

GREAT NICOBAR

A CONTEMPORARY CONSERVATION TIMELINE

Revised and updated

MAY 2024



Ravi Shankar P.

The swamp of Magar nallah as seen from the watch tower of the Great Nicobar Biosphere Reserve. The Breakwater jetty at Campbell Bay is visible in the background.

Great Nicobar Island has been home to rich biodiversity and indigenous communities for over 1000s of years. Hosting one Biosphere Reserve, two National Parks, and abundant coastal and marine diversity, this island is of high conservation importance. This is an updated version of the interactive timeline that traces the contemporary conservation history of this unique island - click on each item to learn more.

This timeline is an initial outcome of ongoing work at the Centre for Technology Alternatives for Rural Areas (CTARA), IIT Bombay, as part of "Geo-Spatial Mapping of 28 years of media reporting on livelihoods and wildlife conservation in India" supported by the DST-GiSE Hub at IIT Bombay and "A digital archive of Great Nicobar Island" supported by JP Narayan Centre of Excellence in the Humanities, IIT Indore.

Prepared by Srishti Saxena, Kamal Kumari, and Pankaj Sekhsaria with critical help and inputs from a number of other researchers.

Contact: psekhsaria@gmail.com

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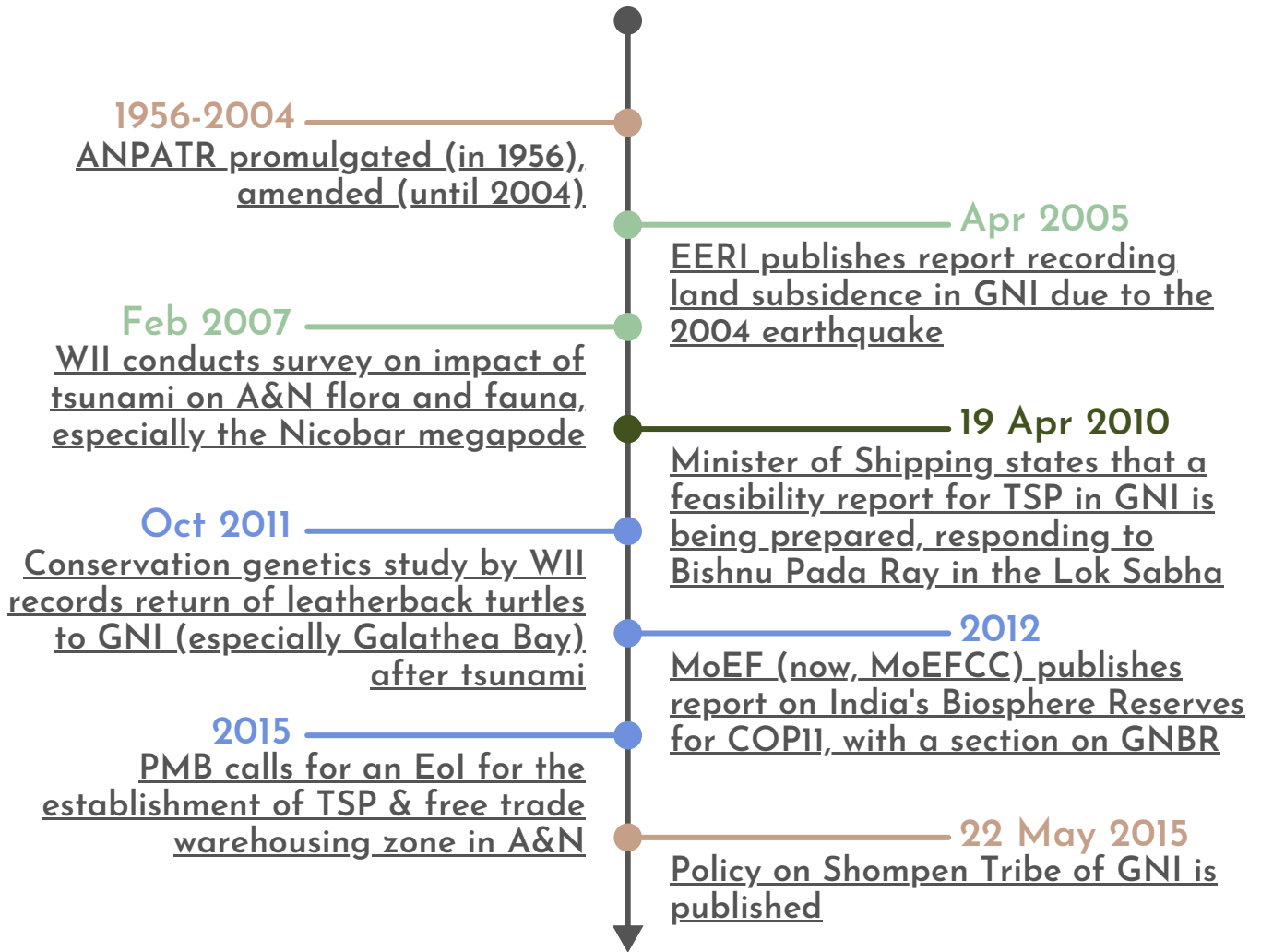
Cover photo: The beach of *Auk Rafaiynh*, more commonly known as the B-Quarry beach in Campbell Bay which was quarried for making the Campbell Bay jetty (Picture by: Kamal Kumari).

Legend

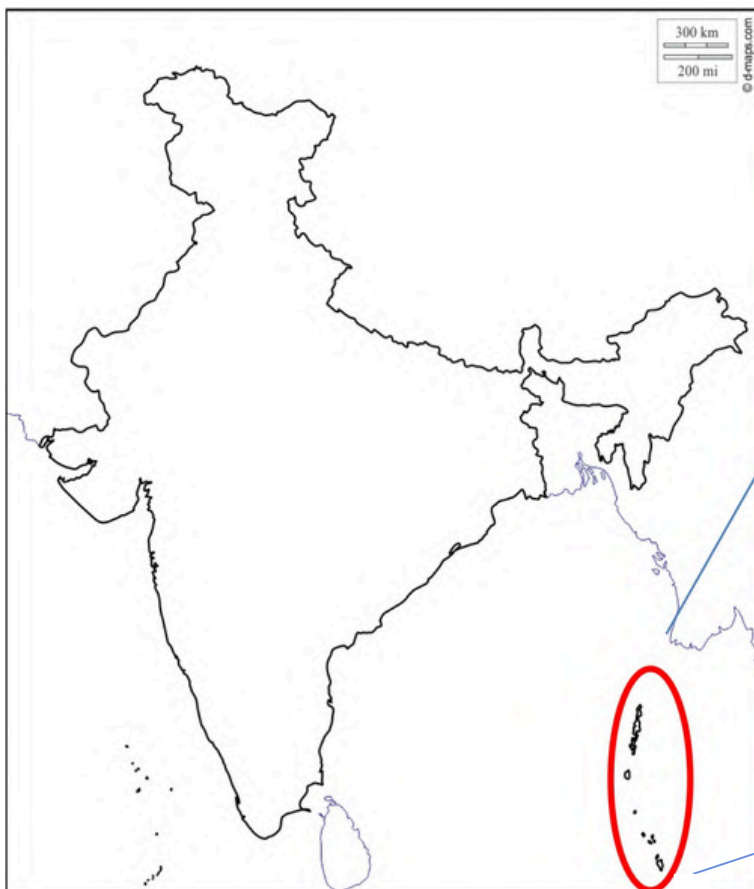
- Gazette notifications, notices, policies / action plans
- Technical reports, tenders, vision documents
- Independent scientific reports and articles
- Minutes of meeting, meeting notices
- News articles/ videos
- Representations from civilians, experts, and parliamentarians
- Documents for project clearance
- RTI responses
- Legal documents, committee orders

