

**Hindu Editorial
Analysis
(20.02.2026)**

Vocabulary

Concerns – anxiety, worry, responsibility

Appraisal – assessment, evaluation, estimation

Enthused – express eager interest

Gargantuan – enormous

Pristine – clean, new, fresh

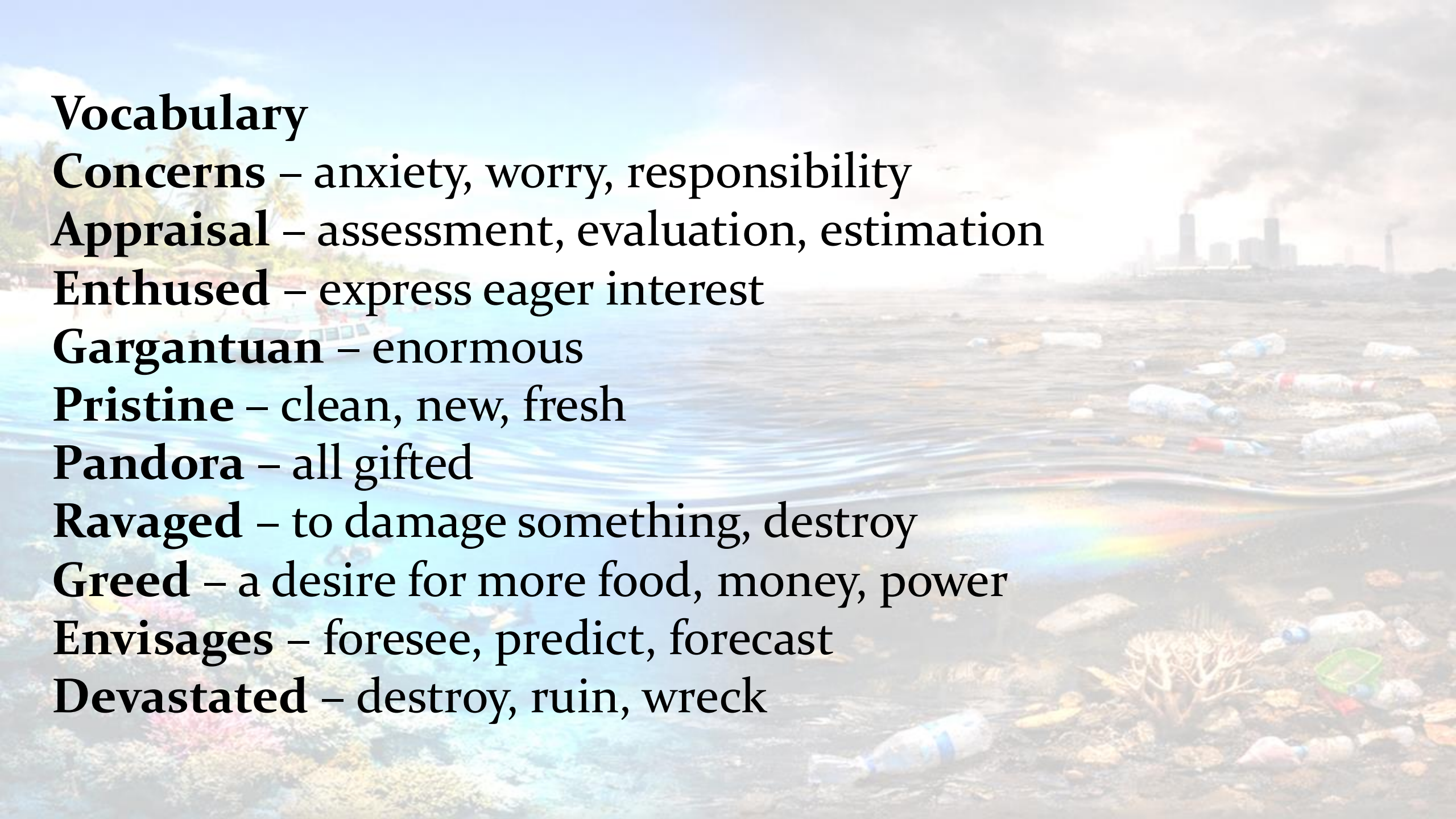
Pandora – all gifted

Ravaged – to damage something, destroy

Greed – a desire for more food, money, power

Envisages – foresee, predict, forecast

Devastated – destroy, ruin, wreck



Vocabulary

Deemed – to have a particular opinion about something

Desolate – barren, empty, uninhabited

Jagged – irregular, uneven

Accorded – give, grant, agree

Nesting – accommodating, home

Coerced – to force somebody to do something

Implied – to suggest something in an indirect way

Imposes – appoint, charge, to force or inflict something

Confront – oppose, resist, defy

Lucid – clear and easy to understand

Vocabulary

Rationale – underlying reason

