobar Mega Infrastructure Project

The Great Nicobar mega infrastructure project, officially the "Holistic Development of Great Nicobar Island," is a large-scale initiative to develop the island into a major economic and strategic hub. Key components include an international transshipment port, a greenfield international airport, a township, and a power plant. The project, driven by NITI Aayog, is designed to boost India's maritime capabilities near the Malacca Strait, reduce reliance on foreign ports, and enhance national security, while also presenting significant environmental and tribal rights concerns.

### Project components

**International container transshipment Terminal:** Aimed at increasing India's participation in the global maritime economy and reducing dependence on ports like Singapore and Colombo.

**Greenfield International Airport:** Will be used for both civilian and defence purposes.

**Greenfield City and Township:** A new city to house project workers and tap into tourism potential.

**Gas and Solar Power Plant:** A 450 MVA power plant to support the new infrastructure.

**Other components:** Plans also include a shipbuilding and ship-breaking yard and a port in Campbell Bay.

### Significance

**Economic:** To establish India as a regional maritime hub, reduce reliance on foreign transshipment ports, and promote port-led economic development.

**Strategic:** To build military deterrence in a strategically vital location near the Malacca Strait, a key shipping lane. The airport and port can be dual-purpose for military use.

**Implementation:** The project is being implemented by the Andaman and Nicobar Islands Integrated Development Corporation (ANIIDCO) with an estimated cost of around ₹75,000-₹81,000 crore.

### Challenges and concerns

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**Environmental:** The project involves the clearing of a large number of trees in a rainforest, and Great Nicobar is a legally protected biosphere zone.

**Tribal Rights:** It poses a risk of displacement and cultural disruption to the **indigenous Shompen and Nicobarese tribes**.

**Technical and Legal:** The island is in a high-risk seismic zone, prone to earthquakes and tsunamis. Concerns have been raised about the transparency of environmental impact assessments and coastal zone reclassification processes.

Galathea Bay has corals, megapode nests and the beach is used for nesting by leatherback turtles and in fact that the Ministry was well aware of this reality, confirms the continued importance of this location. The Andaman and Nicobar Islands Forest Department's own data shows in fact that the beach at Galathea Bay saw over 600 leatherback nestings in the nesting season of 2024 — one of the highest ever recorded in Great Nicobar.