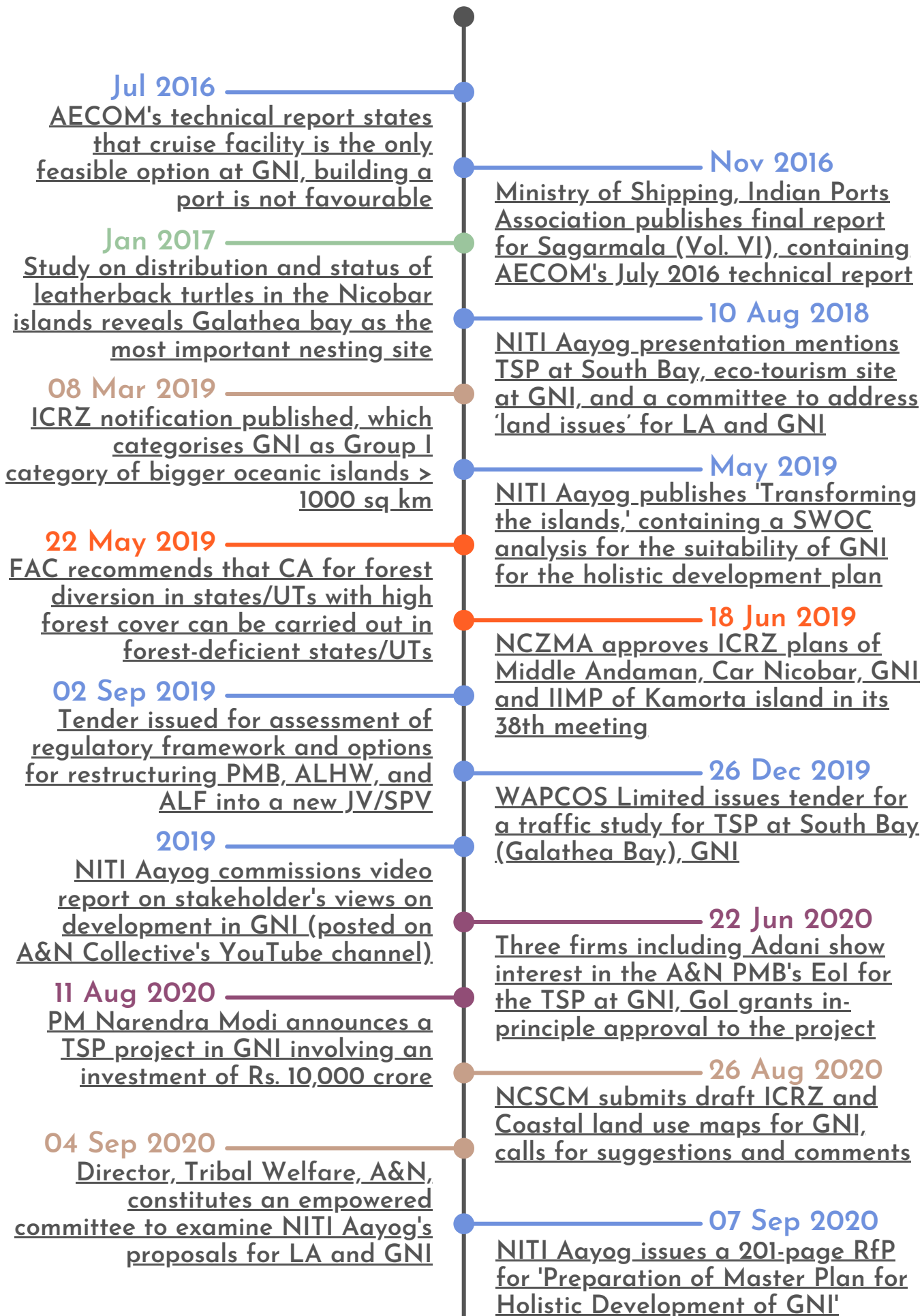
LIST OF ACRONYMS

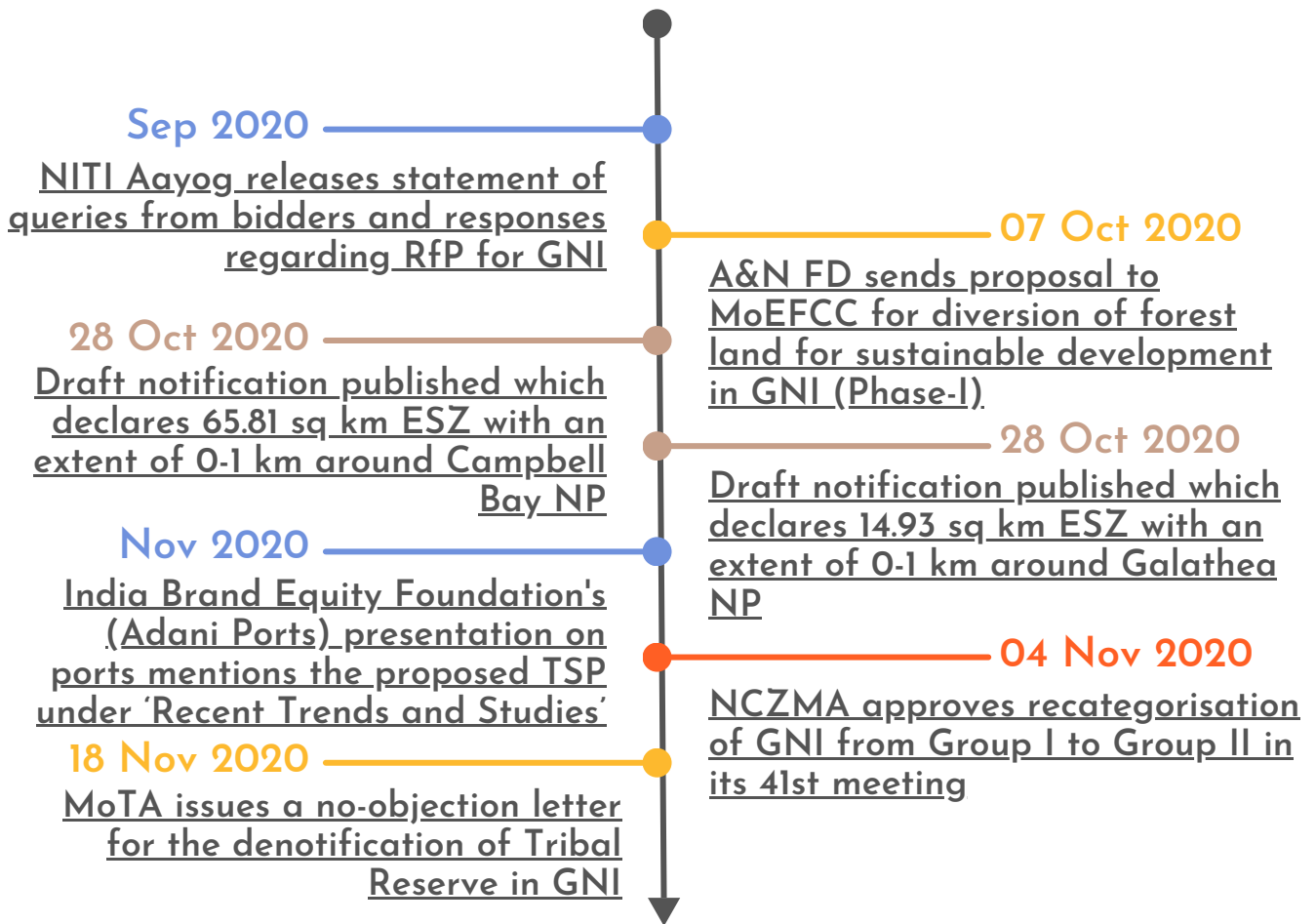
AAI:	Airports Authority of India	IIMP:	Integrated Island Management Plan
AAJVS:	Andaman Adim Janjati Vikas Samiti	IPZ:	Island Protection Zone Notification
AC:	Assistant Commissioner	ISRO:	Indian Space Research Organisation
ACF:	Assistant Conservator of Forest	JV:	Joint venture
ALF:	Andaman Labour Force	LA:	Little Andaman
ALHW:	Andaman Lakshadweep Harbour Works	MHA:	Ministry of Home Affairs
ANPATR:	Andaman and Nicobar (Protection of Aboriginal Tribes) Regulation, 1956	MoEF:	Ministry of Environment and Forests
ANPCC:	Andaman & Nicobar Pollution Control Committee	MoEFCC:	Ministry of Environment, Forests, and Climate Change
ANIIDCO:	Andaman and Nicobar Islands Integrated Development Corporation Limited	MoPSW:	Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways
A&N:	Andaman and Nicobar Islands	MoTA:	Ministry of Tribal Affairs
CA:	Compensatory Afforestation	MP:	Member of Parliament
CERD:	Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination	NCSCM:	National Centre for Sustainable Coastal Management
CM:	Chief Minister	NCST:	National Commission for Scheduled Tribes
COP11:	11th Conference of the Parties	NCZMA:	National Coastal Zone Management Authority
CRZ:	Coastal Regulation Zone	NGT:	National Green Tribunal
DLC:	District Level Committee	NOC:	No Objection Certificate
DPR:	Detailed Project Report	NP:	National Park
EAC:	Expert Appraisal Committee	PA:	Protected Area
EERI:	Earthquake Engineering Research Institute	PfR:	Pre-feasibility Report
EIA:	Environmental Impact Assessment	PM:	Prime Minister
Eoi:	Expression of Interest	PMB:	Port Management Board
ESZ:	Eco-Sensitive Zone	PVTG:	Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group
FAC:	Forest Advisory Committee	RfP:	Request for Proposals
FD:	Forest Department	RTI:	Right To Information
FRA:	The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006	SIA:	Social Impact Assessment
GNBR:	Great Nicobar Biosphere Reserve	SDLC:	Sub-Divisional Level Committee
GNI:	Great Nicobar Island	SLMC:	State Level Monitoring Committee
Goi:	Government of India	SPV:	Special Purpose Vehicle
HPC:	High Powered Committee	ToR:	Terms of Reference
IAS:	Indian Administrative Service	TSP:	Transshipment port
ICRZ:	Island Coastal Zone Regulation	UN:	United Nations
ICTT:	International Container Transshipment Terminal	WII:	Wildlife Institute of India
		WLS:	Wildlife Sanctuary
		ZSI:	Zoological Survey of India



