Society & Social Justice · GS - II

Examine the challenges involved in balancing infrastructure development with the forest rights and livelihood security of indigenous communities, with reference to the Great Nicobar project.

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
DAILY PRACTICE 30/10/2026	GS - II	Society & Social Justice

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
10	~150 words

Answer Hint

Tribal rights; Forest Rights Act 2006; ancestral land; Gram Sabha; environmental clearance; indigenous livelihoods; sustainable development; participatory governance

Model Answer

Introduction

The Great Nicobar infrastructure project has raised concerns regarding the balance between strategic and economic development and the rights of indigenous communities, including the Nicobarese and Shompen.

Major Issues

1. Protection of Tribal Rights

The Forest Rights Act, 2006 recognises individual and community forest rights. Development projects must respect applicable statutory protections and due process.

2. Livelihood and Cultural Security

Displacement or restricted access to traditional territories can affect indigenous livelihoods, cultural practices and community identity.

3. Environmental Concerns

Large infrastructure projects in ecologically sensitive island regions may affect forests, biodiversity, coastal ecosystems and wildlife habitats.

4. Governance and Participation

Exclusion of tribal representatives from decision-making can weaken democratic accountability. Gram Sabhas and relevant tribal institutions should receive meaningful opportunities to participate wherever legally applicable.

Way Forward

- Ensure transparent forest-rights recognition and verification.
- Conduct credible environmental and social impact assessments.
- Provide meaningful consultation and legally required safeguards.
- Explore alternatives that minimise ecological and social costs.

Conclusion

Strategic infrastructure development and indigenous rights must be pursued through constitutional safeguards, environmental responsibility and participatory governance.

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