Pronged – spiked, pointed

Relying – depend

Fragility – weakness

Influx – inflow, inundation

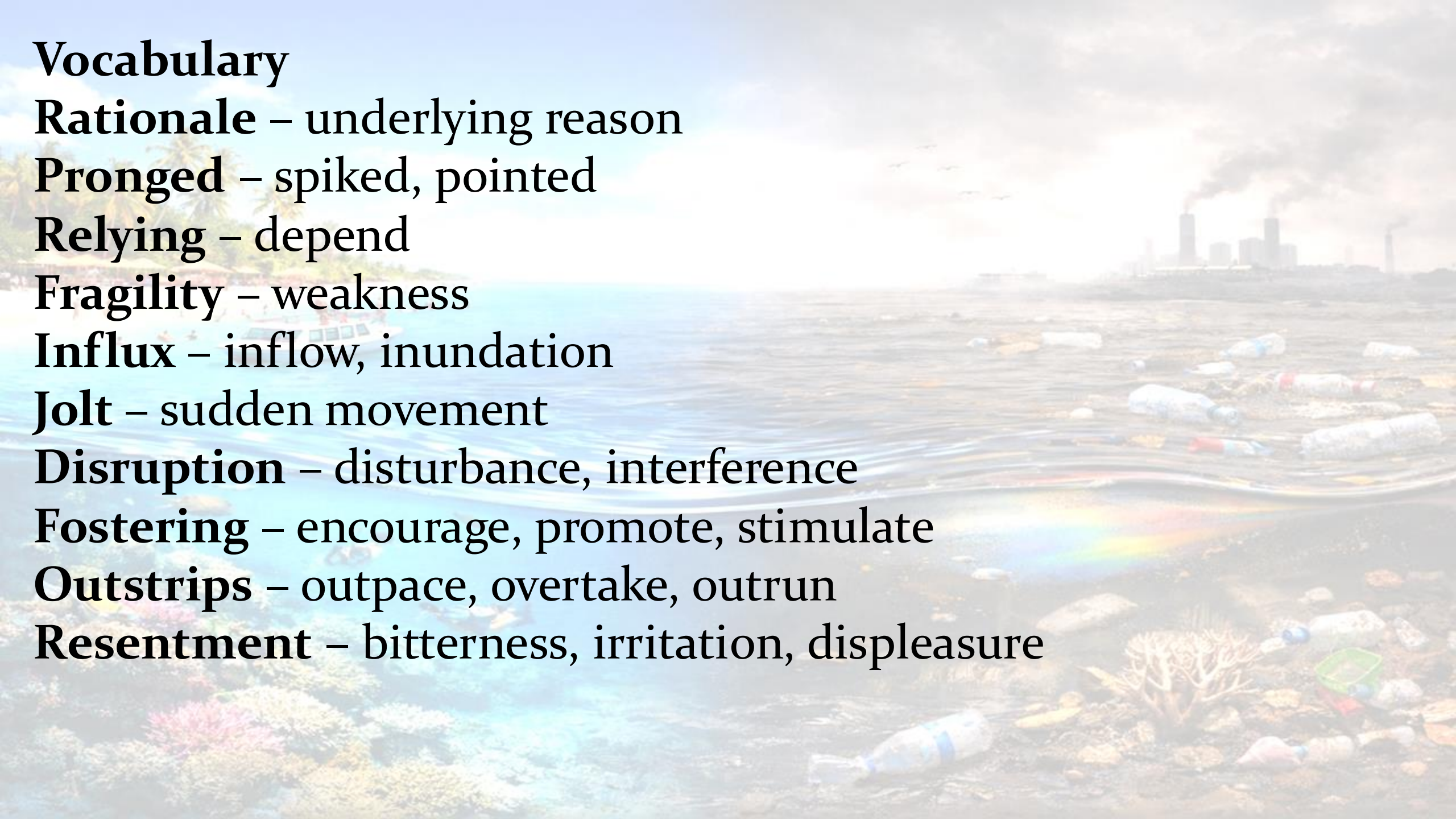
Jolt – sudden movement

Disruption – disturbance, interference

Fostering – encourage, promote, stimulate

Outstrips – outpace, overtake, outrun

Resentment – bitterness, irritation, displeasure



Troubled waters

Concerns about the Great Nicobar project should have got a fair appraisal

Proponents of the controversial Great Nicobar Project will be enthused by an order from the Kolkata bench of the National Green Tribunal (NGT) ruling that all environmental safeguards are in place, that the potential impact of this gargantuan project on resident native populations of the region is duly accounted for, and the project's "strategic utility" is reason enough for the government to not be fully transparent with what it shares in the public domain. But the dominant narrative around the