Location of GNI in India (source: AECOM, 2021)







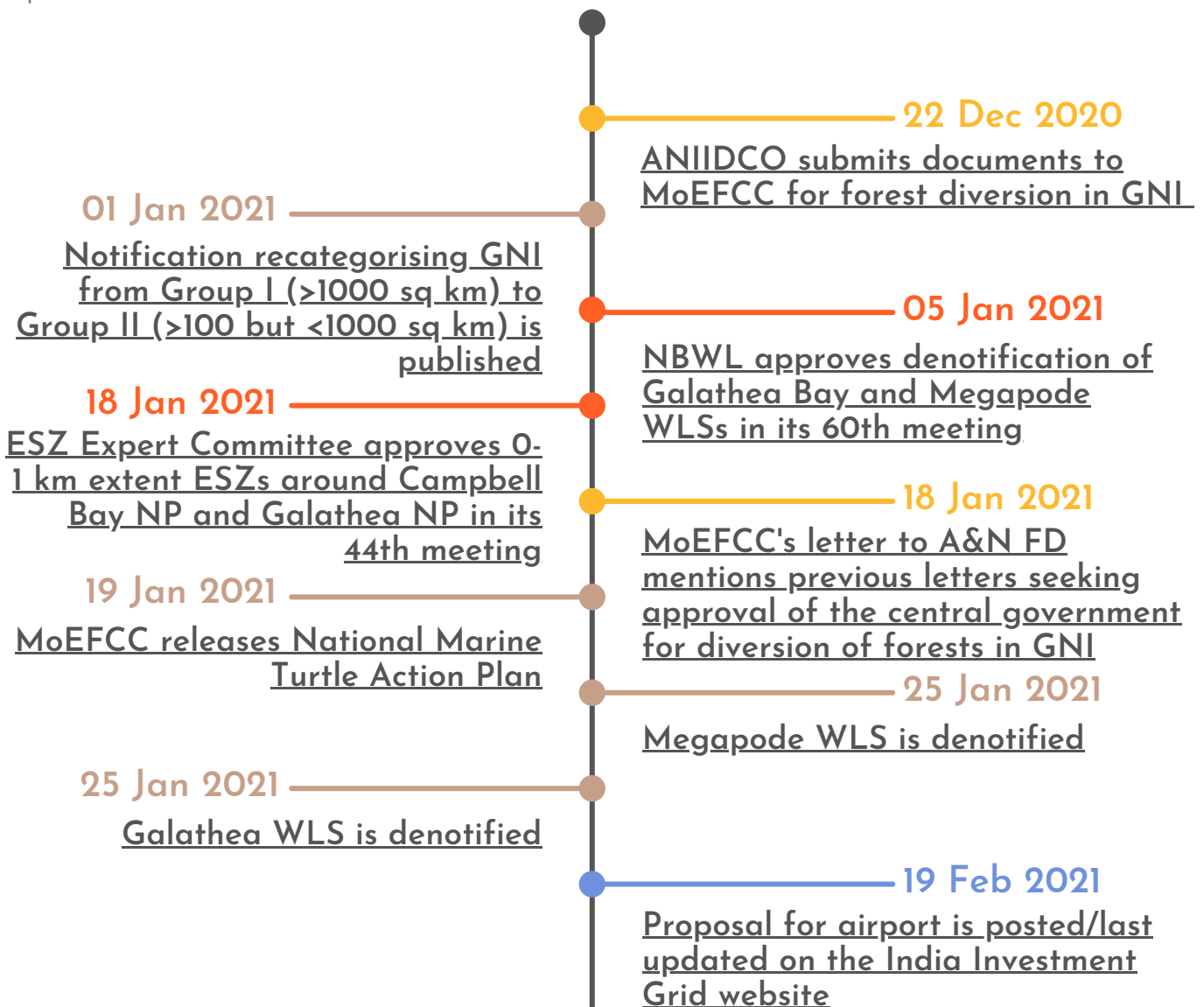
The eastern flank of Galathea Bay, where the port is proposed, is visited by four species of marine turtles to lay their eggs every nesting season.





