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THE GREAT NICOBAR: “India's Role Model for a Peace Economy”

A Strategic Case for Policy Makers on Turning Maritime Geography into National Strength.

A REPORT BY

ECONOMIC COUNCIL OF INDIA

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AUTHOR'S DESK

Nations are remembered less for the wars they avoided and more for the prosperity they built while avoiding them. Great Nicobar gives India the chance to prove that trade, security and sustainability can grow from the same root.

No economy has ever prospered behind an undefended coastline. **Great Nicobar** must be both shield and engine. Peace is not the absence of strategy; **it is strategy that has already won.**

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Being a hard-core practitioner of ***'Peace Economy'***, it's my personal experiences and exposures says that, **"If there is a Peace, there is a flow of Positive Economy".**

The positive economy means a seamless flow of investments for the constructive, cumulative & regenerative co-development besides maintaining an '***Economic Discipline & Economic Integrity'.***

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**Disclaimer: All views and thoughts are independent and are not intended to harm anyone's sentiments or feelings directly or indirectly.*

FOREWORD

This report makes one central argument. **Great Nicobar** should not be planned as a port, an airport or a township. It should be planned as India's first working demonstration of a **'Peace Economy'**: a place where trade earns the country money, security keeps that trade safe, and both together keep the region calm.

That argument matters because the old way of measuring a nation's strength no longer holds up on its own. But a country's real weight in the world is now measured just as much by the ships that call at its ports, the investment it attracts, the supply chains that trust it, and the communities that share in its growth. India, sitting at the centre of the Indian Ocean, has more to gain from this shift than almost any other nation.

Great Nicobar sits exactly where this opportunity is sharpest: at the western door to the Malacca Strait, on one of the busiest sea lanes on earth. Handled well, it becomes a logistics hub, a marine research centre, a tourism destination, and a security asset, all at once, and all reinforcing one another rather than competing for the same rupee.

What follows is not a wish list. It is a working framework, tested against the island's geography, India's strategic needs, and the realities of Indo-Pacific competition, and offered to the people who will have to make the decisions: ministers, planners, defence officials, and the institutions that will build this island's next hundred years.

As India approaches the centenary of its independence in 2047, Great Nicobar can become more than just a strategic island. It can become the proof that ***peace, prosperity and security*** are not three separate files on three separate desks, but one policy, built on one island, for one nation.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Nicobar Islands are a pristine archipelago in the eastern Indian Ocean, serving as a maritime boundary between the Bay of Bengal and the Andaman Sea. Comprising 22 islands (12 inhabited), this Indian district is part of the Andaman and Nicobar Union Territory and is globally renowned for its untouched biodiversity, dense tropical rainforests, and Indigenous tribes.

The Nicobar Islands are situated about 150 km northwest of Sumatra, Indonesia, and separated from the Andaman Islands by the 10-degree channel, spanning over 900 sq. km, approximately is the largest island in the group. The **Car Nicobar** is the northernmost and administrative headquarters, although the overall administration for the Union Territory (UT), Govt. of India operates out of ***Sri Vijaya Puram*** (formerly Port Blair).

The access to The Nicobar Islands is strictly controlled and Indian citizens must obtain approval from the Deputy Commissioner in Sri Vijaya Puram, while non-Indian citizens require special Restricted Area Permits (RAP) to visit, unlike the Andaman Islands.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

India's next phase of growth will be decided as much at sea as on land. Nearly all of the country's trade by volume, and the great majority of it by value, moves across the Indian Ocean. A nation that wants to lead in this century has to be able to move goods, protect the routes those goods travel on, and turn both into jobs and investment at home. Great Nicobar offers India a rare chance to do all three from a single piece of ground.

This report calls that combination a **Peace Economy**: an approach in which secure trade, sustainable growth and credible defence are treated as one connected system rather than three competing budgets. It is not a new ministry or a new slogan. It is a way of planning that recognises a simple fact borne out across history: prosperity that is shared and protected tends to hold. In contrast, prosperity that is unequal or undefended tends to break down.

The Great Nicobar sits close to the western approaches of the Malacca Strait, within reach of one of the busiest shipping corridors on the planet. That single geographic fact allows India to build a transhipment and logistics hub that keeps Indian cargo out of foreign ports, strengthens supply chains, and attracts investment that would otherwise go to Singapore, Colombo, or Klang.

