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Mega Tourism in Andaman and Nicobar Islands: Some Concerns

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ABSTRACT Tsunami has changed lives of thousands of people in the islands of Andaman and Nicobar (A & N) Islands, India since it struck on 26.12.04 . The tsunami has posed certain uncertainties in the minds of people about the kind of houses they are going to stay in, the kind of neighbourhoods going to form, the kind of livelihood they are going to indulge in. Providing livelihood to the Tsunami affected is going to be the top most agenda of the administration. The Administrators see this as an opportunity to rebuild the profile of islands, starting from the rebuilding of livelihoods to building of infrastructures, and also reviving and expanding tourism. It is being anticipated that developing tourism at a massive scale would by default generate employment. It would also rebuild the economy, especially matching its scope with the some of the well known international island tourist spots. As per the information obtained from the Information, Publicity and Tourism Department of Andaman and Nicobar Islands, IPNT, a proposal of Rs 5000 crores for developing tourism in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands is submitted to the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India for consideration. It is worthwhile to take stock of the current ecological state of the islands, socio-economic and demographic profile of the people living in these islands. Accessibility to these islands and how far these islands can take the possibilities and pressures of tourism? Whether the fragile ecosystem of the islands can sustain the pressures of the above development? Whether the environmental degradation due to the development can be balanced with the growth in economy? With the proposed pattern of development what irreparable damages will occur to the environment, impact on lives of people and their habitat, their culture and their health?