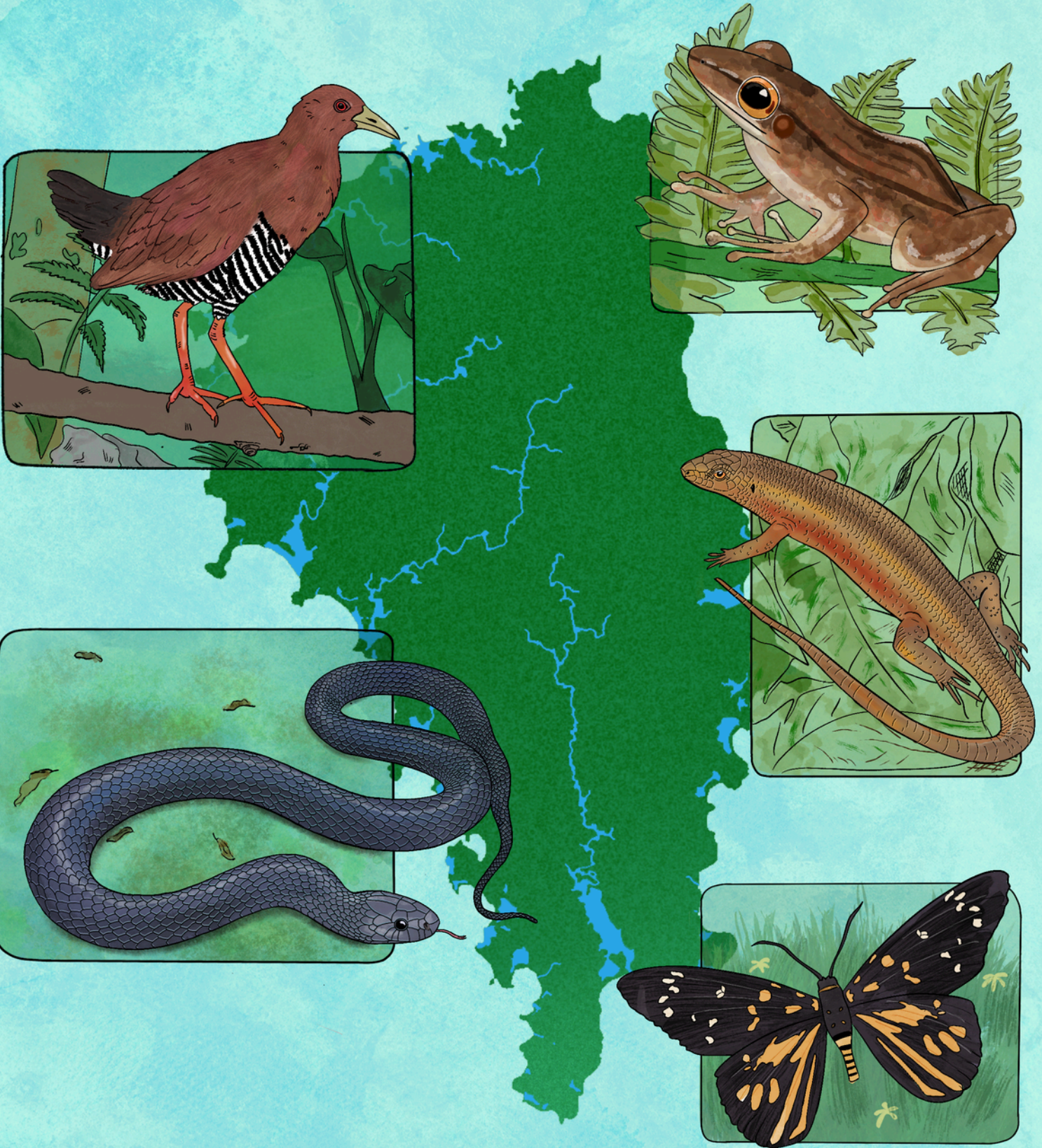


GREAT NICOBAR

A Contemporary Conservation Timeline



**Revised and updated
December 2025**

In focus: These are five of the many species described for the first time from Great Nicobar Island between 2020 and 2025.



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 (GNI) has been home to rich biodiversity and indigenous communities for millenia. Hosting a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, two National Parks, and abundant coastal and marine diversity, this island is of critical 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 has been prepared by Environment and Ecology Research Group (EERG), Centre for Technology Alternatives for Rural Areas, IIT Bombay. Initial financial support was provided by 2 projects executed by EERG: 'Geo-Spatial Mapping of 28 years of media reporting on livelihoods & wildlife conservation in India" supported by DST-GiSE Hub, IIT-B & "A digital archive of Great Nicobar Island" supported by JPN Centre of Excellence in the Humanities, IIT Indore. Earlier versions of the timeline were published in September 2023, December 2024, & May 2025. Prepared by Srishti Saxena, Kamal Kumari, Abhimanyu Sengupta, & Pankaj Sekhsaria with critical help & inputs from a number of other researchers.

Contact: psekhsaria@gmail.com

Published on 01.05.2026

Cover: Five of the several new species that have been described from GNI in the last five years - the Great Nicobar Crake (*Rallina* sp.), Chozha Stream Frog (*Hylarana chozhai*), Irwin's Wolf Snake (*Lycodon irwini*), Datta-Roy's Skink (*Eutropis dattaroyi*), & Gerhard's Moth (*Psaphis gerhardi*). That new species are still being found here speaks to the extraordinary richness of the island's biodiversity, and how much of it remains to be discovered.

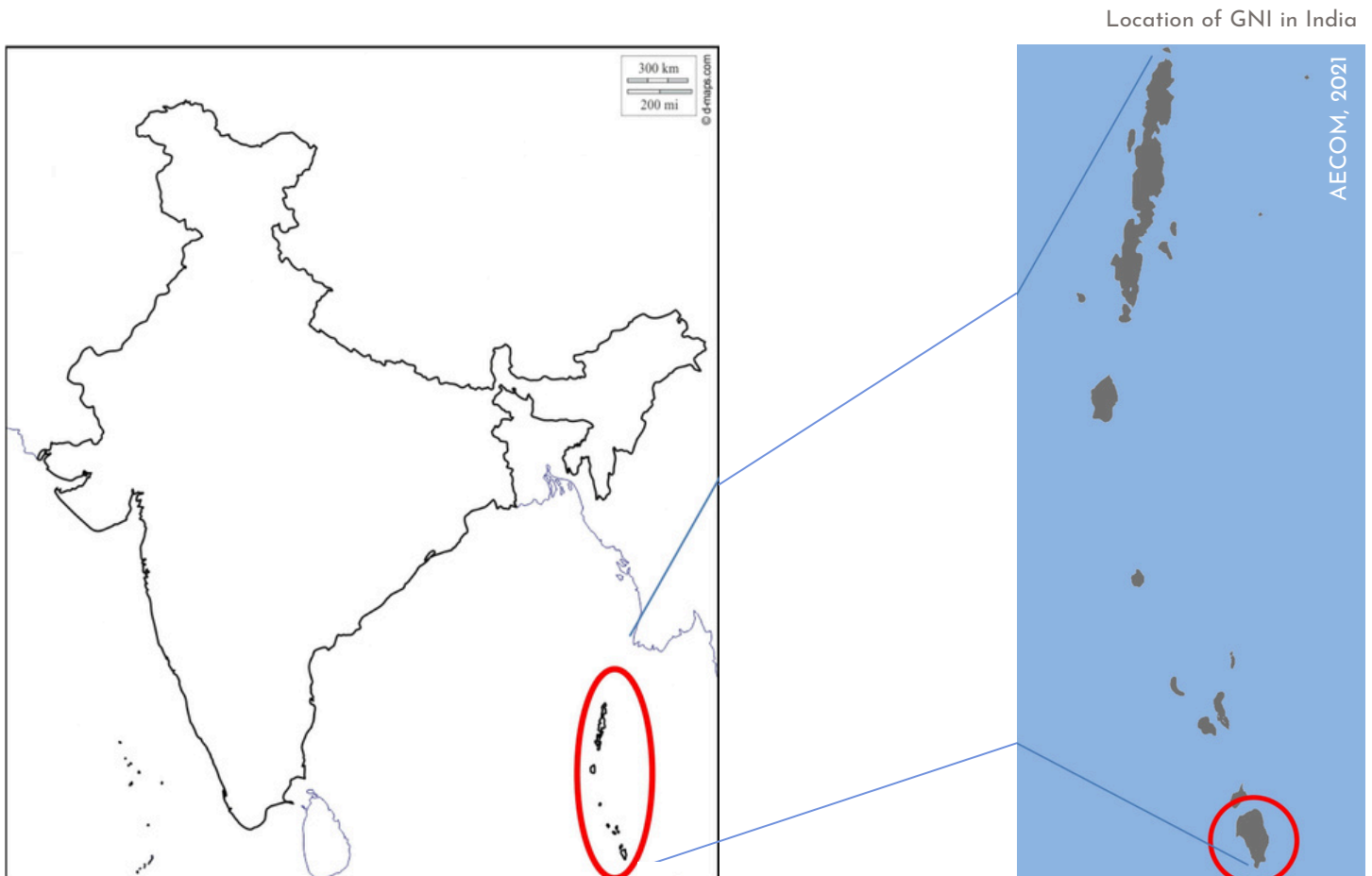
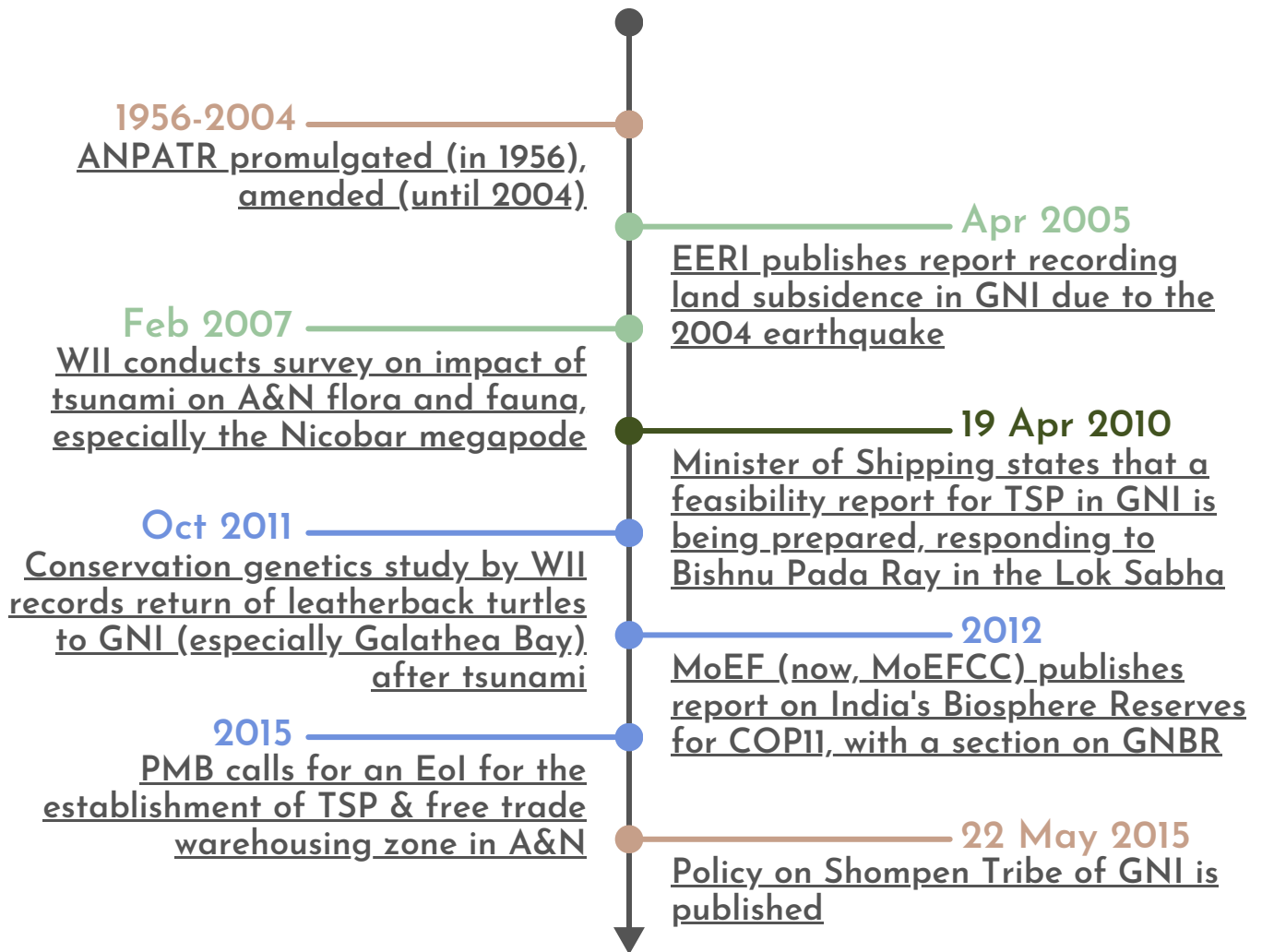
(Cover illustration and design: Shikha Sreenivas)