Trade is the engine, but it is not the whole machine. Tourism, scientific research, marine industry and a trained local workforce turn a port into an economy. Environmental protection is not a brake on this growth; it is the asset that makes eco-tourism, fisheries and long-term investor confidence possible in the first place. And security, properly understood, is not separate from any of this. It is what allows trade, tourism and research to happen without fear of disruption.

The recommendation of this report is straightforward. The Government of India should name Great Nicobar as the country's flagship ***'Peace Economy Project'***, establish a single authority to run it across ministries, and measure its success not only by cargo tonnage but also by jobs created, communities strengthened, ecosystems protected, and regional trust earned.

INDIA’S LONG-DISTANCE VISION

The Great Nicobar is a great initiative and long-distance vision 2047 of the Govt. of India, a one-of-its-kind initiative proposed, to be shaped and developed after independent India.

By the time India marks one hundred years of independence, Great Nicobar should be recognisable as:

- ✓India's premier maritime gateway, linking South Asia to Southeast Asia and the wider Indo-Pacific.
- ✓The leading transhipment and smart logistics hub in the eastern Indian Ocean, running on automation and resilient digital systems.
- ✓A genuine centre of the Blue Economy, home to marine biotechnology, sustainable fisheries, ocean science and renewable marine power.
- ✓A world-class destination for eco-tourism and knowledge tourism, known for careful conservation and serious research.
- ✓A climate-resilient island economy, built on clean power, circular resource use and thoughtful urban planning.
- ✓A regional base for humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, adding to India's standing across the Indo-Pacific.
- ✓A model of inclusive growth, where indigenous heritage and local livelihoods advance alongside the wider economy.
- ✓India's first fully working Peace Economy, proof that trade, sustainability, technology and security can be built as one system rather than three.

The central claim of this report is simple. Great Nicobar should not just become India's most strategically located island. It should become the clearest example anywhere in the world of maritime geography turned into lasting peace, prosperity and stability.

I. WHY THE WORLD MEASURES POWER DIFFERENTLY NOW

For most of modern history, a nation's strength was judged by the size of its army and the reach of its borders. That measure has not disappeared, but it is no longer sufficient. In a world run on global supply chains, digital networks and maritime trade, the countries that matter most are increasingly the ones that can keep goods, capital and ideas moving safely through their territory.

This is not a soft or sentimental idea. It is a hard calculation that governments across Asia have already made. Peace, in this reading, is not simply the absence of war. It is the presence of stable institutions, working infrastructure, secure trade routes and economic growth that reaches ordinary people. When those things are in place, conflict becomes expensive, and cooperation becomes the rational choice for everyone involved.

This report calls that combination the **Peace Economy**: a model in which prosperity and security are treated as two ends of the same rope rather than two separate departments pulling in different directions. For India, the case is stronger than for most nations, because the Indian Ocean carries close to 95 per cent of the country's trade by volume and roughly 70 per cent by value. Maritime commerce is not a side issue for India. It is close to the whole story.

The Great Nicobar is the point at which this story can be written most clearly. It gives India the chance to show, on one island, that ports, logistics, conservation and defence can be planned together rather than argued over separately, and that the result is stronger than any of the parts on their own.

What the Peace Economy Actually Means

Strip away the label, and the logic is old and well-tested. Jobs reduce the appeal of instability. Trade gives neighbouring states a reason to stay on good terms. Strong institutions attract investment, and investment funds growth, including a country's own defence capacity. None of this replaces a strong military. It simply gives that military something worth defending and the fiscal base to keep improving.

This is already visible across the Indo-Pacific. States that have invested in ports, industrial corridors and digital infrastructure have gained influence that has little to do with the size of their navies. Economic engagement has become one of the sharpest tools of diplomacy available to any government, and secure supply chains have become as central to national security as any weapons platform.

India has the geography and the population to lead this shift. What it has lacked, in places, is the follow-through: the institutional coordination and sustained investment needed to turn geographic advantage into economic reality. Great Nicobar is where that gap can finally be closed.

