

Key events

■ In the **2010s**, the Union Government began exploring Great Nicobar's strategic and developmental potential, including tourism, power generation and defence

■ In **May 2019**, a NITI Aayog report identified five islands of the Andaman & Nicobar archipelago with high potential for tourism, organic farming, seafood exports, deep-sea mining and other key economic sectors

■ In **2021**, the Government of India approved the Great Nicobar Island Development Project

■ On **November 11, 2022**, the Ministry of Environment and Forests & Climate Change granted environment clearance for the project

■ On **March 12, 2025**, Tribal Affairs Minister Jual Oram assured the Rajya Sabha that "Not even a single tribal is being displaced and there is no impact on the environment."

■ On **February 16, 2026**, the NGT cleared the GNIDP, considering its 'strategic importance' and found no 'good reason to interfere' as 'adequate safeguards' have been provided

■ On **March 13, 2026**, the draft 'Comprehensive Tribal Welfare Plan' was circulated for consultation, detailing tribal relocation

■ On **March 30**, the Centre told the Calcutta HC Bench it needed a fortnight to demonstrate tribal consent for the project

From gaps to wilful neglect

Conceived by the NITI Aayog, the Great Nicobar Island Development Project (GNIDP) is being executed by the Andaman and Nicobar Islands Integrated Development Corporation Ltd

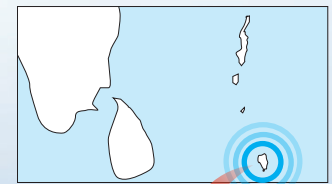
- Currently, around 75% of India's trans-shipped cargo is handled at foreign ports. The proposed International Container Transshipment Port is expected to boost forex savings, FDI, port activity, logistics infrastructure, employment and revenue
- Greater Nicobar is strategically vital because it is located near important sea lanes and GNIDP will help boost India's defence preparedness and presence in the Indo-Pacific

Main components of GNIDP

- 1 An International Container Transshipment Port at Galathea Bay
- 2 A greenfield dual-use airport with a 3,300-metre runway
- 3 Two new planned coastal townships
- 4 A 450-MVA hybrid gas-solar power plant

Environmental risks

- Approximately **130 sq km** of pristine rainforest including over a million trees, is set to be cleared for the GNIDP, raising alarm among environmentalists
- Extensive infrastructure development over the next two decades could cause irreversible damage to sensitive ecosystems and threaten endangered species



SOURCE: NITI AAYOG REPORT, PIB, A14, MEDIA REPORTS