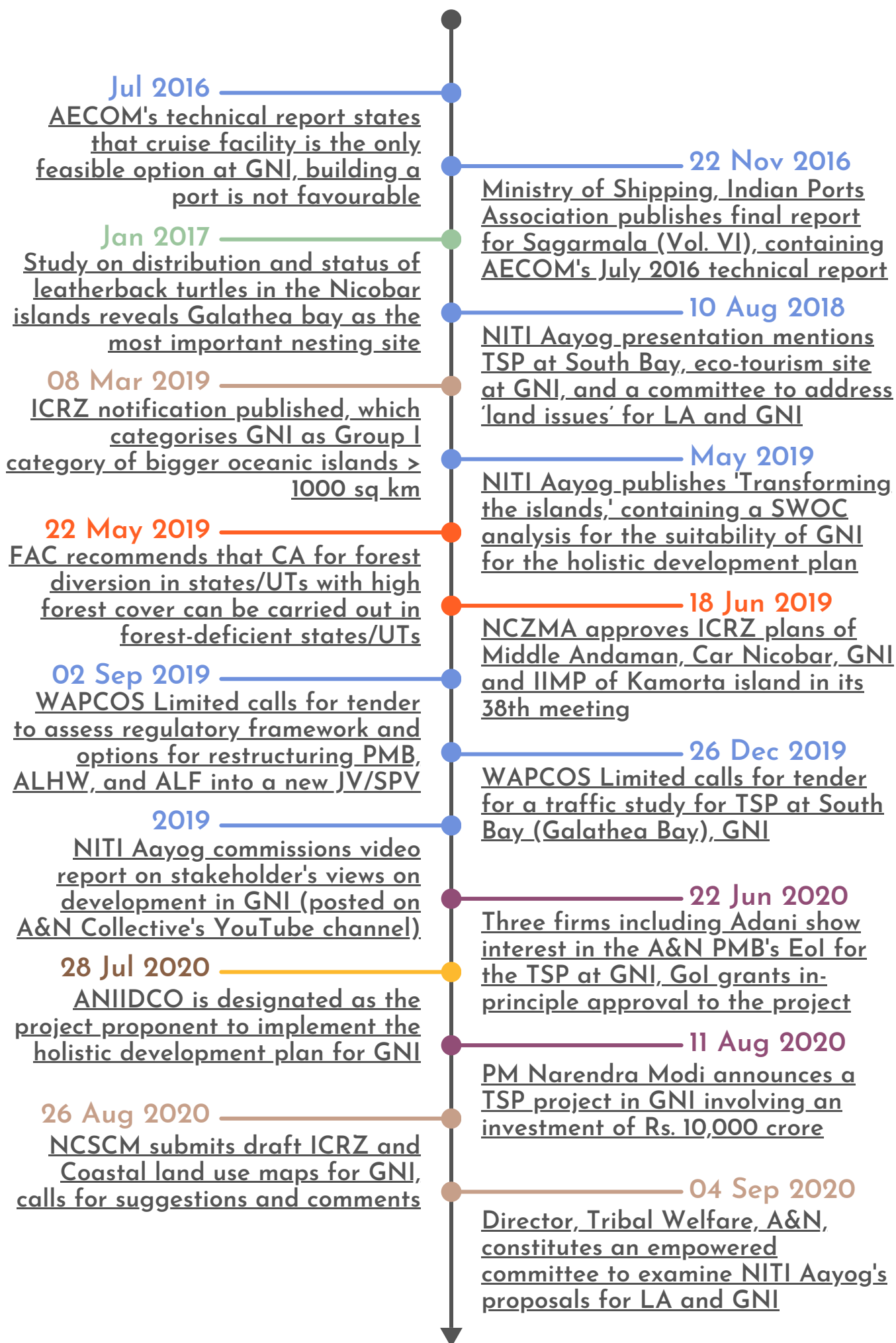
Legend

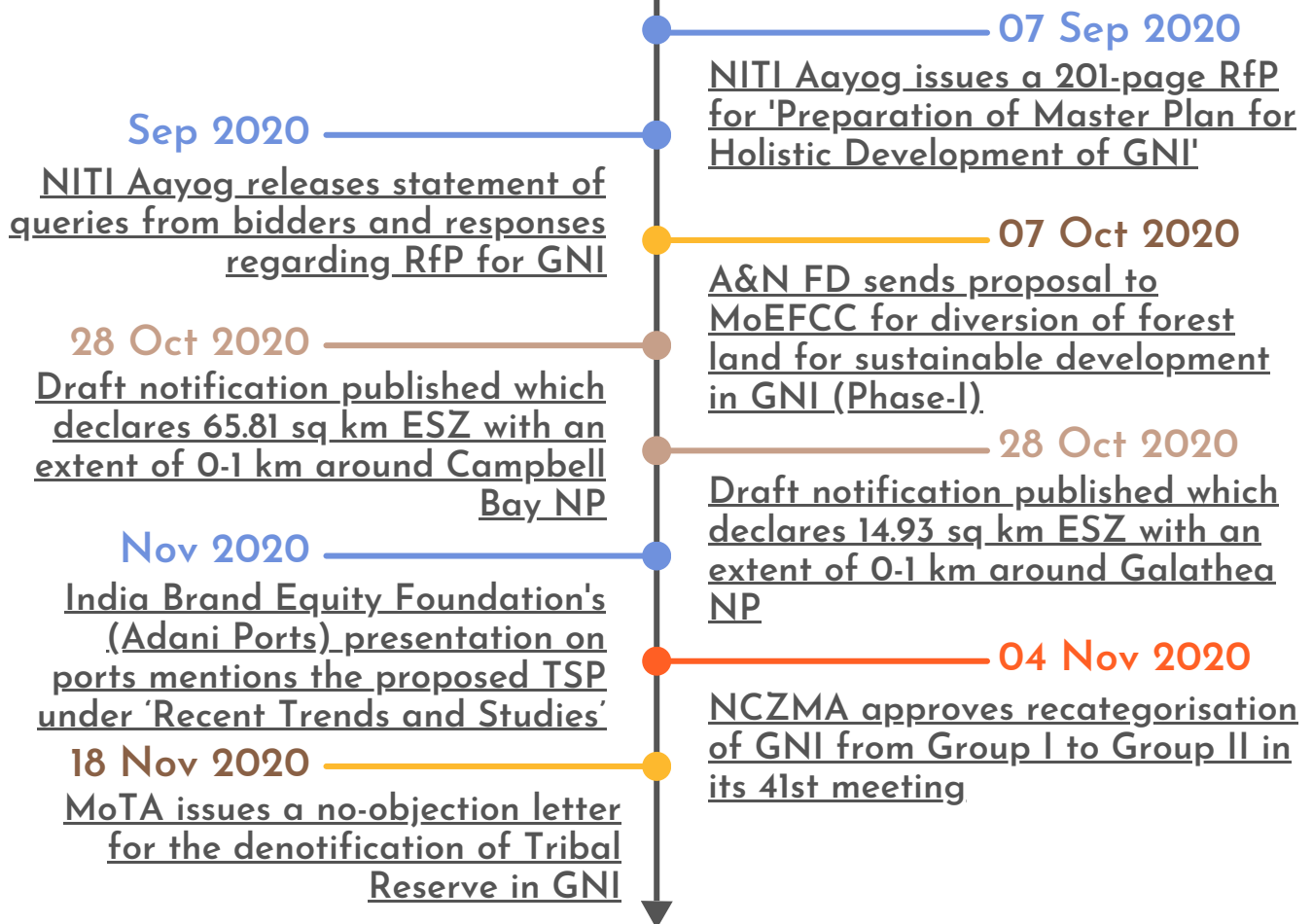
- Gazette notifications, notices, policies / action plans
- Technical reports, tenders, vision documents
- Independent scientific reports and articles
- Minutes of meeting, meeting notices
- News articles/ videos
- Representations from civilians, experts, and parliamentarians
- Documents for project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

LIST OF ACRONYMS

A&N: Andaman and Nicobar Islands	IISRO: Indian Space Research Organisation
AAI: Airports Authority of India	JV: Joint venture
AAJVS: Andaman Adim Janjati Vikas Samiti	LA: Little Andaman
AC: Assistant Commissioner	LG: Lieutenant Governor
ACF: Assistant Conservator of Forest	MHA: Ministry of Home Affairs
ALF: Andaman Labour Force	MoEF: Ministry of Environment and Forests
ALHW: Andaman Lakshadweep Harbour Works	MoEFCC: Ministry of Environment, Forests, and Climate Change
ANCZMA: Andaman & Nicobar Coastal Zone Management Authority	MoPSW: Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways
ANFD: Andaman & Nicobar Forest Department	MoTA: Ministry of Tribal Affairs
ANIIDCO: Andaman and Nicobar Islands Integrated Development Corporation Limited	MP: Member of Parliament
ANPATR: Andaman and Nicobar (Protection of Aboriginal Tribes) Regulation, 1956	NCCR: National Centre for Coastal Research
ANPCC: Andaman & Nicobar Pollution Control Committee	NCSCM: National Centre for Sustainable Coastal Management
AnSI: Anthropological Survey of India	NCST: National Commission for Scheduled Tribes
APWD: Andaman Public Works Department	NCZMA: National Coastal Zone Management Authority
CA: Compensatory Afforestation	NGT: National Green Tribunal
CERD: Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination	NIO: National Institute of Oceanography
CM: Chief Minister	NIOT: National Institute of Ocean Technology
COP11: 11th Conference of the Parties	NOC: No Objection Certificate
CRZ: Coastal Regulation Zone	NP: National Park
DLC: District Level Committee	NTPC: National Thermal Power Corporation
DPR: Detailed Project Report	OIL: Oil India Limited
DSW: Directorate of Social Welfare	ONGC: Oil and Natural Gas Corporation of India
EAC: Expert Appraisal Committee	PA: Protected Area
EC: Environmental Clearance	PCCF: Principal Chief Conservator of Forests
EERI: Earthquake Engineering Research Institute	PfR: Request for Proposals
EIA: Environmental Impact Assessment	PIL: Public Interest Litigation
EMP: Environmental Management Plan	PM: Prime Minister
Eoi: Expression of Interest	PMB: Port Management Board
ESZ: Eco-Sensitive Zone	PVTG: Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group
EXIM: Export-Import	RFCTLARR: Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013
FAC: Forest Advisory Committee	RfP: Pre-feasibility Report
FD: Forest Department	RTI: Right To Information
FRA: The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006	SACON: Salim Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History
GNBR: Great Nicobar Biosphere Reserve	SDLC: Sub-Divisional Level Committee
GNI: Great Nicobar Island	SDSU: Strategic Decision Support Unit
Gol: Government of India	SIA: Social Impact Assessment
HC: High Court	SLMC: State Level Monitoring Committee
HPC: High Powered Committee	SPV: Special Purpose Vehicle
IAS: Indian Administrative Service	TISS: Tata Institute of Social Sciences
ICRZ: Island Coastal Zone Regulation	ToR: Terms of Reference
ICTT: International Container Transshipment Terminal	TSP: Transshipment port
IIMP: Integrated Island Management Plan	UN: United Nations
IIT: Indian Institute of Technology	WII: Wildlife Institute of India
PZ: Island Protection Zone Notification	WLS: Wildlife Sanctuary
	ZSI: Zoological Survey of India







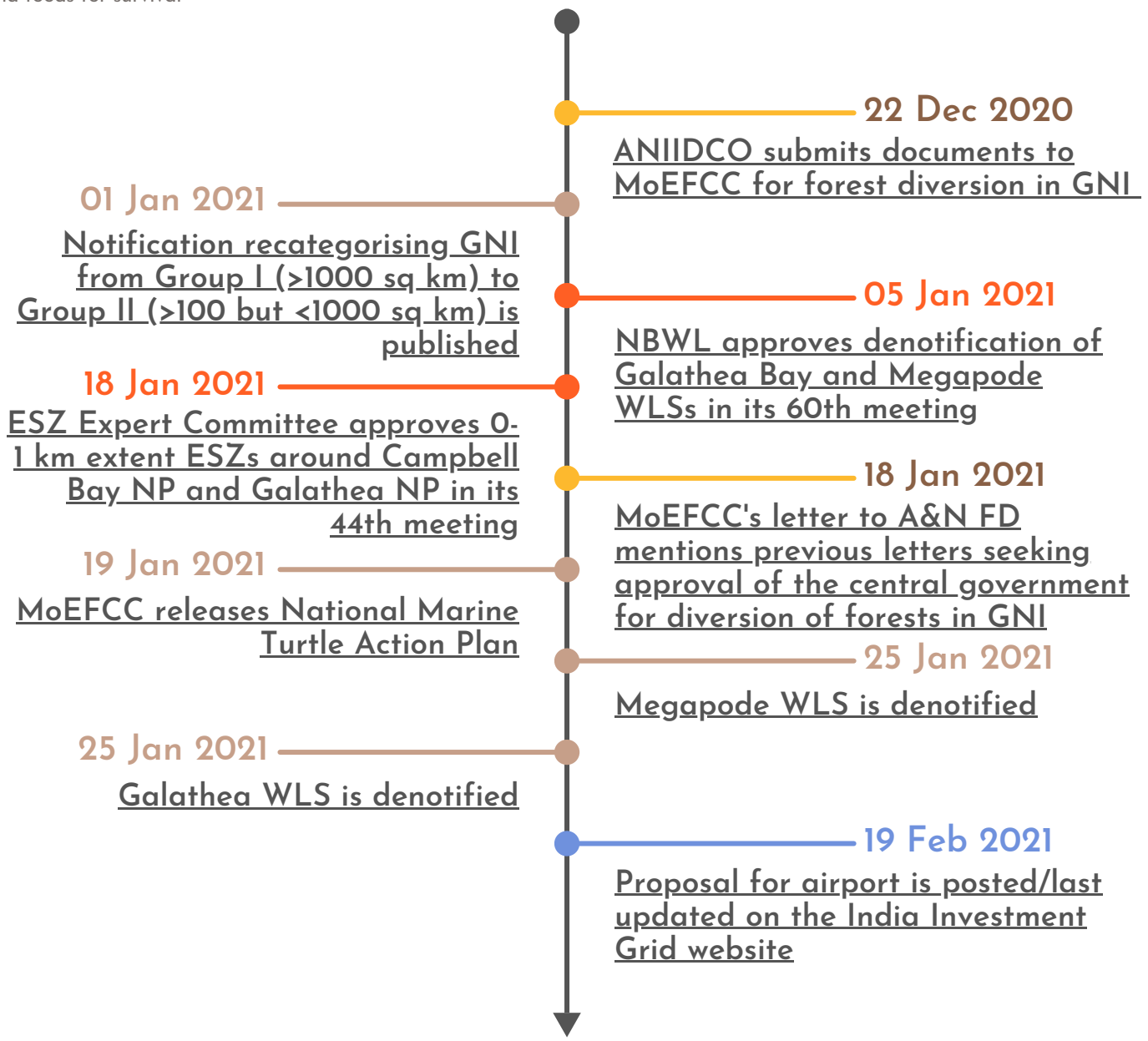
The eastern flank of Galathea Bay, where the port is proposed, is visited by four species of marine turtles to lay their eggs every nesting season