KEY FINDINGS

- **The Peace Economy** gives India a working framework that connects regenerative economic growth and national security rather than treating them as rivals for the same budget.
- Sustainable prosperity is now a core part of national power, not a soft add-on to it. India's maritime geography is a genuine, underused strategic asset.
- The Great Nicobar can become India's first fully integrated proof of the ***'Peace Economy model.'***

II. WHY GREAT NICOBAR MATTERS

The Great Nicobar occupies one of the most valuable stretches of coastline India controls. It looks out over the western approaches to the Strait of Malacca, a corridor that carries a large share of the world's seaborne cargo every year. That single geographic fact places India directly inside the flow of global trade, regional security and maritime diplomacy, whether or not the island is ever developed.

For decades, India's island territories have been treated mainly as defence outposts. That framing is not wrong, but it is incomplete. Viewed only through a security lens, these islands remain underused. Viewed through the Peace Economy lens, Great Nicobar can be a logistics hub, a tourism destination, a research base and a defence asset at the same time, each function strengthening the others rather than competing with them.

Efficient ports pull in trade. Trade pulls in investment. Investment builds industry, logistics and tourism. That growth creates jobs, strengthens local communities and steadies the wider region. Stability, in turn, encourages even more trade and cooperation. It is a virtuous circle, and Great Nicobar is positioned to start it. Great Nicobar will act as an international centre for ***'Commerce Good'***.

KEY FINDINGS

- Great Nicobar's real strategic value is as the geographic anchor of India's Peace Economy, not simply as a defence post.
- Geography only becomes national value once it is converted into working infrastructure.
- Maritime connectivity builds prosperity, investment and regional stability at the same time.
- Great Nicobar can serve as India's flagship demonstration of development, sustainability and security pursued together.

III. MARITIME TRADE AND THE BLUE ECONOMY: THE REAL ENGINE

'Trade' has built more lasting ***'Peace'*** across history than treaties have. Civilisations that mastered maritime commerce built wealth and influence without needing to fight for every gain. That pattern holds today: more than 90% of global merchandise by volume still moves by sea, making the security and efficiency of shipping lanes a matter of both economic and strategic importance.

For India, maritime trade is not simply a transport sector. It is a strategic tool that can generate jobs, draw investment, deepen regional partnerships and build resilience against shocks. Great Nicobar's location near one of the world's busiest corridors gives India the chance to turn that geography into a long-term economic ecosystem rather than a single infrastructure project.

Ending India's Dependence on Foreign Transhipment

India remains one of the fastest-growing trading economies on earth, yet a large share of its container cargo is still transhipped through ports outside the country. Every container that passes through Colombo or Singapore instead of an Indian port adds cost, adds time, and sends economic value abroad that should have stayed at home.

The proposed International Container Transhipment Terminal at Great Nicobar is the direct answer to that problem. Its position allows large vessels to call with minimal deviation from existing shipping routes, thereby lowering costs for shipping lines and making the terminal commercially attractive from day one. A modern transhipment hub of this kind attracts logistics firms, freight forwarders, insurers, warehousing operators and technology companies, all of whom bring jobs and investment.

Building Supply Chains That Do Not Break

The pandemic, along with several regional conflicts since then, exposed how fragile global logistics networks can be when too much capacity is concentrated in too few places. Economic security is now, in practical terms, a form of national security. Great Nicobar gives India a way to diversify its logistics network rather than depend so heavily on a small number of chokepoints and foreign hubs.

Expanded port capacity, multimodal transport links, digital customs processing and integrated logistics infrastructure all reduce operational risk. Businesses invest where they trust that goods will keep moving even when something goes wrong elsewhere in the world. That trust, once earned, becomes a durable economic asset.

The Blue Economy: Growth the Ocean Has Not Yet Given

Shipping is only one part of what the ocean can offer. Fisheries, aquaculture, marine biotechnology, offshore renewable power, marine research and coastal tourism together make up what is usually called the Blue Economy, and Great Nicobar has the raw material to lead in most of these fields at once.

Its marine biodiversity and coastal resources support sustainable fisheries, serious oceanographic research and environmentally responsible aquaculture. A research presence on the island, focused on marine science, climate adaptation, and ocean technology, would generate steady economic activity while positioning India as a genuine regional leader in this space, not just a participant.