Aashish Gokhale

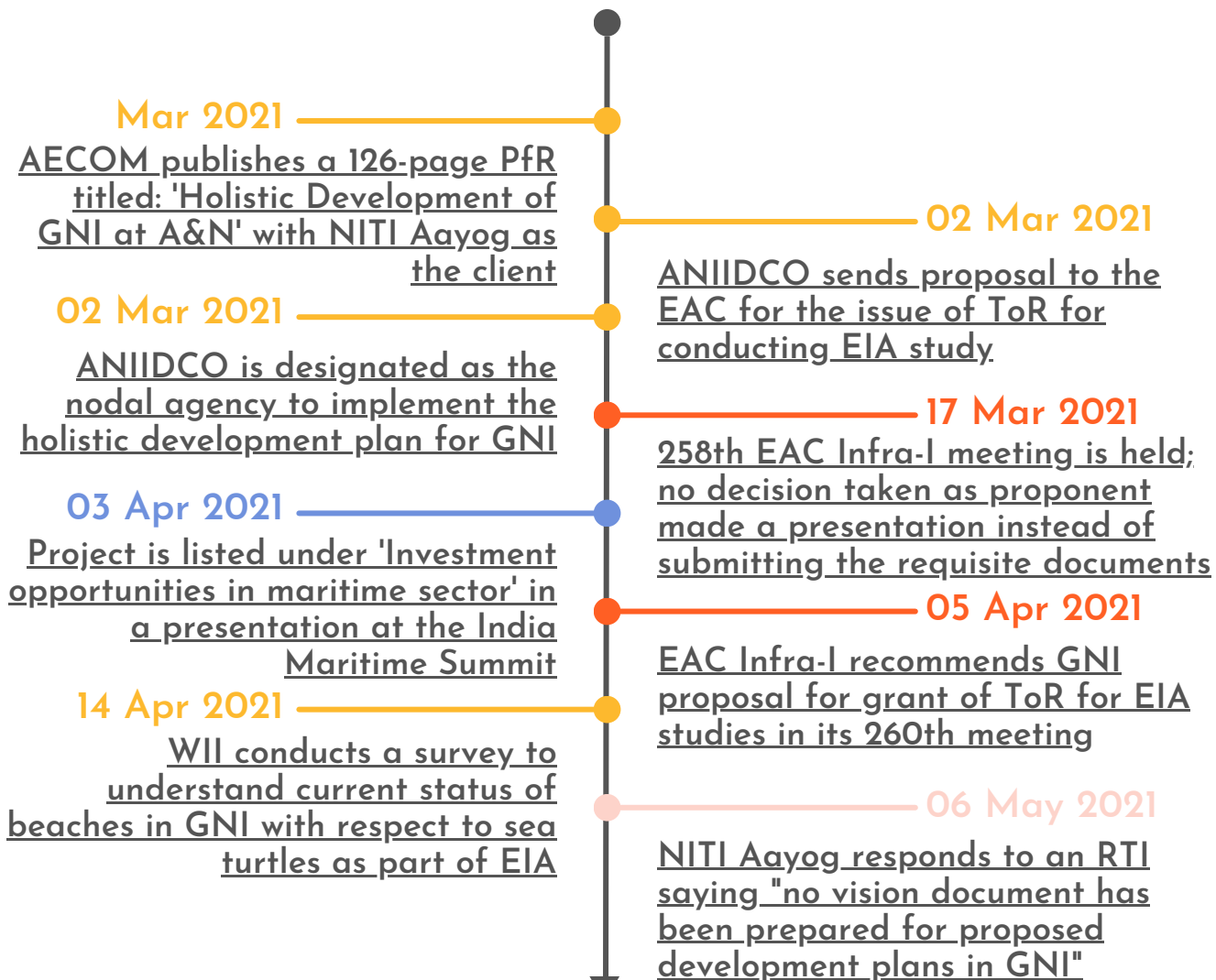
A young Nicobar long-tailed macaque, an endemic species found in three islands of Nicobar group: Great Nicobar, Little Nicobar, and Katchal. About 9.6 lakh trees are slated to be axed for the GNI project, taking away their preferred habitats and pushing them to depend on human spaces and foods for survival.