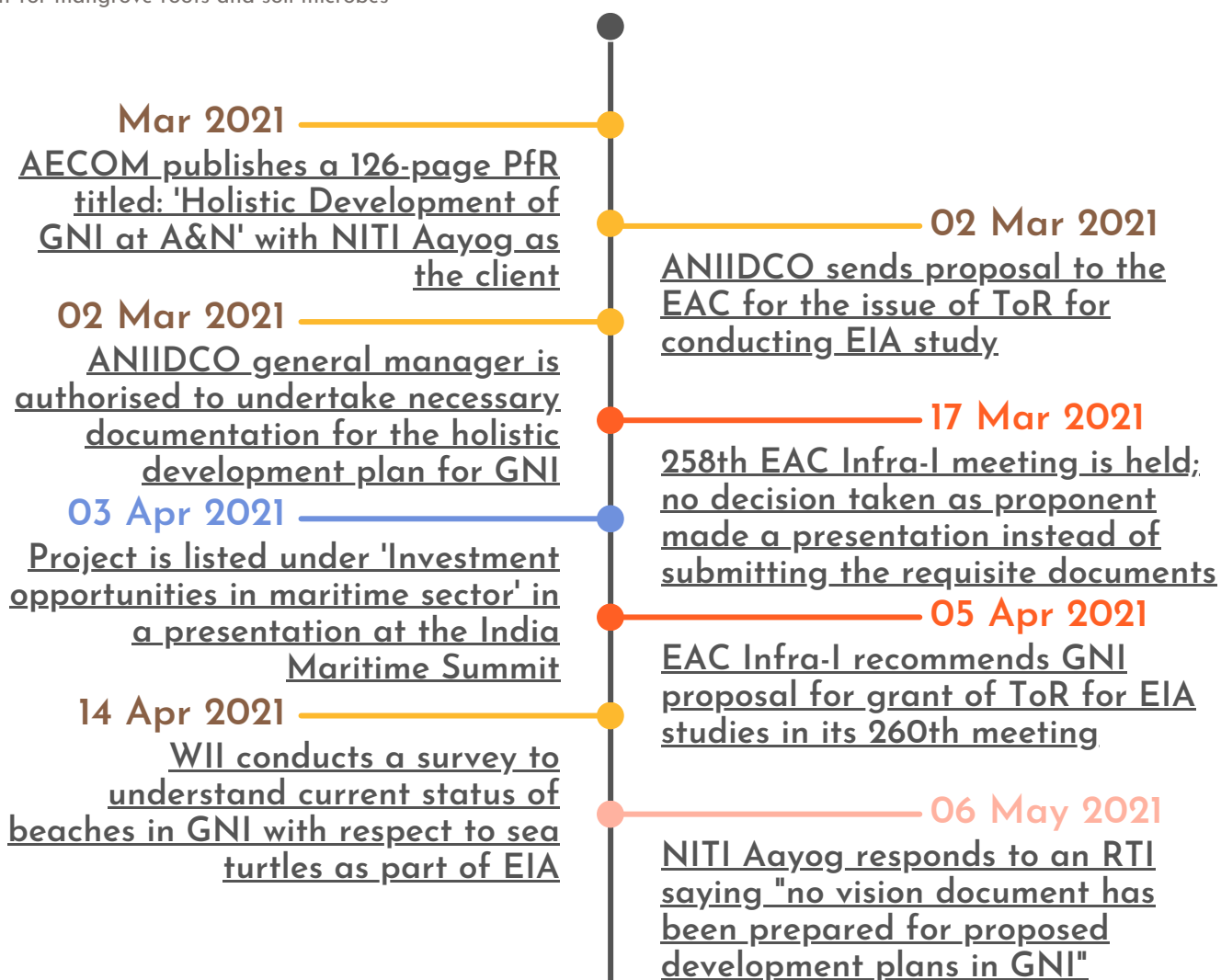
Aashish Gokhale

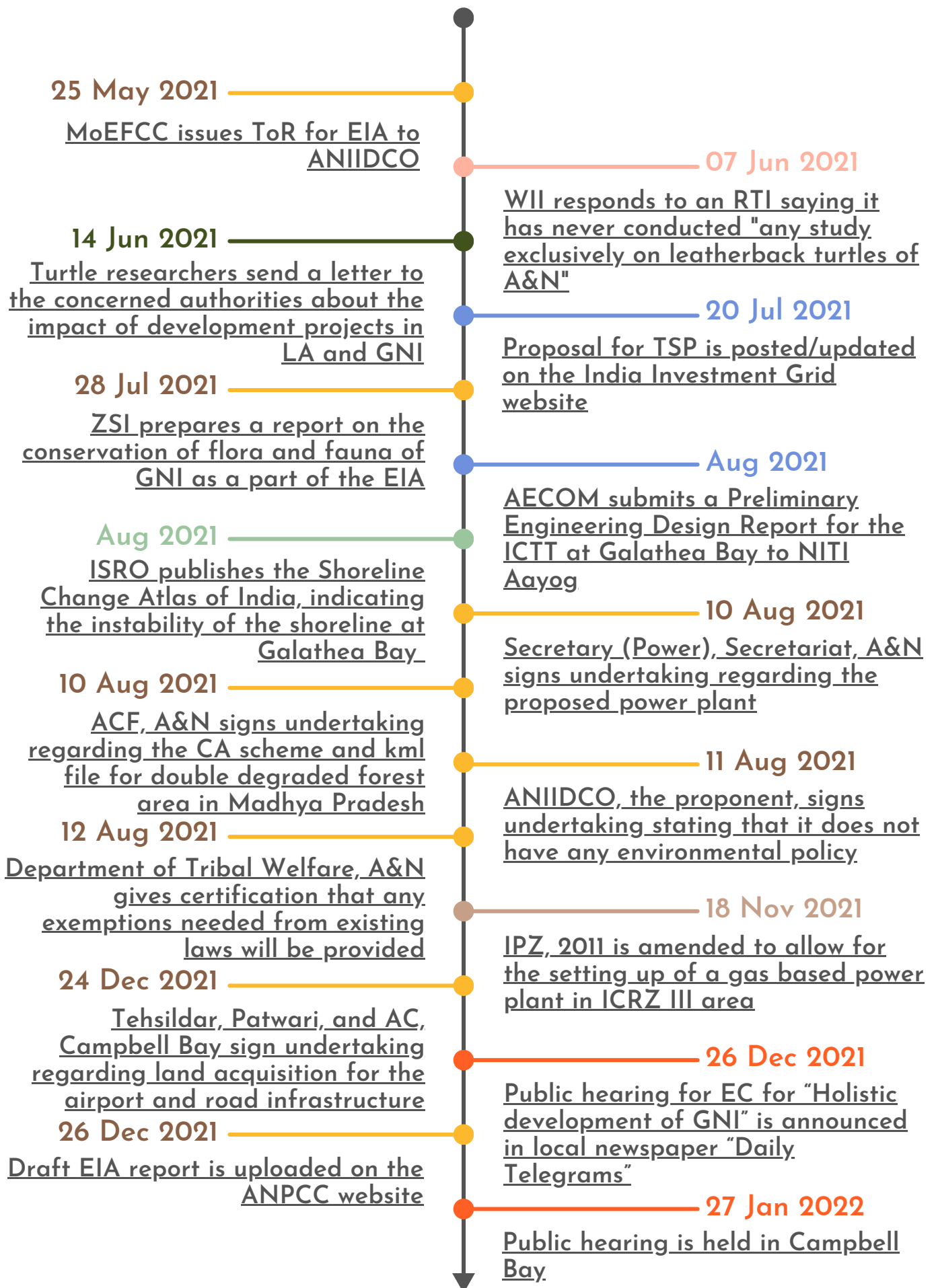
A young Nicobar long-tailed macaque, an endemic species found in three islands of Nicobar group: Great Nicobar, Little Nicobar, and Katchal. About 9.6 lakh trees are slated to be axed for the GNI project, taking away their preferred habitats and pushing them to depend on human spaces and foods for survival

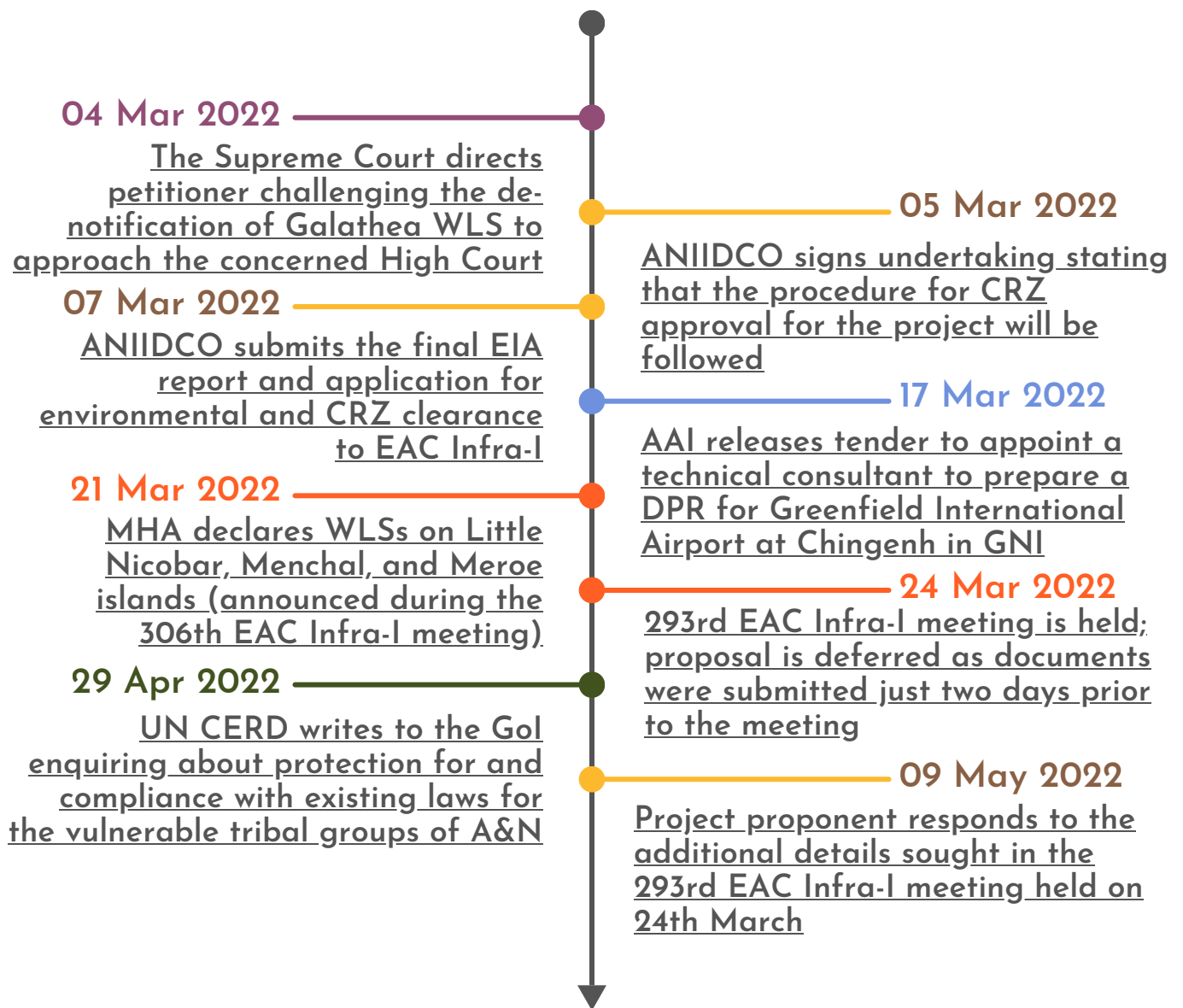




A Fiddler Crab as seen on a beach in Campbell Bay. Their burrows allow water to penetrate deep into the sand making it an oxygen rich environment for mangrove roots and soil microbes







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, tasks Syama Prasad Mookerjee Port Trust with preparation of DPR for the proposed ICTT