KEY FINDINGS

- Maritime trade is the clearest engine of jobs, investment and industrial growth available to Great Nicobar.
- Great Nicobar has the geography needed to become India's leading international transhipment hub.
- Supply chain resilience reduces strategic vulnerability as much as it improves economic performance.
- The Blue Economy offers a genuine path to diversified, sustainable growth.
- Smart logistics and digital systems will decide competitiveness as much as physical infrastructure does.
- Regional economic cooperation built through trade strengthens both commerce and long term stability.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

✓Build the International Container Transhipment Terminal as the anchor of a wider maritime economic ecosystem, not a stand-alone facility.

✓Establish a globally competitive logistics and maritime services hub backed by digital infrastructure and multimodal links.

✓Direct investment toward Blue Economy sectors: marine biotechnology, sustainable fisheries, ocean renewable power and marine research.

✓Use public-private partnerships to accelerate logistics, technology, and industrial development.

✓Position Great Nicobar as India's flagship smart port, built on automation, blockchain trade facilitation and strong cyber defences.

✓Deepen maritime cooperation with ASEAN, BIMSTEC and Indian Ocean partners through trade, research and logistics ties.

✓Tie every economic initiative back to the single goal of building a resilient ***Peace Economy***.

IV. TOURISM, HUMAN CAPITAL AND INNOVATION: GROWTH BEYOND THE PORT

A Peace Economy cannot run on infrastructure alone. Ports move cargo, but it is people who turn that movement into lasting prosperity. Employment, education, entrepreneurship and a sense of ownership among local communities decide whether an investment becomes a national success story or an isolated construction project that never quite pays off.

History backs this up. Regions that paired commerce with real investment in their people became centres of stability and innovation. Regions that built infrastructure without improving local livelihoods usually ended up with resentment rather than resilience. Great Nicobar has the chance to get this right from the start.

Tourism as a Strategic Sector, Not a Side-line

Tourism is often treated as a minor contributor to foreign exchange. Its real value runs deeper. Well-managed tourism builds cultural understanding, strengthens local economies, and gives India's international image a boost that no amount of official messaging can match on its own.

Great Nicobar's beaches, rainforests, coral reefs and marine life set it apart from ordinary coastal destinations. Rather than chasing high-volume mass tourism, the island should pursue a premium, conservation-led model built around eco-tourism, marine tourism, wellness retreats, and genuine scientific interest. This kind of tourism earns more per visitor while protecting the very environment that makes it valuable in the first place.

A Home for Serious Research

One of the least explored opportunities on the island is its potential as a centre for marine biology, oceanography, climate science and disaster management research. An International Centre for Island and Ocean Studies could draw universities and research institutions from across the region, generating steady, year-round economic activity that is independent of tourist seasons.

Field courses, conferences and training programmes built around this research base would give India intellectual leadership in tropical island science, something few countries currently claim, and Great Nicobar is well placed to fill that gap.

Skills, Enterprise and a Stake in the Outcome

None of this works without a trained local workforce. Maritime academies, hospitality institutes and technical training centres should be established early, not added as an afterthought once construction is complete. Local people need real employment pathways into logistics, tourism, fisheries, environmental management and research, not just construction jobs that end when the building does.

Small enterprise deserves equal attention. Local entrepreneurship in tourism, handicrafts, food processing and digital services should be supported through financing, training and market access, so that growth on the island is shared rather than imported wholesale from outside contractors and firms.

KEY FINDINGS

- Tourism can generate employment while strengthening conservation and India's cultural standing abroad.
- Eco-tourism offers stronger long term returns than mass tourism, and protects the asset it depends on.
- Research and education tourism can make Great Nicobar an international knowledge centre in its own right.
- Local skills development is essential if communities are to actually benefit from this growth.
- Innovation and small enterprise diversify the economy and reduce dependence on any single sector.
- Inclusive growth builds the social stability that any large infrastructure project ultimately depends on.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

- ✓ Develop Great Nicobar as a premium eco-tourism destination built on conservation from day one.
- ✓ Establish an International Centre for Island and Ocean Studies for research, education and global collaboration.
- ✓ Build out wellness, marine, cultural and educational tourism as distinct sectors, not variations of the same offer.
- ✓ Launch skill development programmes matched to logistics, tourism, maritime services and emerging technologies.
- ✓ Support innovation in smart ports, Blue Economy technology and digital enterprise.
- ✓ Back community-based tourism and local business through financing, training and market access.
- ✓ Fold healthcare, education, housing and digital access into every phase of development, not just the final one.

