Great Nicobar Project: An Ecological Disaster

Victor Growth

1. Background

- ₹72,000 crore mega-infrastructure project in **Great Nicobar Island**.
- Poses danger to **indigenous tribes, fragile ecosystem, and disaster-prone area**.
- Criticised as **half-baked & ill-conceived policymaking**.

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2. Indigenous Tribes Affected

- **Nicobarese Tribe** & **Shompen Tribe (PVTG)**.
- Nicobarese villages fall in project's proposed land.
    - Displaced earlier in 2004 tsunami; now permanently uprooted.
- Shompen reserve to be destroyed → threatens **last pristine ecosystems**.
- Will cause **large-scale influx of outsiders**, disrupting tribal survival.

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3. Legal & Constitutional Concerns

- **Tribal rights sidelined** in violation of:
    - Forest Rights Act (2006) → gives Shompen rights to protect forests.
    - Article 338-A (Constitution) → safeguard for Scheduled Tribes.
- **Social Impact Assessment (SIA)** bypassed.
- HPC (High-Powered Committee) ignored tribal voices → truth withheld.

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4. Ecological & Environmental Impact

- Cutting down **8.5 lakh trees** (15% of island's forests).
- Risk to endangered species:
    - **Nicobar long-tailed macaque**.

    - **Sea turtle nesting sites**.
    - Coral reefs, biodiversity hotspots.
- Project in **seismic & tsunami-prone zone** → unsafe.

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5. Flaws in Environmental Assessment

- Assessments done **off-season** for turtle nesting.
- **Drones used** → limited scope, ignored critical data.
- Independent experts call methodology **flawed & misleading**.

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6. Conclusion / Criticism

- Seen as **environmental & humanitarian catastrophe**.
- Ignores tribal rights, biodiversity, disaster risks.
- Driven by **investment & profit, not sustainability**.
- Urgent need for **collective resistance** to protect tribes and ecosystems.

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