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

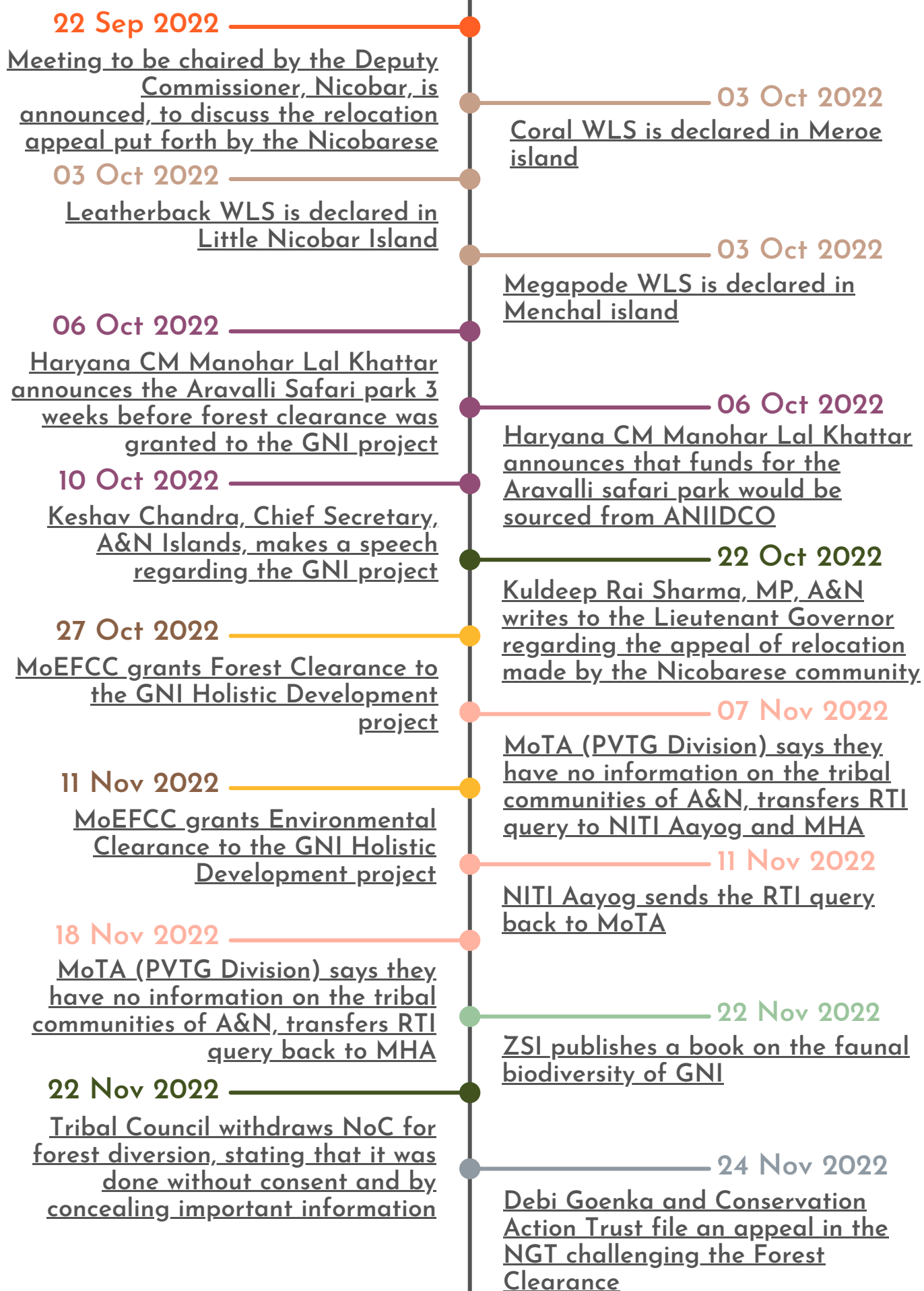
The Nicobarese community appeals for relocation to Chingenh and Pulo Bhabhi (sites proposed for the port and airport).

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

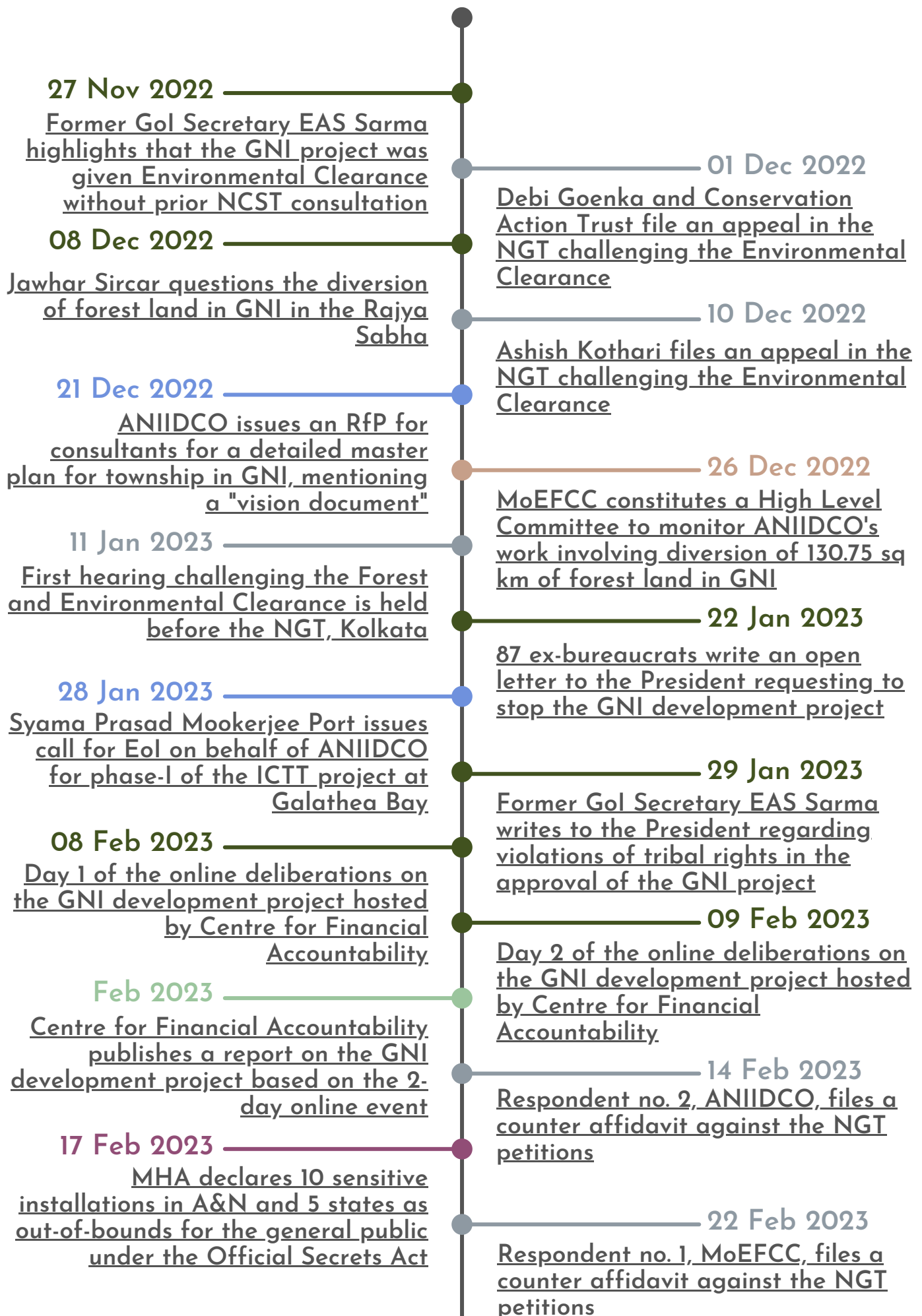






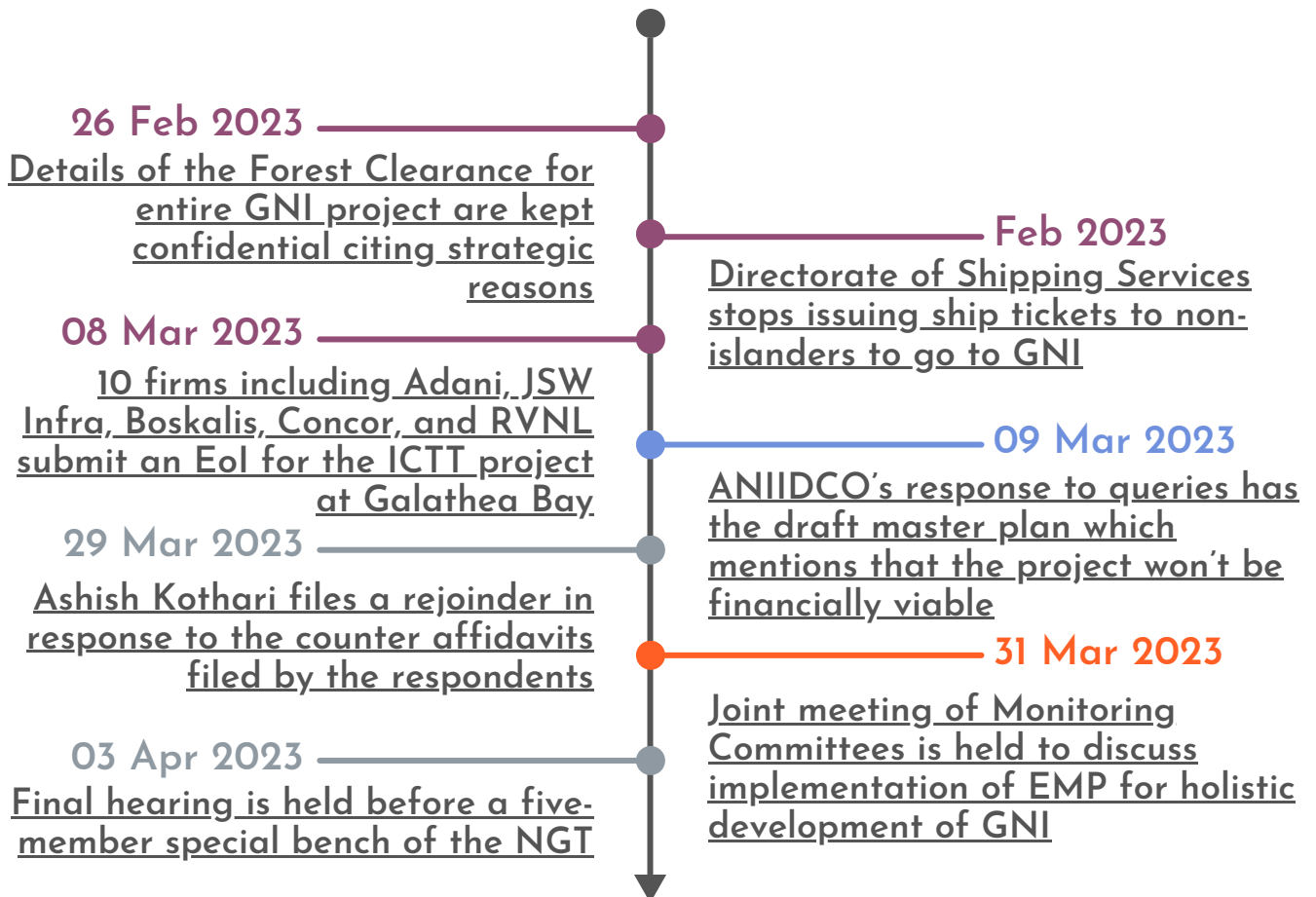
N. Swapna

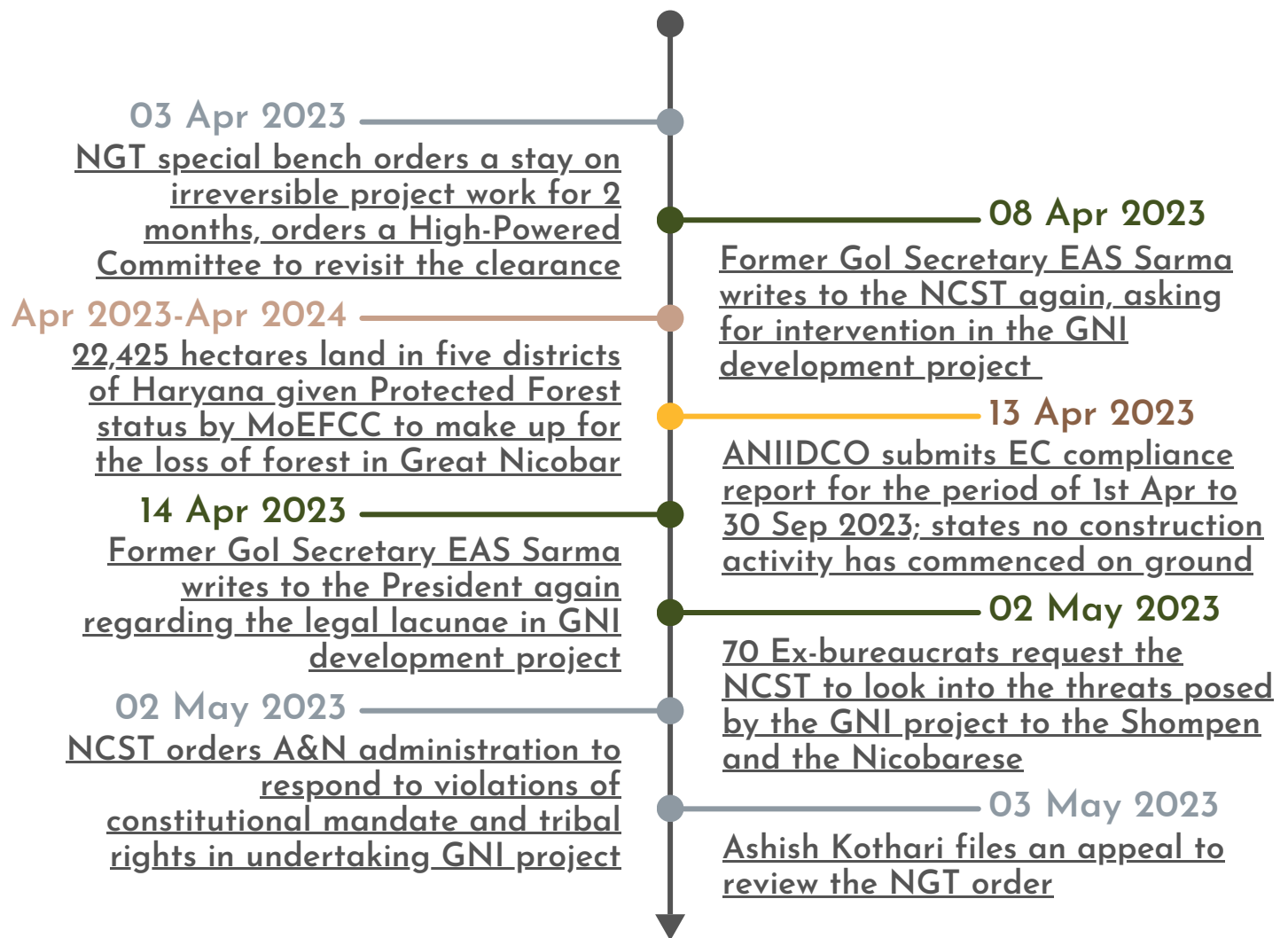
"When one tries to look upwards to find out what tree it is, it is not just one but many." This photograph from Great Nicobar Biosphere Reserve taken in 2023 is best described by this statement from the EIA report of the GNI project, which is used to justify why an intensive survey was not conducted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