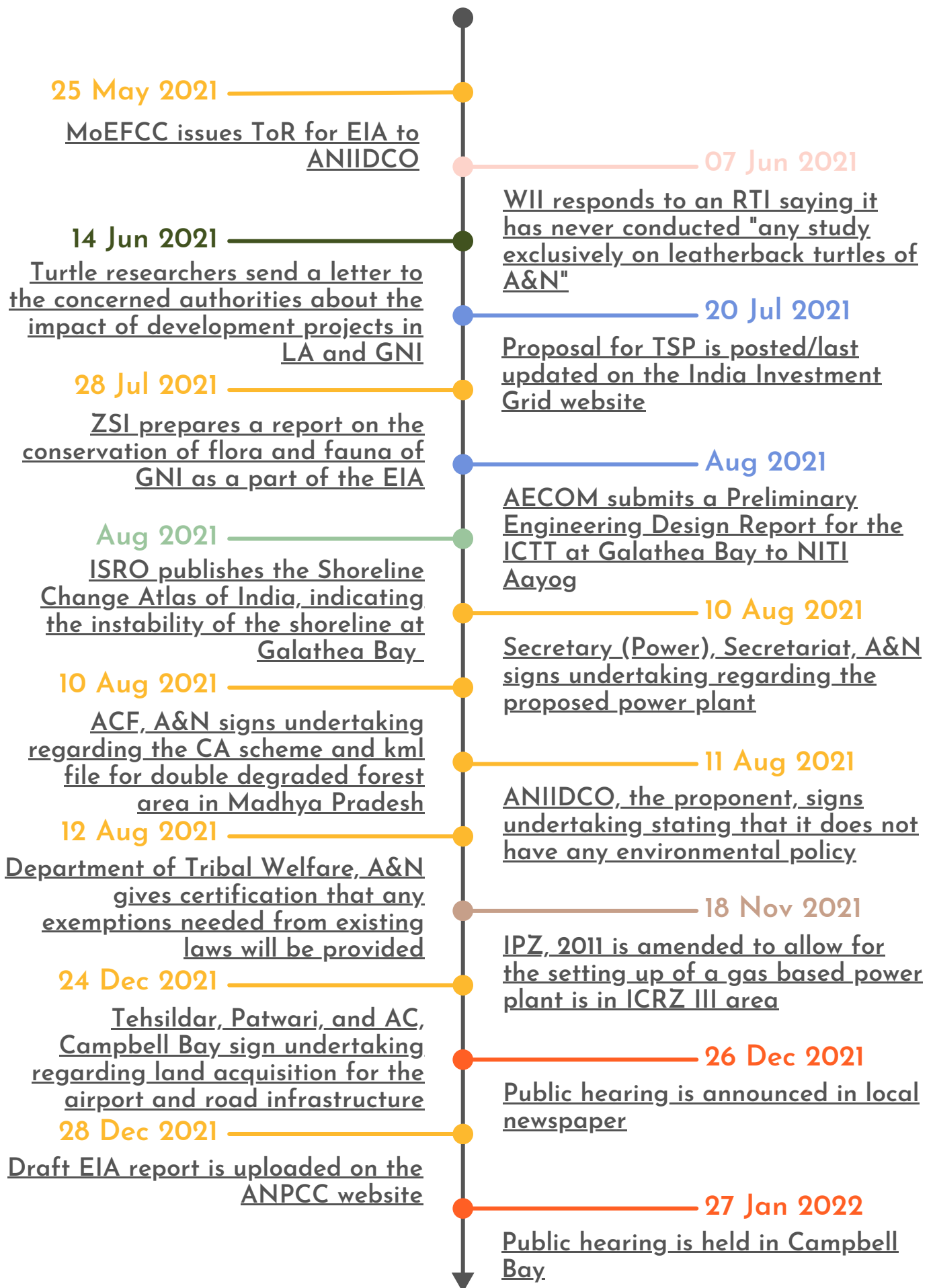


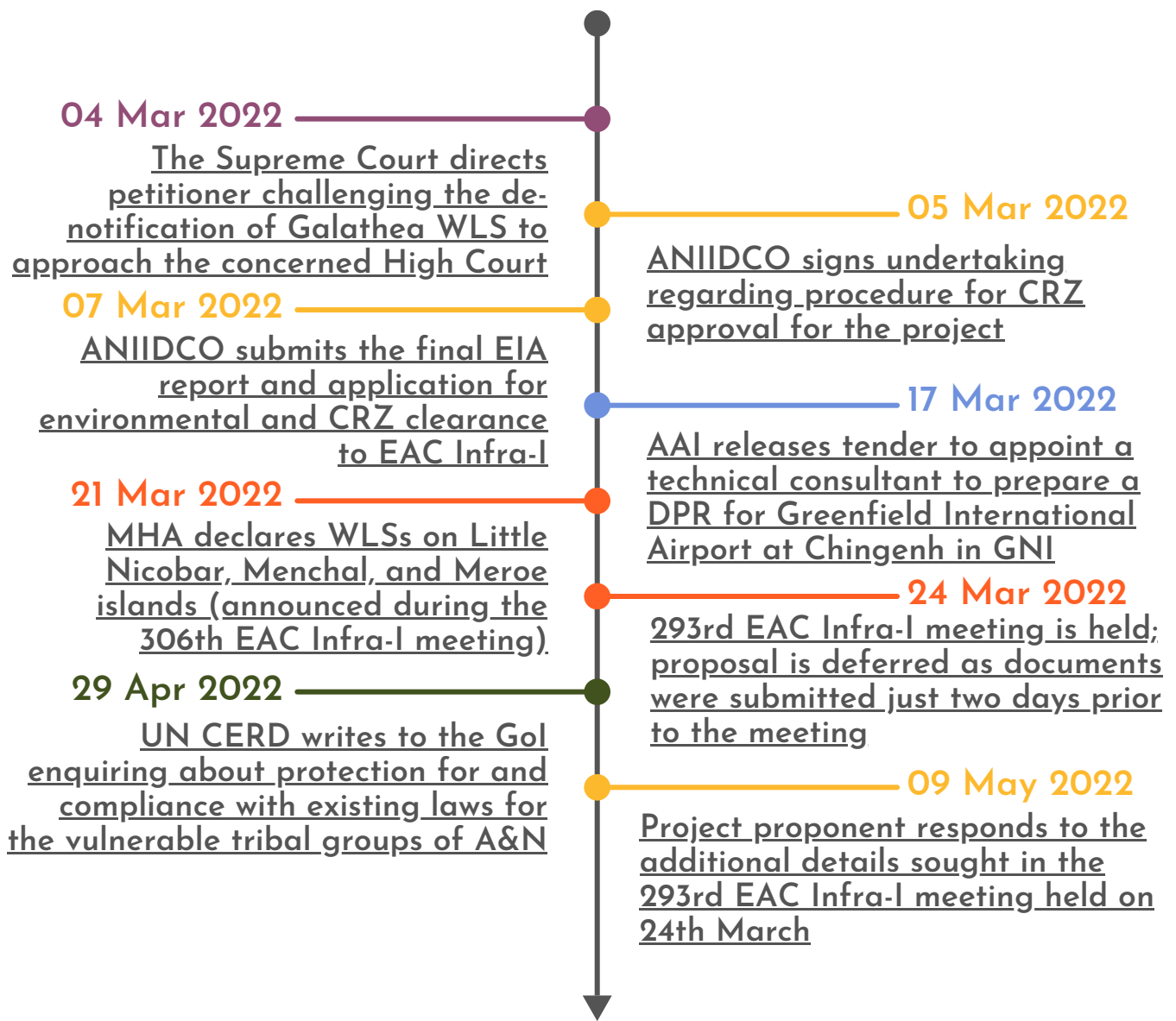


Pankaj Sekhsaria

A Fiddler Crab as seen on a beach in Campbell Bay. Their burrows allow water to penetrate deep into the sand making it an oxygen rich environment for mangrove roots and soil microbes.







Daniel's forest lizard, a highly under-studied species known only from Great Nicobar Island. Nothing is known about its distribution on the island.





Ravi Shankar P.

An adult Nicobar Tree Shrew photographed at Galathea Bay. It is an Endangered endemic found only in Great Nicobar and Little Nicobar islands and is a strictly arboreal animal.

16 May 2022

Haryana Tourism Corporation issues an EoI for the Aravalli Safari Park in Gurugram and Nuh, spread over 10,000 acres

07 Jun 2022

The President directs Lieutenant Governor, A&N to assume the powers and functions of the State Government under FRA

26 Jul 2022

Directorate of Tribal Welfare, A&N announces the constitution of the SDLCs, DLCs, and SLMC and the ToR for each under the FRA

11 Aug 2022

'Special Gram Sabha' notice is issued for FRA considerations of SDLC/DLC surrounding development plans in GNI

24 May 2022

EAC Infra-I designates airport as a joint military-civil facility and notifies PAs for turtles, megapodes, and corals at its 297th meeting

08 Jun 2022

Ministry of Shipping, GoI, declares Syama Prasad Mookerjee Port Trust as nodal agency for the proposed port

Aug 2022

Centre for Financial Accountability publishes a compendium of 3 NPs threatened by infrastructure projects, including Galathea NP

12 Aug 2022

Gram Sabha meeting deciding that forest within Gram Panchayat boundaries may be diverted for development plans in GNI is held

16 Aug 2022

Pramukh, Up-Pramukh, AAJVS representative, and Chairman of the Tribal Council sign NOC for forest diversion

19 Aug 2022

Project proponent responds to the additional details sought in the 297th EAC Infra-I meeting held on 24th May.

22 Aug 2022

EAC Infra-I recommends project for grant of Environmental and CRZ Clearance in its 306th meeting

30 Aug 2022

Nicobar Times interviews Campbell Bay Pramukh regarding the residents' stand on the proposed projects

18 Aug 2022

Deputy Commissioner, Nicobar, issues certificate of FRA process completion

20 Aug 2022

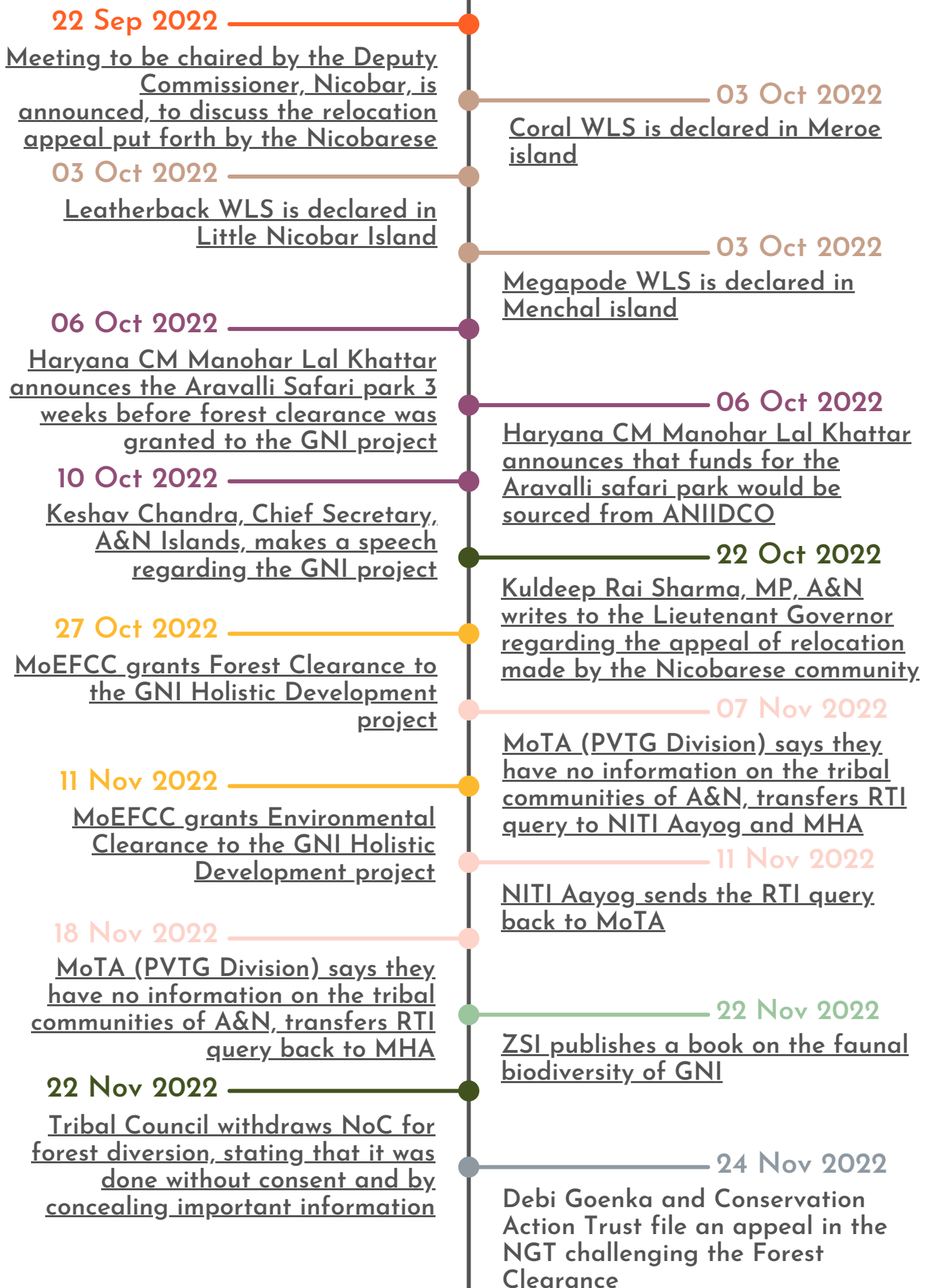
The Nicobarese community appeals for relocation to Chingeh and Pulo Bhabhi (sites proposed for the port and airport).

28 Aug 2022

The Nicobarese community opposes the declaration of WLSs in the islands of Menchal, Meroe, and Little Nicobar

Working on the coastal road just outside Campbell Bay in 2006. It was washed out by the December 2004 earthquake and tsunami.