environmental safeguards are in place, that the potential impact of this gargantuan project on resident native populations of the region is duly accounted for, and the project’s “strategic utility” is reason enough for the government to not be fully transparent with what it shares in the public domain. But the dominant narrative around the project mirrors the classic development versus

environment conflict of a pristine Pandora being ravaged for the greed of far-away mainlanders. The Great Nicobar Island Project (GNIP) envisages a trans-shipment port, an international airport, township development, and a 450 Mega-volt-Amperes (MVA) gas and solar-based power plant. In the early 20th century, the British Phosphate Commissioners (a joint venture of the U.K.,

Australia, and New Zealand) began large-scale phosphate mining for fertilizer on Nauru and Banaba in the Pacific Ocean. By 1945, the island had been so physically devastated by strip mining that it was deemed uninhabitable. The native Banabans were forcibly relocated to Rabi Island in Fiji, over 2,000 kilometres away. Today, Banaba is a desolate landscape of jagged limestone “pin-

nacles” and the displaced population is fighting for the rehabilitation of its homeland. These serve as historical precedents for why economic logic alone cannot dictate actions in remote territories. Though accorded an environment and preliminary forest clearance by the Union Environment Ministry, concerns about the potential loss of biodiversity, tree-felling, and impact on resident tribes prompted the NGT to order a review of the environmental aspects of the project.

Independent scientists and environmentalist groups have said that the felling of tracts of pristine tropical forest – nearly nine lakh trees across 130 sq.km – for this project would significantly harm the biodiversity of the region and constitute an irreparable loss. This is not counting the disturbance to leatherback turtle nesting grounds and the assault on the corals. There was

also the contested matter of whether the community rights of the local Shompen and the Nicobarese tribes were fully settled under the requirements of the Forest Rights Act. Recently, members of the Tribal Council said they were being coerced to sign “surrender certificates” that implied their consent to large parts of their land being diverted for the project. The NGT order es-

essentially rubber-stamps the government's appraisal process without independently examining the concerns raised. It only imposes faith that the government will be a conscientious executor of the project. Whether the Great Nicobar Project is a 'net good' can only be judged by future generations, but the lack of a process that offers a fair appraisal of independent concerns bodes ill for the present.

Kashmir revival

Tourism that benefits locals can help counter the terrorist ecosystem

The April 2025 Pahalgam attack forced India to confront the fact that tourism recovers only when visitors can predict what will happen to them and local communities see credible benefits from keeping the sites open. Following the attack, the local administration closed 48 government-approved tourist sites, la-

Following the attack, the local administration closed 48 government-approved tourist sites, later reopening them in phases, including 14 on February 16. Tourists have rated the Kashmir Valley as relatively safe overall while still differentiating types of risk, which means that tourism policy in the region needs to focus on what visitors can be certain about and whether the state has a fixed and lucid rationale for closing or reopening sites.

In the Union Budget 2026-27 announcement, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman described a two-pronged plan to enhance tourism: institutional capacity building and developing trails and heritage sites. She also singled out the development of ecologically sustainable mountain trails in Jammu and Kashmir, which is good because formal trails admit better management, including

ticketing, permits, deployment of rangers, and medical facilities, and reduce fragility by diversifying the 'Kashmir experience'. Kashmir could also do with a third prong: it is a biodiverse region that has become heavily militarised and shared environmental governance can help build trust.

The central government should consider paid civic roles rather than relying only on volunteer awareness campaigns, using protocols that forest protection committees already implement around protected areas. These can include trail maintenance, waste management, guiding, fire watch, and (wildlife) conflict mitigation. An influx of tourists can jolt the local economy to provide more and better services, so that over time, more families are incentivised to speak out against terrorism that suppresses tourism. Functional sites also need clear rules, reliable permits,

fast help during emergencies, working roads, clean public spaces, and good communication, and the lower disruption is the state's incentive to solve these problems. Tourism can also help reduce fear and isolation by bringing people from across India into local contact and fostering business ties. Tourism and allied services can give young people a real path into the economy by skilling or reskilling them. The people of the region deserve more civilian ownership of social stability and more negotiating power, especially one that outstrips their cause for resentment.

Thank You