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V. SECURITY AS THE GUARDIAN OF PROSPERITY

Peace and prosperity have never existed apart from security. Every period of sustained economic growth in history has depended on secure trade routes and credible protection against threats to commerce. That has not changed. Investment, trade and innovation only flourish where people trust that the environment around them is stable.

The Peace Economy does not reduce the importance of military strength. It places that strength inside a wider strategic picture, where defence exists to protect prosperity rather than stand apart from it. Great Nicobar should be understood in exactly this way: not as the militarisation of an island, but as the construction of a secure economic zone where trade, tourism and investment can operate with confidence.

Protecting the Sea Lanes that Carry India's Economy

India's economic future is tied directly to the security of the Indian Ocean. Any serious disruption to the sea lanes carrying the country's trade would immediately hit manufacturing, exports and employment. Great Nicobar's location gives India a genuine opportunity to strengthen maritime awareness, improve search-and-rescue capabilities, and support humanitarian operations across the region.

The Indian Navy and the Indian Coast Guard already play an indispensable role here. Their contribution goes beyond conventional defence: they protect the very economic systems on which national prosperity is built. Secure sea lanes lower insurance costs, raise investor confidence and encourage more shipping to use Indian infrastructure rather than routing around it.

Inclusive Infrastructure Built to Survive a Bad Day

Ports, energy systems and digital networks are strategic assets precisely because they need to keep working during a crisis, not just during ordinary operations. Great Nicobar should be designed from the outset with climate resilience, backup communication systems, secure energy supply and strong cyber protection built into every major component, rather than retrofitted after the fact.

Investors consistently favour locations where essential services continue to run during disruptions. Infrastructure that can absorb a cyclone, a cyberattack or a regional crisis without collapsing is not a cost centre. It is one of the strongest signals a government can send to the people deciding where to put their money.

Awareness, Cyber Defence and Humanitarian Reach

Situational awareness across the maritime domain, knowing what ships, hazards and threats are actually present, allows the government to respond quickly without disrupting commercial activity. Integrated radar networks, satellite surveillance and secure digital systems at Great Nicobar can extend India's maritime domain awareness across genuinely important stretch of ocean.

As ports and logistics systems become more digital, they also become more exposed. Cyber resilience needs to be treated as a core part of the island's development, not a separate IT concern bolted on afterwards. And because the Andaman and Nicobar Islands sit in an active disaster zone, the same infrastructure built for trade and security also gives India far stronger humanitarian assistance and disaster relief capability across the eastern Indian Ocean, which in turn builds regional goodwill that diplomacy alone could not achieve.

KEY FINDINGS

- Maritime security protects the commercial systems that national prosperity actually depends on.
- Strategic infrastructure strengthens both economic competitiveness and national resilience at once.
- Maritime domain awareness builds investor confidence as much as it builds security.
- Cyber security is now essential to protecting digital trade and smart maritime infrastructure.
- Humanitarian and disaster relief capability builds regional trust and international standing.
- Broad based national resilience is a more durable form of deterrence than military strength alone.
- Prosperity and security reinforce each other. This relationship is the core of India's Peace Economy.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

- ✓ Build security planning into every phase of the Great Nicobar Project, not as a separate track.
- ✓ Expand maritime domain awareness through advanced surveillance, satellite links and inter-agency data sharing.
- ✓ Develop a serious cybersecurity architecture for all digital systems supporting ports, logistics and trade.
- ✓ Improve coordination between the Navy, Coast Guard, civil administration and commercial operators to protect critical infrastructure.
- ✓ Establish Great Nicobar as a regional hub for humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.
- ✓ Back indigenous technology in cybersecurity, digital logistics and maritime surveillance to strengthen strategic autonomy.
- ✓ Keep defence investment tied to the wider goal of protecting trade, tourism and sustainable growth.

VI. PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT THAT MAKES THIS POSSIBLE

Every part of this plan depends on a simple fact: infrastructure and trade generate lasting prosperity only when the ecosystems around them remain healthy. Development that damages the environment it sits on eventually weakens the economy it was meant to build, raises disaster risk and drives away the very investors it was trying to attract.

