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Concerns with A&N Island Development

What is the issue?

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- Andaman & Nicobar administration and NITI Aayog will organize an investors' meet in New Delhi.
- Crucial questions about development in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands remain.

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What is the objective of the meet?

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- The meet is organized in regards with tourism projects under a plan called 'holistic development of the islands'.
- The projects are planned on four islands — Long, Neil, Smith and Aves.
- They are undertaken as per decisions of the Islands Development Agency (IDA).
- The specifics of proposals listed for the investors include developing Premium Island Resort, tree houses, etc.
- The projects also include the setting up of infrastructure for power, water, floating jetty, adventure sports, banqueting and conferences.

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What are the benefits?

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- **Natives** - A section of the population has received it with considerable excitement.

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- As, the project would offer varied economic and livelihood opportunities.

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- **Tourism** - It also caters to the aspirational dimension of utilizing the potential of the islands to be a world-class tourism destination.

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- In addition the projects are to provide world class and sustainable tourism infrastructure.

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- **Environment** - The project comes with low environmental impact.

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- There are also provisions for socio-economic involvement of local population.

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What are the concerns?

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- **Facilities** - Air strips, floating jetties and premium resorts are promised for the island.

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- But the local community still lacks safe and reliable and comfortable ships to travel.

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- This is because in an island system shipping is the lifeline.

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- Not ensuring this could also pose threats to the safety of the natives.

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- E.g. a recent huge leak and filling up of water in a key passenger ship en route to Chennai from Andaman and Nicobar Island.

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- This incident questions the whole idea of the grand plans and promises being made.

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- **Ecology** - The project cost is met by the local communities and the local environment.

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- Though the projects may generate job opportunities, the ecological cost of such initiative must be taken into account.

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- Andaman and Nicobar islands are extremely vulnerable landscapes in the time of fast changing climate.
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- So human activities should not aggravate the conditions leading to degradation of the natural capital.
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What is the way forward?

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- The substantial human, planning and financial resources being spent for the tourism projects can be invested in better and more productive projects.
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- A truly holistic development plan for an island system should have a robust shipping system as its the first building block.
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- In the vision for achieving the ambitious goals, the fundamental elements should not be ignored.
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Source: The Hindu

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