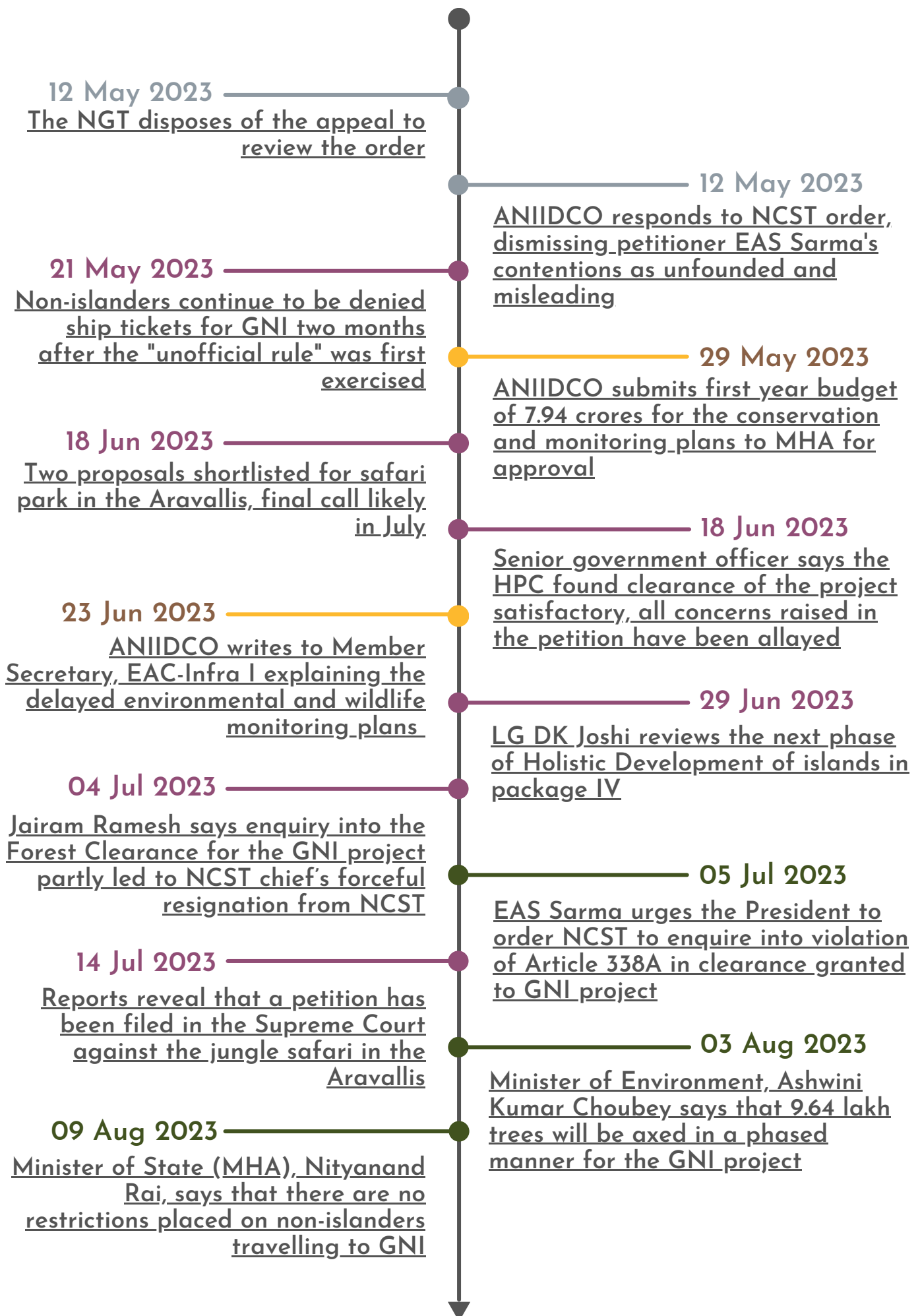
The Nicobar Megapode is a shy and elusive resident of the coastal forests of Great Nicobar. It lost 71% of its population in the tsunami of December 2004. About 51 active nests of the bird are said to be located in the site of the GNI project. This picture was taken from the now denotified Galathea Bay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





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

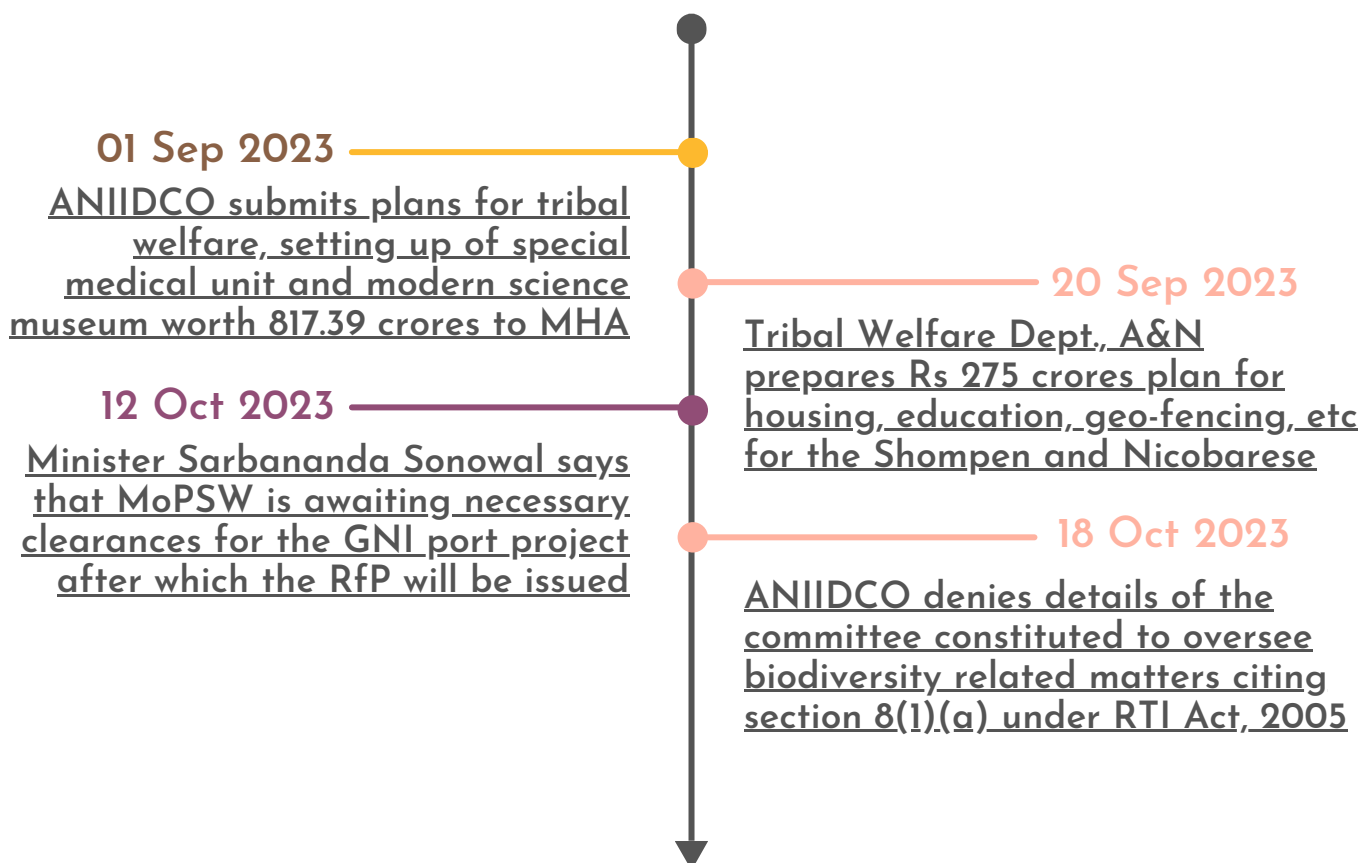


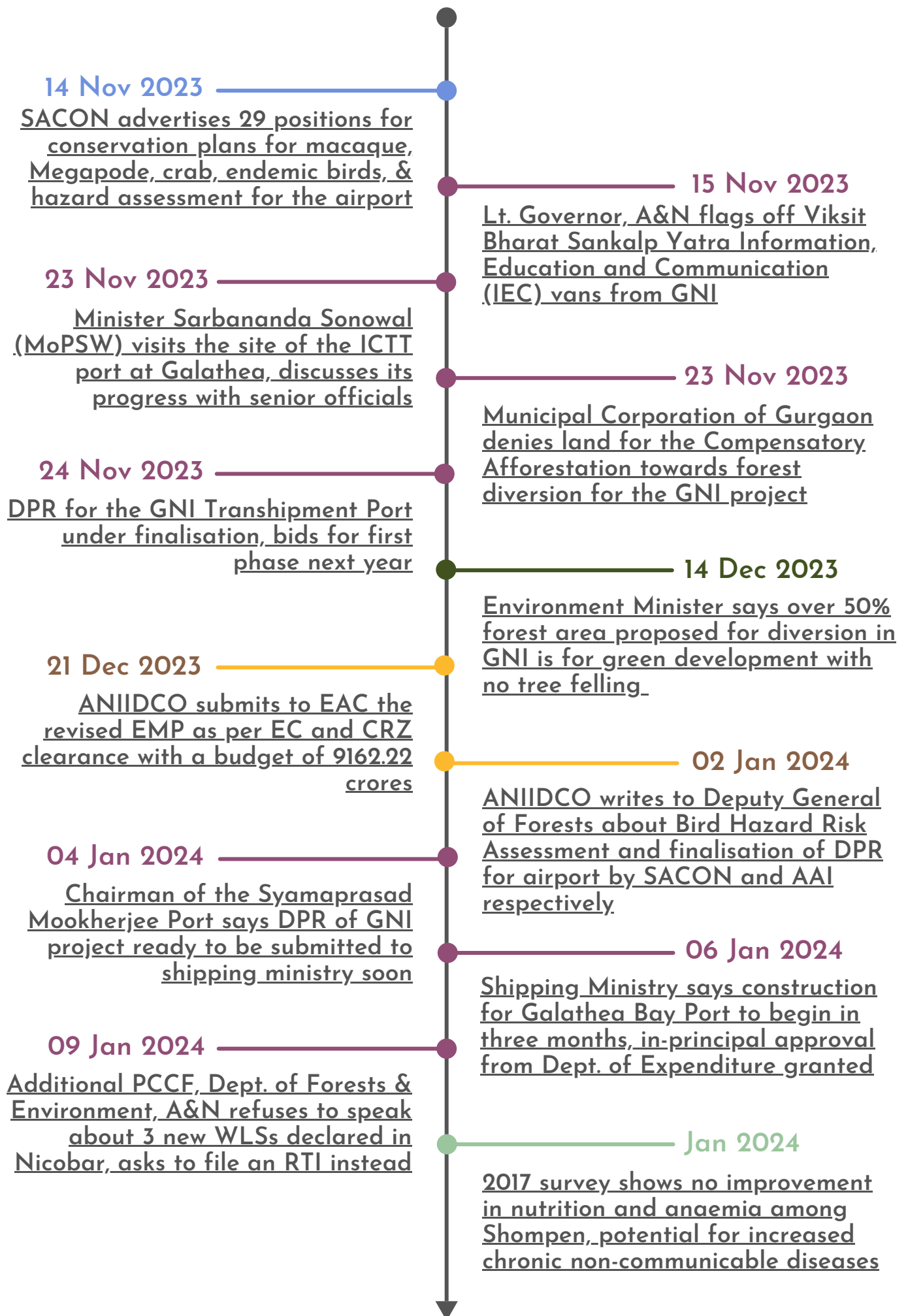




N Swapna

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 to protect the nesting grounds of the Giant leatherback turtle