Great Nicobar makes this point more clearly than most places could. The island is home to tropical rainforests, coral reef systems, mangroves, and species found nowhere else on Earth. These are not simply things worth protecting for their own sake. They are economic capital that supports tourism, fisheries, research, and the island's long-term resilience to climate change.

Building for the Climate That Is Actually Coming

Island territories face climate risks earlier and more sharply than most of the mainland. Rising seas, cyclones and shifting ocean conditions threaten infrastructure and coastal communities across the Indo-Pacific. Planning that ignores this reality tends to look cheap on paper and expensive a decade later.

Great Nicobar should become India's first genuinely climate-resilient maritime city, built with renewable power, efficient buildings, smart water management, and low-carbon transport from the start, rather than added later at greater cost.

Treating Biodiversity as an Asset, Not an Obstacle

Healthy forests and reefs are not a regulatory hurdle standing between a plan and a port. They are what make eco-tourism, sustainable fisheries, and coastal protection possible at all. Countries that have protected their natural assets have generally ended up with stronger tourism sectors and higher-quality investment than those that chose short-term extraction instead.

Scientific monitoring, careful land-use planning, and ongoing ecological restoration should run alongside construction, not follow it once the damage is already done.

Environmental Clearance

The Nicobar Islands recently secured an environment clearance (EC) from *the National Green Tribunal (NGT)*, which mandates that all authorities ensure strict compliance with 42 specific EC conditions. Despite the proposed clearing of 130 sq. km. of forest land, threats to a globally unique biodiversity hotspot, and the displacement of the island's indigenous communities, the NGT considered the project to be of ***'strategic and national importance'***, given that it is a major *international transhipment, economic, and military hub*.

Indigenous Communities as Genuine Partners

The Nicobar Islands is a home of several 'Special Tribes' or 'Special Communities', primarily to the ***'Nicobarese'*** and the ***'Shompen'***. Great Nicobar is home to indigenous communities whose knowledge of the land and sea represents a real, practical asset for conservation and disaster preparedness, not just a cultural footnote. Their constitutional protections and rights need to guide every phase of this project, with genuine consultation rather than formal notice after decisions have already been made.

Regenerative Co-development of Special Communities

The Regenerative Co-development that strengthens these communities rather than displacing them builds the kind of legitimacy that no amount of public relations can substitute for. It also tends to be the difference between a project that lasts and one that generates decades of legal and social friction.

KEY FINDINGS

- Ecological resilience strengthens both economic resilience and national security over the long run.
- Sustainable infrastructure improves investor confidence while lowering climate related risk.
- Biodiversity is productive economic capital, supporting tourism, fisheries, research and coastal protection.
- Indigenous communities should be treated as active partners, with real participation and legal protection.
- Climate resilient infrastructure reduces long term economic vulnerability.
- Circular economy practices improve efficiency while supporting competitiveness.
- Environmental leadership strengthens India's international credibility as a responsible Indo Pacific power.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

✓ Adopt a single sustainable development framework that integrates environmental protection with economic planning throughout the project.

✓ Build Great Nicobar as India's first climate-resilient, environmentally sustainable maritime economic zone.

✓ Strengthen biodiversity conservation through ongoing scientific monitoring and habitat restoration.

✓ Guarantee meaningful participation of indigenous communities in planning, implementation and benefit sharing.

✓ Build renewable energy and circular economy principles into every stage of infrastructure development.

✓ Establish a permanent Centre for Island Sustainability and Climate Resilience for research and policy work.

✓ Position Great Nicobar as a global demonstration of sustainable maritime development.

VII. INTERNATIONAL PILGRIMAGE CENTRE

India is the land of all faiths and religions with a proven historical background as one of the oldest civilisations in the world, and an abundant repository of ancient knowledge and wisdom, which could be utilised by showcasing and developing an ***'International Pilgrimage Centre'*** for global communities with our proverb of '*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*' which means ***'World is One Family'!***

The Nicobar Islands under ***'The Great Nicobar Project'*** would be an opportunity for Govt. of India to deliver a strong message to the world economies by positioning it as a global centre for **'Peace Economy'** to instill and practice '*Peace Led Regenerative Economic Co-developments*' by respecting and valuing sentiments of potential investors as '***Pilgrimage of Inter-faith***'.