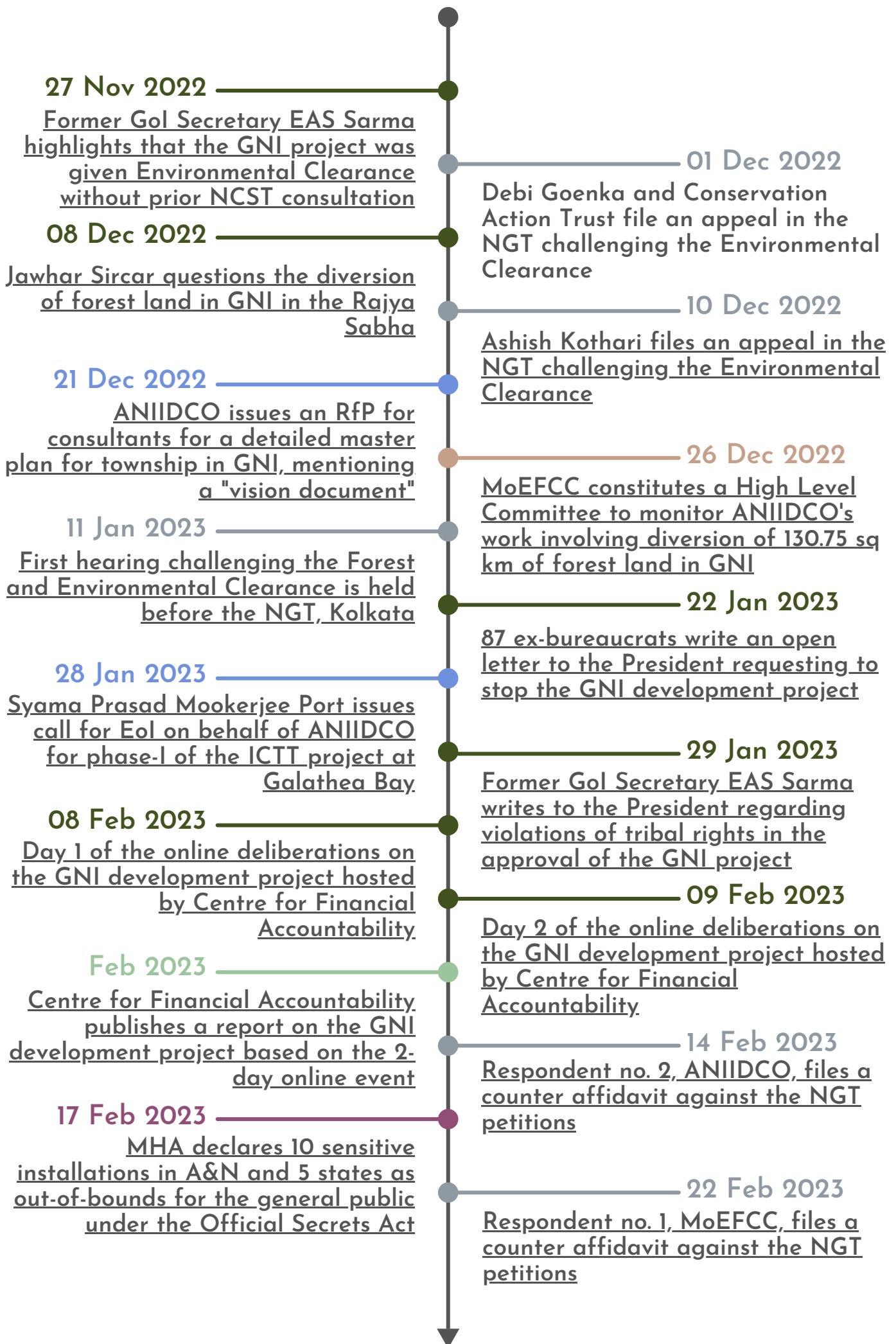






N. Swapna

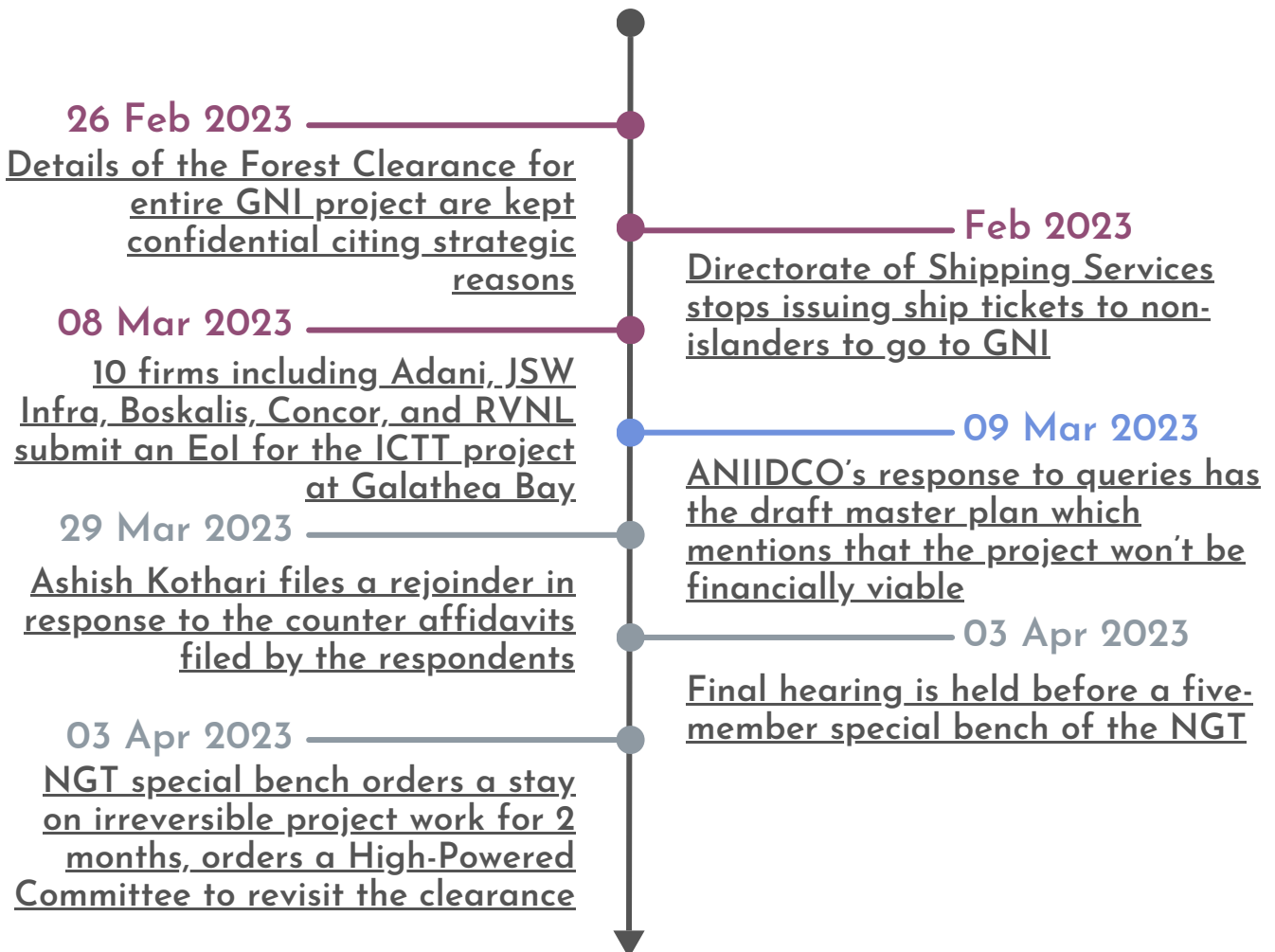
"When one tries to look upwards to find out what tree it is, it is not just one but many." This photograph from Great Nicobar Biosphere Reserve taken in 2023 is best described by this statement from the EIA report of the GNI project, which is used to justify why an intensive survey was not conducted to assess the impact of the project - the forests are simply too dense!