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

20 Feb 2024

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

24 Feb 2024

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

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

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

President Droupadi 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





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

14 Mar 2024

Notification issued for SIA consultation for 404.8194 ha of affected area spanning 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

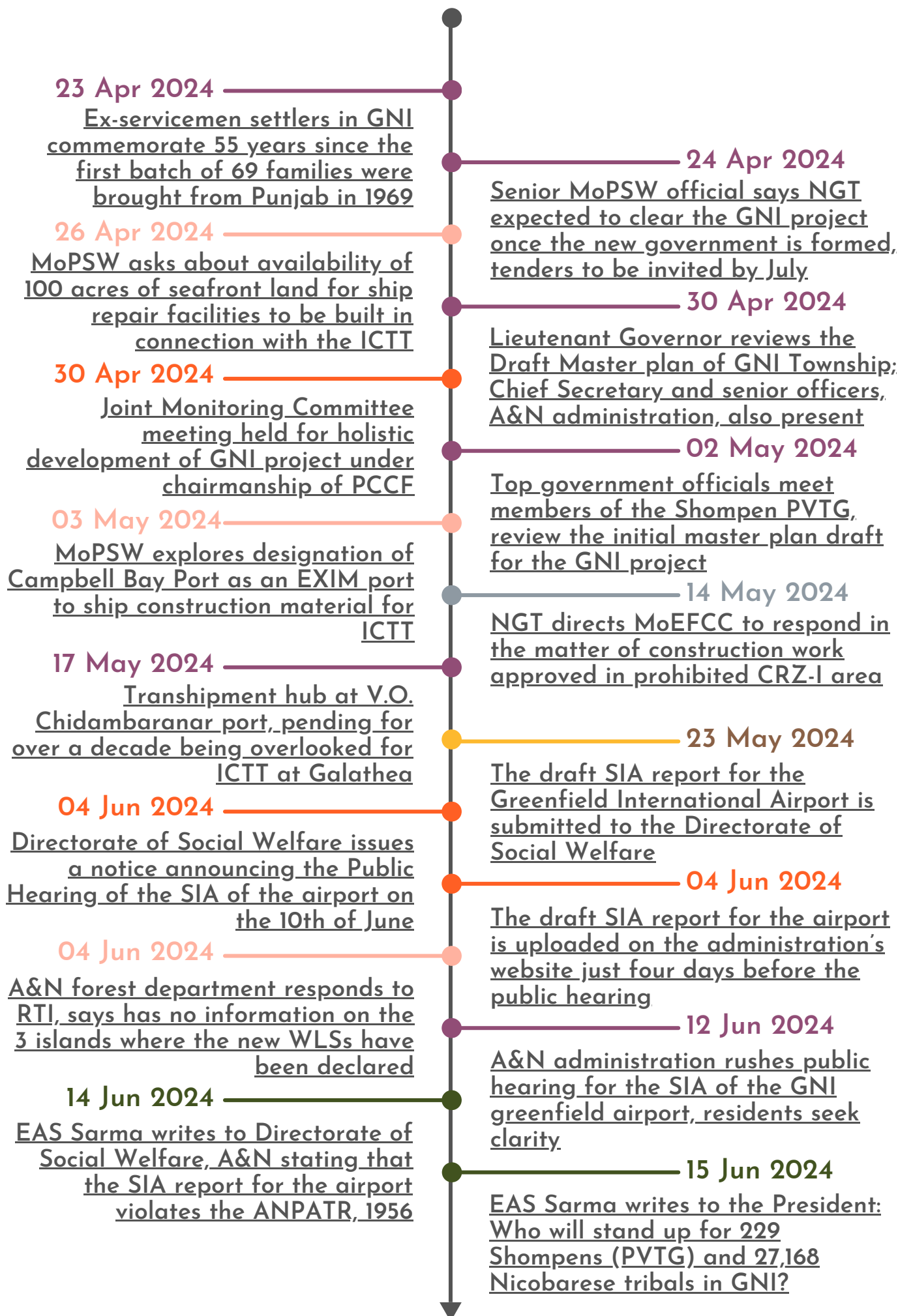
Loksabha elections held in A&N Islands, media articles wrongly report that Shompen voted for the first time, they had voted in 2014

04 Apr 2024

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

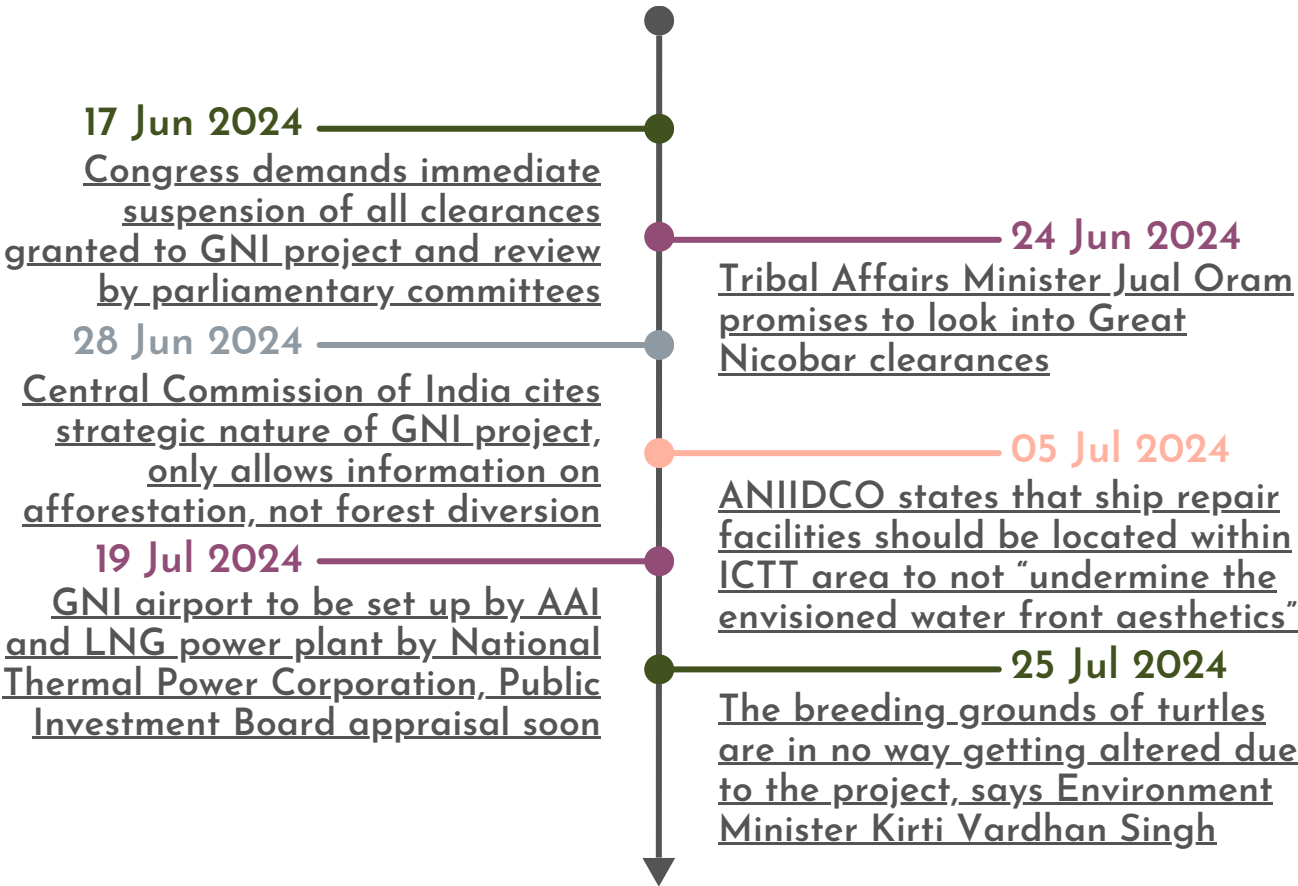
15 Apr 2024

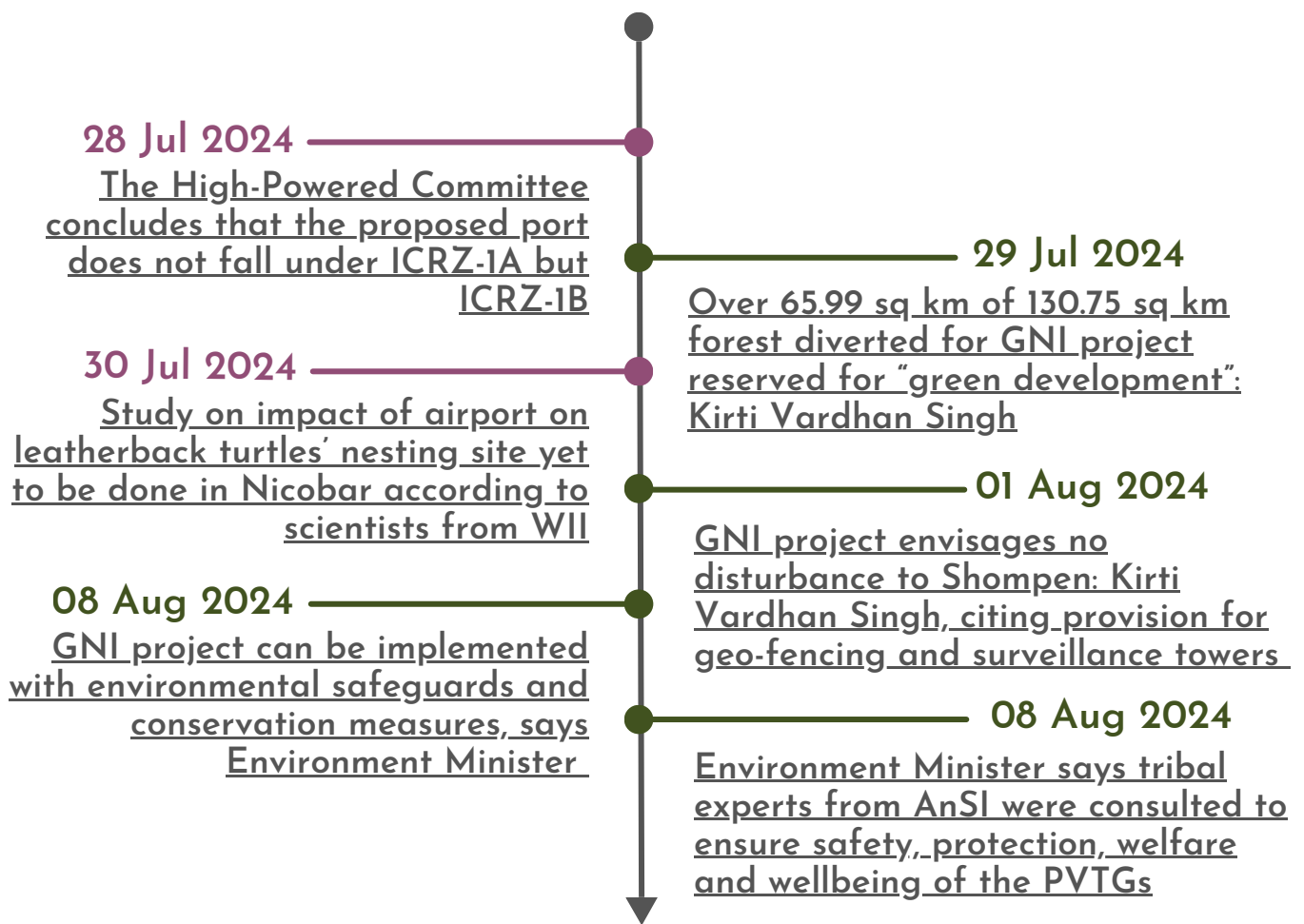
Environmentalists, anthropologists, scholars write a rebuttal to ANIIDCO's submission, urge NCST and MoTA to scrap the GNI project