"सर्वे भवन्तु सुखिनः सर्वे सन्तु निरामयाः सर्वे भद्राणि पश्यन्तु मा कश्चिद्दुःखभाग्भवेत्"!

PEACE ECONOMIC TOURISM

The definition of tourism has changed considerably over time, and this shift has positioned India as one of the preferred tourist destinations, drawing millions of footfalls from across the world for a diversified, multi-culture, multi-cuisine, cost-effective tourism experience, whether it's *'Medical Tourism', 'Spiritual Tourism', 'Religious Tourism', 'Naturopathy', 'Ayurveda', or 'Economic Tourism'*. Together with trade and commerce, this offers the full enjoyment of India's unique multiculturalism and lifestyle, conjointly, ***'Peacefully' and 'Economically'***.

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VIII. STRATEGIC FINDINGS AND A NATIONAL ROADMAP

Everything in this report points to one conclusion. Great Nicobar should not be treated as an infrastructure project or an isolated island development scheme. It is a national opportunity to build India's first fully integrated Peace Economy. In this trade, sustainable growth, technology, tourism, environmental care, and national security work as one system rather than five competing files.

The Peace Economy is not a slogan, nor is it a substitute for defence spending. It is a way of planning that treats prosperity and security as partners. Economic strength funds strategic autonomy. Secure infrastructure draws investment. Stable trade builds growth. Environmental protection preserves the assets on which growth depends. Taken together, these elements create a cycle that reinforces itself, both within India and across the wider Indo-Pacific. The recommendations below turn this argument into a working plan.

Strategic Findings

i. The Peace Economy should be the organising idea, not an afterthought

Ports, tourism, defence infrastructure, logistics, conservation and urban planning should not be built as separate projects that happen to sit on the same island. Every part should serve one national objective: sustainable prosperity built on strategic resilience. A shared framework of this kind improves coordination, cuts duplication and increases the long-term return on every rupee spent.

ii. Maritime trade is the engine, and it needs to be treated as one

Great Nicobar's biggest advantage is its position near one of the busiest shipping corridors on earth. Its success depends on becoming a genuinely competitive maritime logistics ecosystem, not just another commercial port. Transhipment, shipping services, logistics, digital trade, the marine industry, and research need to be planned as a single, connected system.

iii. Security exists to protect prosperity

National security remains essential, but its role here is to safeguard trade, investment, tourism and continuity of economic activity. Maritime surveillance, cyber resilience, disaster readiness, and deterrence should be planned alongside economic development, not as a separate national priority that competes with it for funding.

iv. Tourism deserves to be treated as a strategic sector

Great Nicobar can become one of the Indo-Pacific's leading ecotourism destinations. A carefully regulated, high-value model can create steady employment while protecting the environment it depends on. Scientific, wellness, marine and educational tourism should complement each other to keep activity steady across the year.

v. Environmental protection is an investment, not a cost

Healthy forests, reefs and marine ecosystems directly support tourism, fisheries, climate resilience and India's international standing. Long-term prosperity depends on protecting these assets through careful, science-led planning and honest governance.

vi. Technology will decide who stays competitive

Future competitiveness in maritime trade will depend as much on digital infrastructure as on physical infrastructure. Automation, blockchain, digital customs and integrated maritime information systems should be central to how this project is built, not features added at the end.

NATIONAL POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION 1

Name Great Nicobar as India's Flagship Peace Economy Project

The Government of India should formally designate Great Nicobar as the country's first integrated ***Peace Economy Initiative***. This designation gives strategic direction across ministries and ensures that economic development, environmental protection and national security are pursued under one shared framework rather than five separate ones.

RECOMMENDATION 2

Establish a Great Nicobar Peace Economy Authority

Given the scale of the project, a dedicated statutory authority should coordinate planning, implementation and long term governance, with representation from the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, the Ministry of Tourism, the Ministry of Finance, NITI Aayog, the Andaman and Nicobar Administration, industry, academia and scientific institutions. A single governance structure of this kind speeds up decisions and avoids the delays that come from working across disconnected departments.