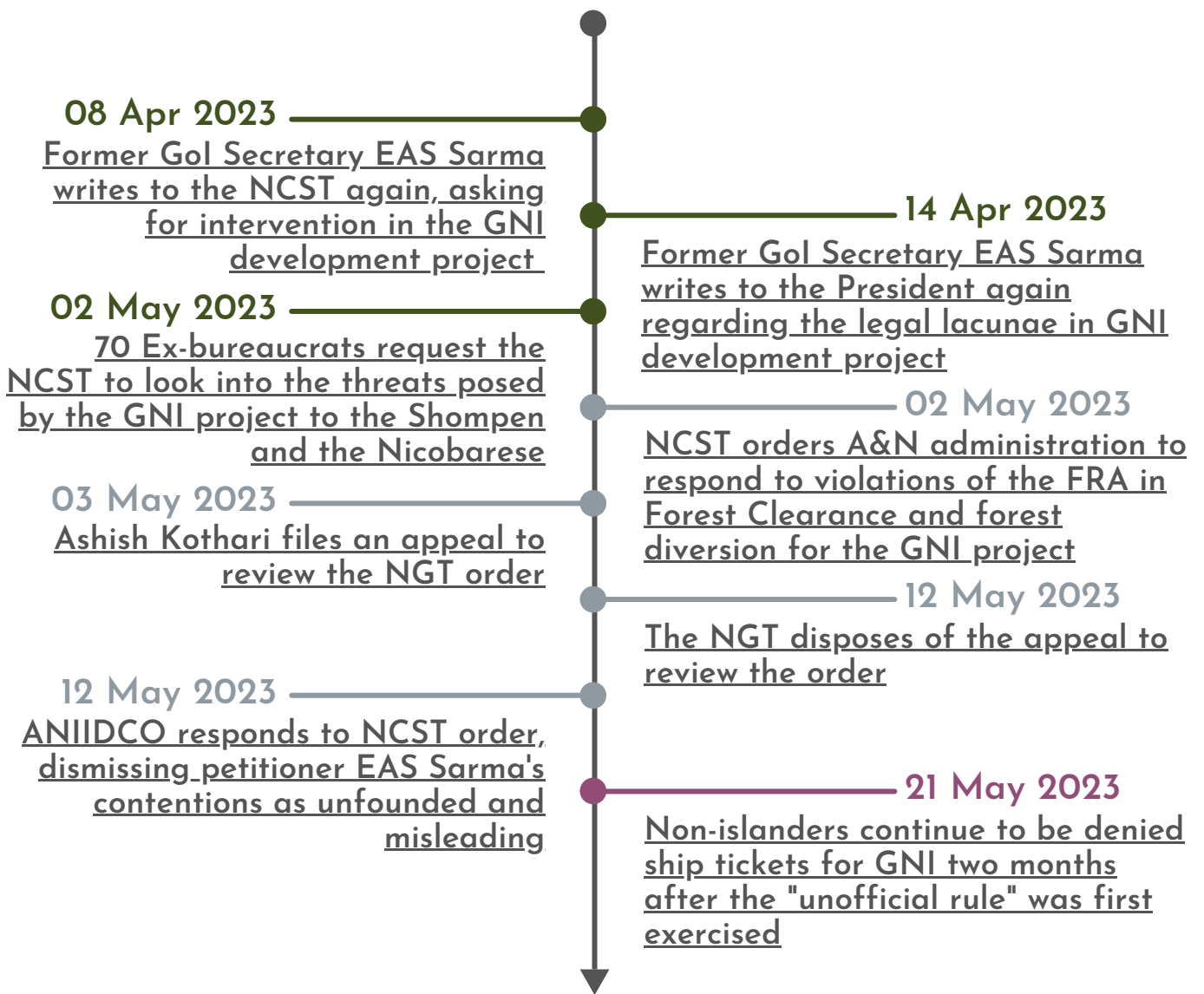




Pankaj Sekhsaria

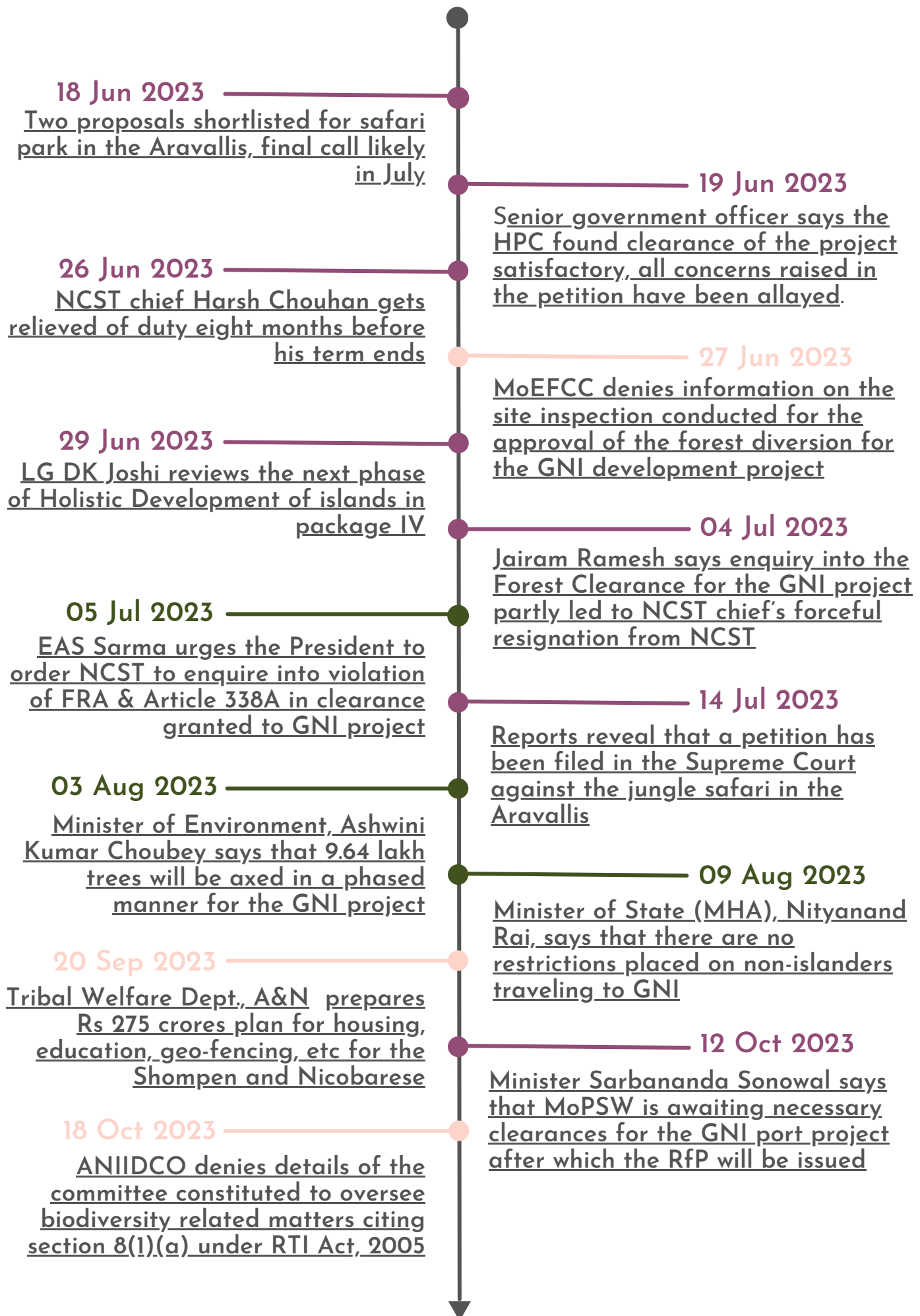
Nicobar Megapode is a shy and elusive resident of the coastal forests of Great Nicobar. It lost 71% of its population in the tsunami of December 2004. About 51 active nests of the bird are said to be located in the site of the GNI project. This picture was taken from the now denotified Galathea Bay WLS.





Large parts of Campbell Bay, on the eastern coast of GNI, submerged in the aftermath of the earthquake and tsunami of December 2004.