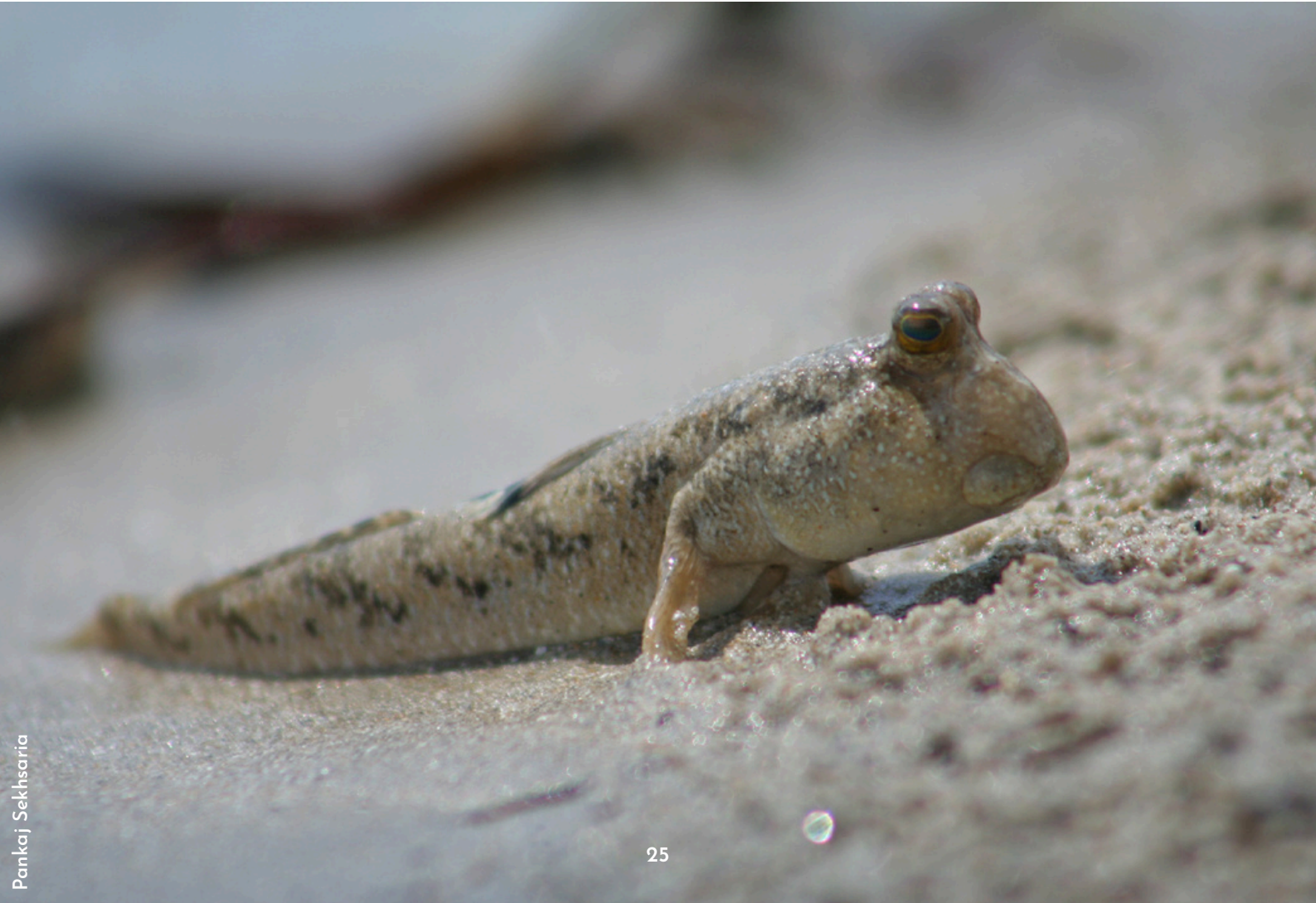


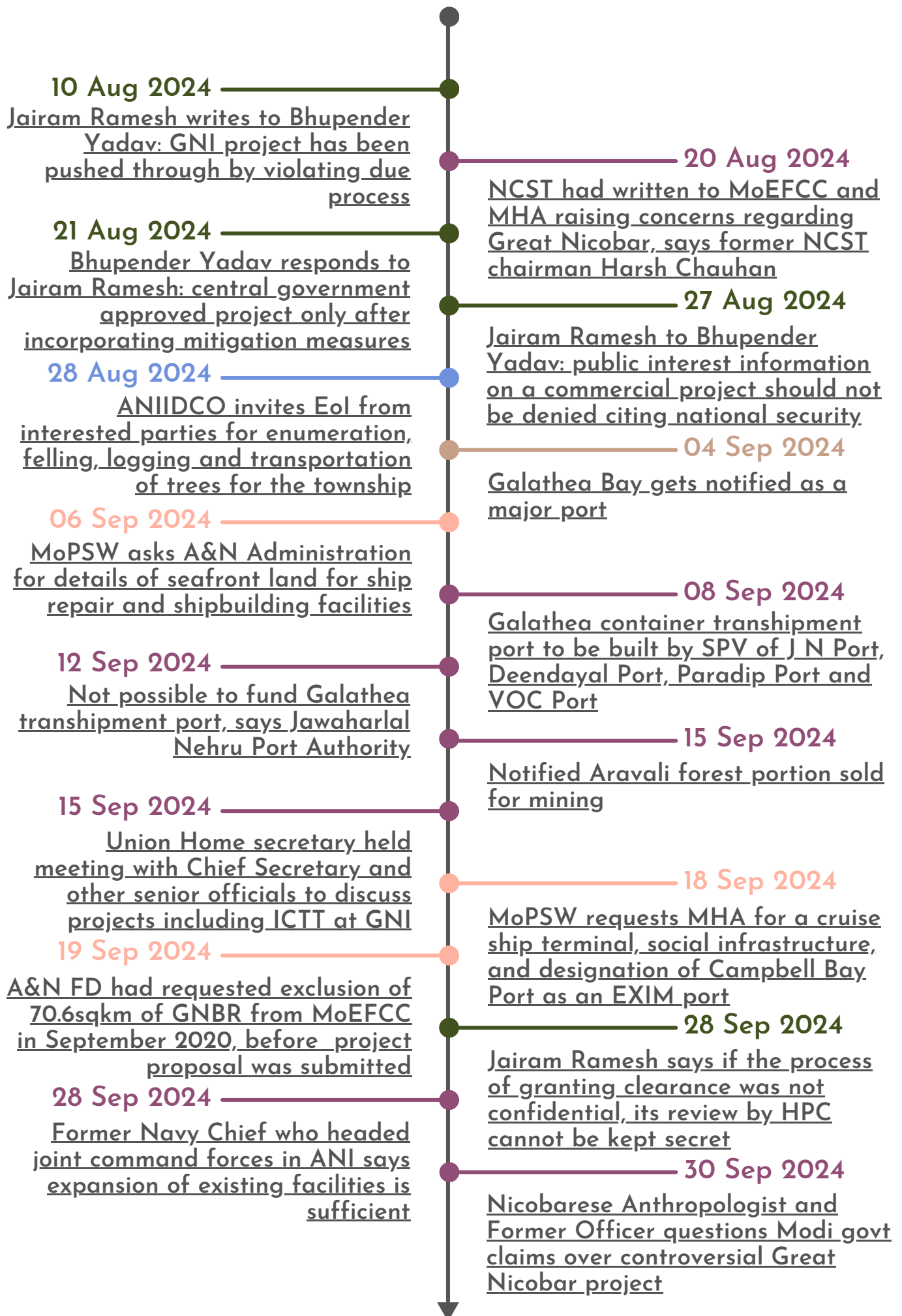
A view of the Campbell Bay National Park as seen from a residential area in Campbell Bay





Mudskippers are amphibious fish found on Great Nicobar Island who can breathe through their skin and have modified fins that allow them to crawl outside of water in intertidal mudflats and mangrove forest. They are an indicator species for intertidal ecosystems





04 Oct 2024

Managing Director, ANIIDCO chairs a meeting on compliance of conditions from the Environmental and Forest Clearance

07 Oct 2024

Density of forests in Great Nicobar may be far higher than estimated, flag ecologists

15 Oct 2024

EAS Sarma asks President how UT administration can divert large extents of forest without fulfilling the CA condition

05 Oct 2024

"Shompen people prize their freedom above all", says former AnSI director in Andaman Islands

11 Oct 2024

Joint Survey team constituted to assess existing social infrastructure for shifting govt buildings falling within the site of the new airport

17 Oct 2024

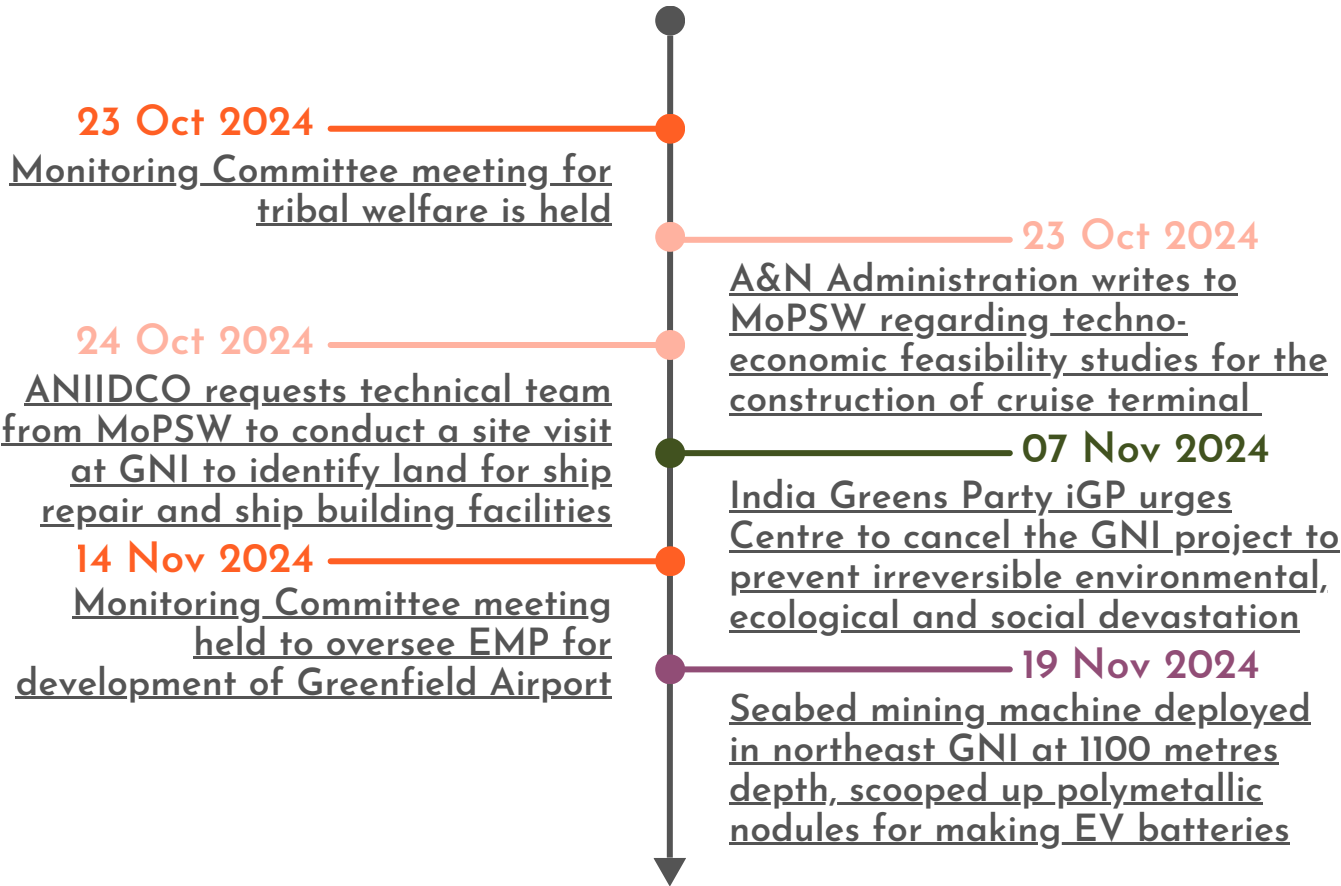
Monitoring Committee meeting held to oversee pollution-related matters

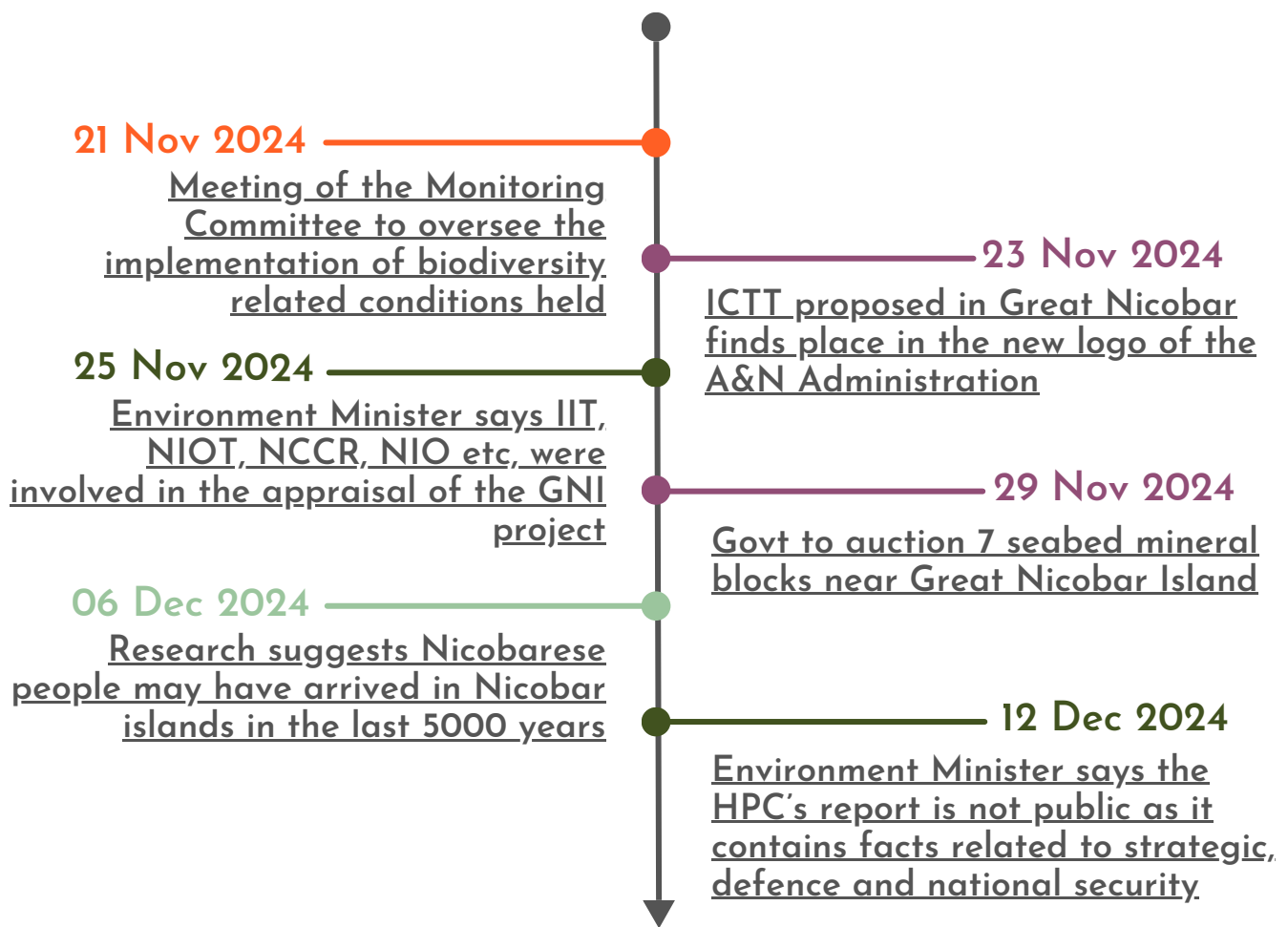
Parts of Campbell Bay submerged because of the earthquake of December 2004