RECOMMENDATION 3

Build Great Nicobar into a Global Maritime Economic Hub

Infrastructure planning needs to go well beyond the port itself, covering international transhipment, smart logistics, warehousing, ship repair, maritime finance and insurance, digital trade platforms, cruise terminals, research institutions and maritime education. This integrated ecosystem is what maximises the economic multiplier effect of the project.

RECOMMENDATION 4

Build India's First Smart Green Port

The port should be designed around automated cargo handling, blockchain supported customs, renewable energy, digital twin technology, green hydrogen readiness, low emission operational targets and integrated cyber security. This would place Great Nicobar among the next generation of sustainable ports anywhere in the world.

RECOMMENDATION 5

Treat Tourism as a Strategic Growth Sector

Tourism policy should prioritise eco tourism, scientific tourism, marine tourism, wellness tourism, adventure tourism, conference tourism and cultural tourism, with an emphasis on quality over visitor numbers, protecting both the environment and the premium economic returns that come with it.

RECOMMENDATION 6

Establish an International Centre for Peace Economy and Maritime Studies

Great Nicobar should host a globally respected institution focused on the ***Peace Economy.*** The blue economy, maritime trade, Indo-pacific studies, climate resilience, island sustainability, smart ports, maritime technology and ocean governance. This gives India intellectual leadership to match its physical infra & supports Policymaking grounded evidence rather than assumption.

RECOMMENDATION 7

Strengthen Indigenous Participation

Economic transformation should benefit local communities directly, through skill development, local entrepreneurship, community tourism, fisheries, environmental management, healthcare, digital education, housing and sustainable livelihoods. Inclusive growth is not a side benefit here. It is the condition on which the project's long term social stability depends.

RECOMMENDATION 8

Fold National Security into Economic Planning

Security agencies should actively support maritime trade protection, maritime domain awareness, cyber resilience, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, critical infrastructure protection and emergency logistics, planned together with economic development rather than around it.

RECOMMENDATION 9

Build International Partnerships

India should deepen collaboration with ASEAN, BIMSTEC, the Indian Ocean Rim Association, Quad partners, international financial institutions, maritime universities and global logistics companies. These partnerships accelerate investment, technology transfer and the kind of regional confidence that no single country can build alone.

RECOMMENDATION 10

Measure Success Through Peace Economy Indicators

Traditional infrastructure metrics are not enough on their own. Success should be tracked through employment generation, logistics efficiency, foreign investment, tourism revenue, community income, environmental quality, maritime connectivity, climate resilience, innovation, investor confidence, regional cooperation and contribution to national GDP. These indicators give a far more honest picture of whether the project is actually working.

THE PEACE ECONOMY MODEL: GREAT NICOBAR

The strategic logic of this report can be summarised in a single chain, moving from secure foundations to lasting peace:

PEACE ECONOMY

- *Secure Maritime Domain*
- *World Class Infrastructure*
- *Blue Economy Trade & Commerce*
- *Foreign Direct Investments (FDI's)*
- *Regenerative Industrial Development*
- *Employment And Enterpreneurship*
- *Global Toursim Hub*
- *International Pilgrimage Centre*
- *Regenerative Environment*
- *Regional Cooperation*
- *Strategic Inclusive Infrastructure*

HERITAGE PRESERVATION

Heritage Sensitivity: All developments, renovations, modernization, and upgradation work proposed to be carried out at Great Nicobar should strictly adhere to respect and preserve the *historical and heritage value of the islands including people, culture, and communities,* and structural integrity will remain untouched and uncompromised.

FINAL STRATEGIC OBSERVATION

Great Nicobar is more than a strategically located island waiting to be developed. It is India's chance to redefine how prosperity and security relate in this century. By placing the Peace Economy at the centre of national planning, India can show that strategic infrastructure works best when it creates jobs, attracts investment, protects the environment, strengthens maritime connectivity and reinforces credible national security, all at the same time, all on the same island.

Built with strategic foresight, honest institutional coordination and real environmental responsibility, Great Nicobar can become the world's first large-scale, working example of a maritime **Peace Economy**. It would turn India's geographic advantage into lasting economic strength, regional stability and national resilience. And in doing so, it would offer a model that serves not only ***Viksit Bharat 2047*** but also a more secure, connected and prosperous Indo-Pacific. Hence, Great Nicobar would be an ideal '***Economic Province***'

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