President Draupadi Murmu visited Indira Point, the southernmost tip of the country located in Great Nicobar in February, 2024 where she interacted with the members of the tri-services command and was explained the strategic importance of the location. She also met the indigenous Great Nicobarese people.

14 Nov 2023

SACON advertises 29 positions for conservation plans for macaque, Megapode, crab, endemic birds, & hazard assessment for the airport

22 Nov 2023

Minister Sarbananda Sonowal (MoPSW) visits the site of the ICTT port at Galathea, discusses its progress with senior officials

15 Nov 2023

Lt. Governor, A&N flags off Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra Information, Education and Communication (IEC) vans from GNI

23 Nov 2023

Municipal Corporation of Gurgaon denies land for the Compensatory Afforestation towards forest diversion for the GNI project

24 Nov 2023 — DPR for the GNI Transshipment Port under finalisation, bids for first phase next year

14 Dec 2023

Environment Minister says over 50% forest area proposed for diversion in GNI is for green development with no tree felling.

04 Jan 2024 —

Chairman of the Syamaprasad Mookherjee Port says DPR of GNI project ready to be submitted to shipping ministry soon

06 Jan 2024

Shipping Ministry says construction for Galathea Bay Port to begin in three months, in-principal approval from Dept. of Expenditure granted

09 Jan 2024 —

Additional PCCF, Dept. of Forests & Environment, A&N refuses to speak about 3 new WLSs declared in Nicobar, asks to file an RTI instead

Jan 2024

2017 survey shows no improvement in nutrition and anemia among Shompen, potential for increased chronic non-communicable diseases

07 Feb 2024 —

Genocide scholars from 13 countries write to the President regarding the impact on the Shompen community and urging to scrap the project

08 Feb 2024

ANIIDCO denies sharing information on correspondence from NGT about lifting of stay citing 8(1). (a) under the RTI Act

20 Feb 2024 —

President stresses on the need for balance between development and environmental protection at a civic reception at Port Blair

20 Feb 2024

President visits GNI, meets the tribal community and is shown the importance of strategic projects proposed on the island

24 Feb 2024 —

The acting vice-chairperson of the NCST, Ananta Nayak says that the criticism of Great Nicobar project is an international conspiracy.

04 Mar 2024

22,425 hectares land in five districts of Haryana given Protected Forest status by MoEFCC to make up for the loss of forest in Great Nicobar

06 Mar 2024

Rs. 2,173,475 awarded to Probe Research & Social Development Pvt Ltd for conducting SIA for the airport to be built by ANIIDCO

04 Apr 2024

MoEFCC denies the report submitted by the High Powered Committee citing 8(1)(a) of RTI Act, 2005

15 Apr 2024

Environmentalists, anthropologists, scholars write a rebuttal to ANIIDCO's submission, urge NCST and MoTA to scrap the GNI project

14 Mar 2024

Notification issued for SIA for the affected area of 404.8194 hectares spanning two villages, Gandhinagar and Shastrinagar

11 Apr 2024

'Megha', the Nicobar Megapode is unveiled as the mascot for Nicobar district for the 2024 elections

19 Apr 2024

Loksabha elections held in A&N Islands, media articles wrongly report that Shompen voted for the first time, they had voted in 2014

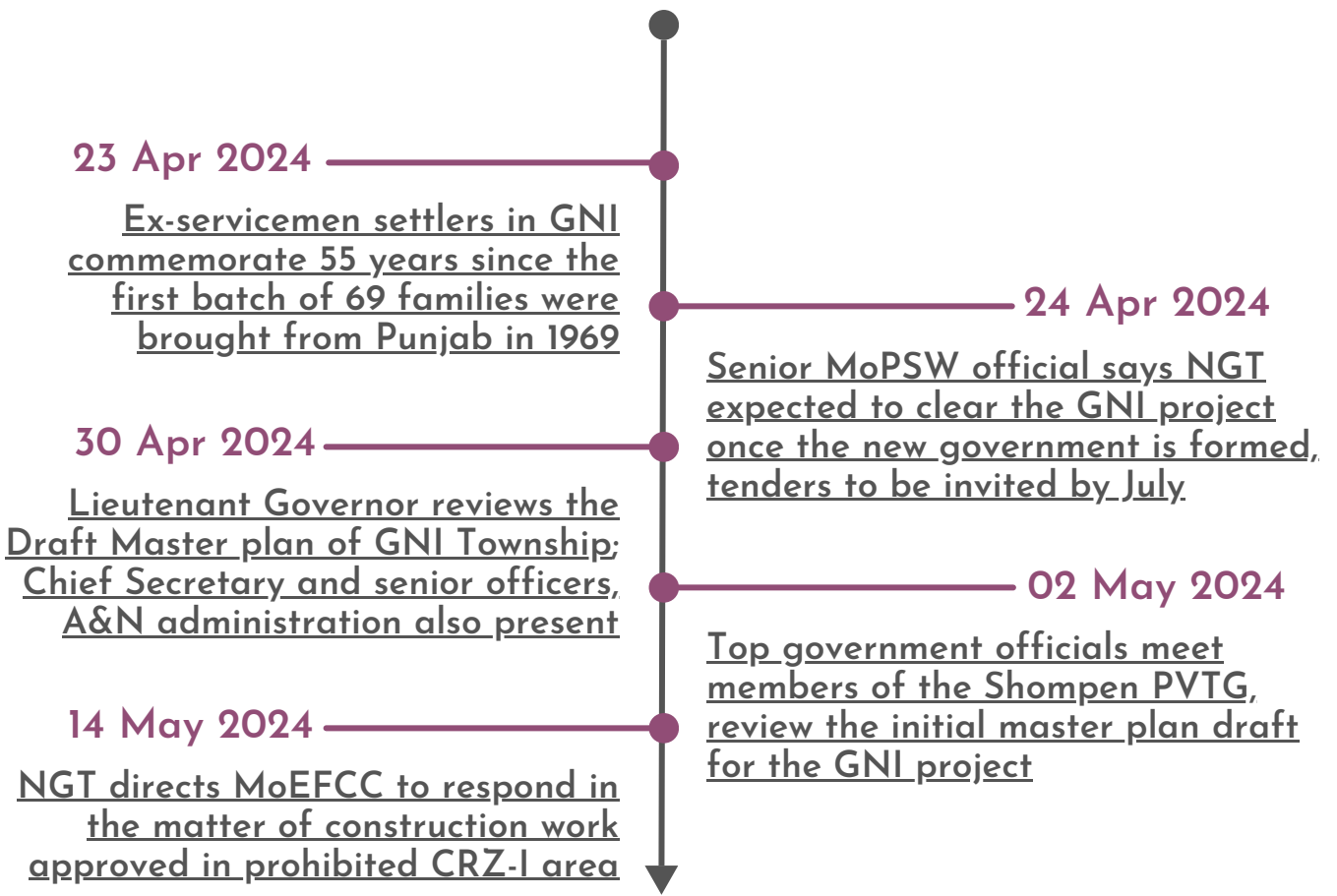
View of the forest protected under the Galathea NP (spread across the southern half of the island) - as seen from the entry point of the now de-notified Galathea Bay WLS, which was meant for protecting the nesting grounds of the Giant leatherback turtle.





N. Swapna

Trucks carrying rubble from razed hills to make roads through coastal rainforests enroute Indira point are seen in this photograph from 2023. Landslides in such razed areas are not uncommon.





ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

[A Monumental Folly - NITI Aayog's Development Plans for GNI \(A report by Kalpavriksh, December 2021\).](#)

[Nicobar Nightmare \(Frontline Cover Package, 27 January 2023\).](#)

[The Great Nicobar - Mega Threats to Climate, Biodiversity and People \(Sanctuary Special Issue, April 2023\).](#)

[Questions about Great Nicobar Island and the project raised in the Parliament](#)

MAPS:

[Land details within proposed project area \(as per Draft Master Plan report, Holistic Development of GNI by AECOM, August 2021\).](#)

[Proposed land use plan for GNI \(as per Draft Master Plan report, Holistic Development of GNI by AECOM, August 2021\).](#)