

2. Great Nicobar Island Project

Why in News?

- Recently, The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has issued a stay on the Great Nicobar Island project worth ₹72,000 crore and created a committee to review the environmental clearance granted by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.

Highlights

- The Great Nicobar Island (GNI) Project is a mega project to be implemented at the southern end of the Andaman and Nicobar islands.
- The project includes an international container transshipment terminal, a greenfield international airport, township development, and a 450 MVA gas and solar based power plant over an extent of 16,610 hectares in the island.
- As per the NITI Aayog report, the proposed port will allow Great Nicobar to participate in the regional and global maritime economy by becoming a major player in cargo transshipment.
- It is equidistant from Colombo to the southwest and Port Klang (Malaysia) and Singapore to the southeast, and positioned close to the East-West international shipping corridor, through which a very large part of the world's shipping trade passes.
- The proposal to develop Great Nicobar was first floated in the 1970s, and its importance for national security and consolidation of the Indian Ocean Region has been repeatedly underlined.
- Increasing Chinese assertion in the Indian Ocean has added great urgency to this imperative in recent years.
- The project has faced several criticisms citing concerns regarding its adverse impact on the rich biodiversity of the area and damage to the habitats of endangered species.
- The project area is part of Coastal Regulation Zones-IA and IB, and the Galathea bay which is a nesting ground for birds.
- Also, turtle nesting sites, dolphins and other species will be harmed by dredging.