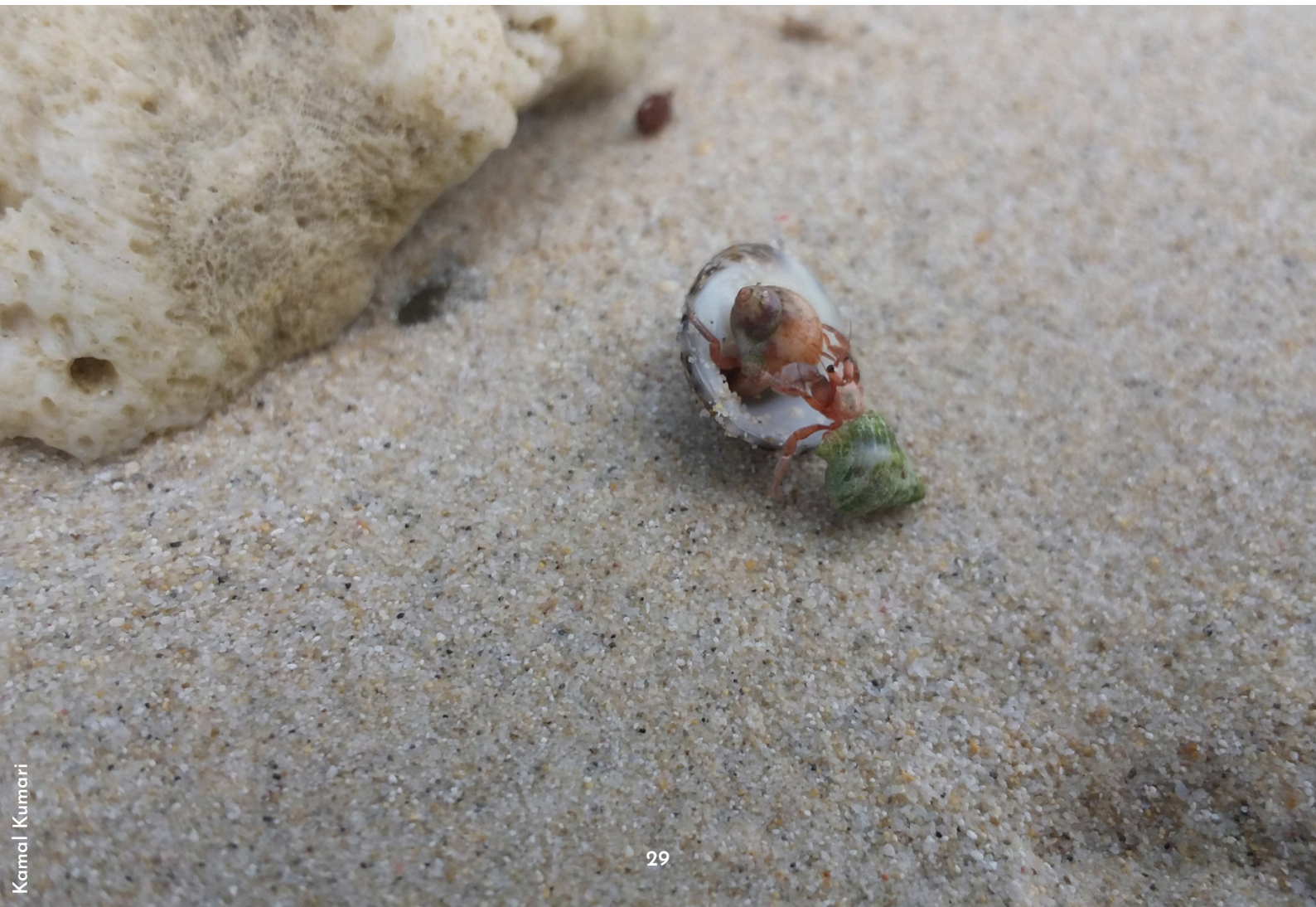


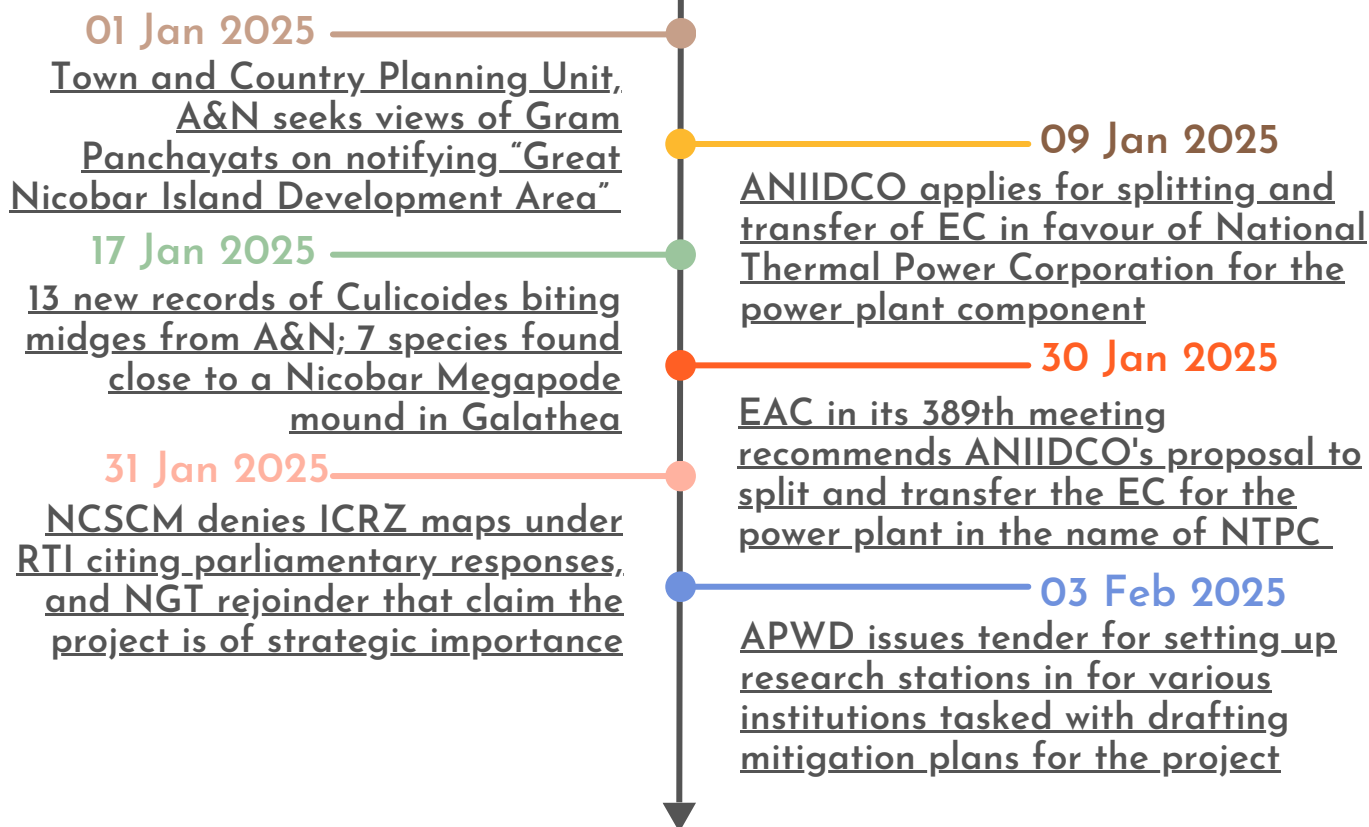
The earthquake and tsunami ravaged eastern coast of Great Nicobar, photographed in 2006





A pair of Hermit Crabs fighting for a shell. Unlike many other crab species, Hermit crabs are soft-bodied and therefore need empty shells of snails to protect themselves. Crabs of different body sizes are often seen in queues waiting in a descending order for the bigger crabs to discard their old shells





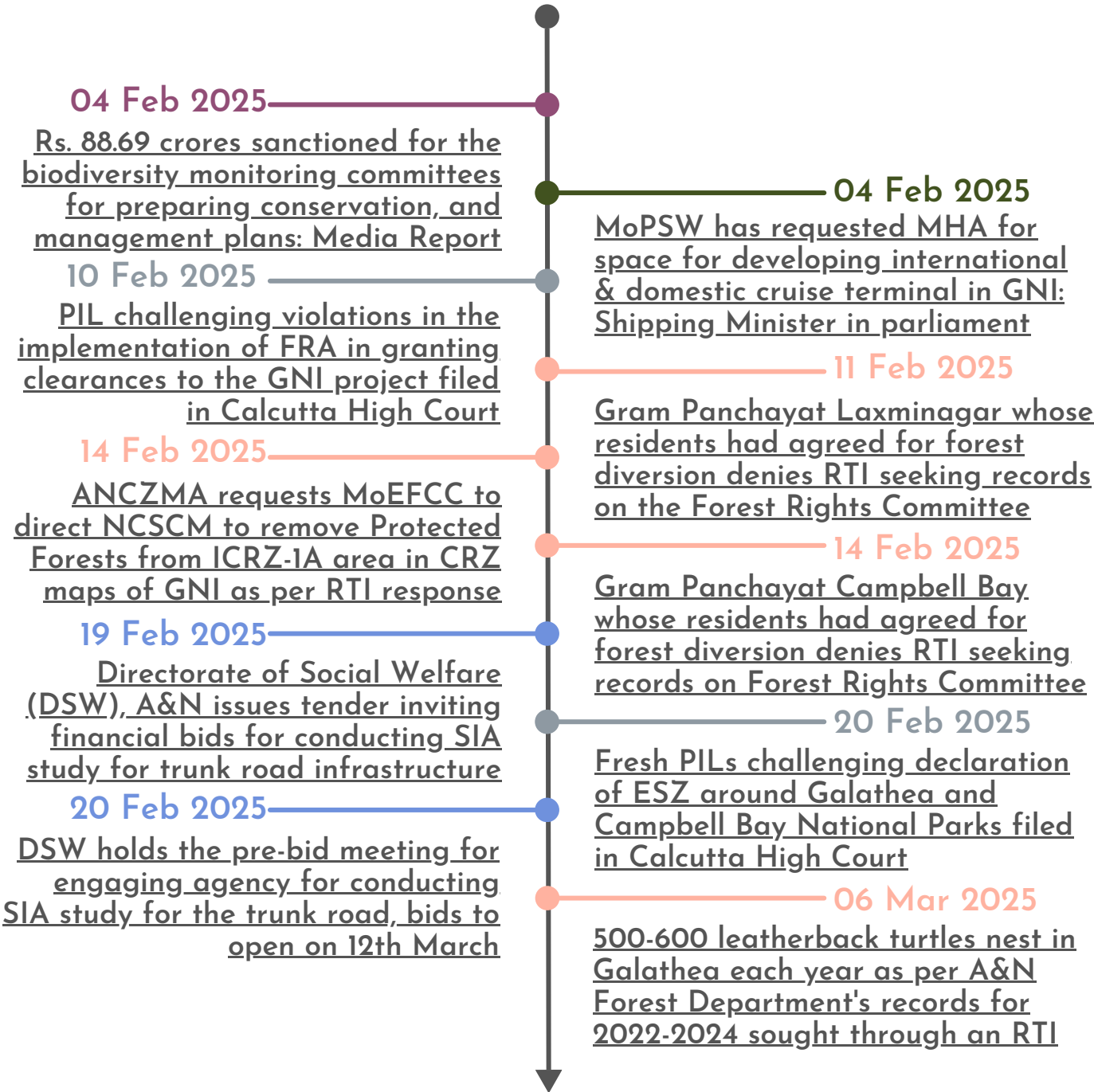
The coast of Gandhinagar - the site of the proposed airport. The beach is visited by the Green Sea, Olive Ridley, and Hawksbill turtles every year. Of the 845 Hectares marked for a Greenfield international airport, 57 Hectares is designated as an Ecologically Sensitive Area and 38 Hectares is a “No Development Zone” - where construction, and land reclamation are strictly prohibited under ICRZ 2019.





Shakti Shrivastav

These visible stone-like structures at the Murdakhadi Beach in Great Nicobar are coral skeletons uplifted likely by seismic events.



06 Mar 2025

Rural Development & Panchayati Raj Committee to collect expert testimonies on implementation of RFCTLARR in GNI: Media report

11 Mar 2025

NTPC invites bids for 5 MW power plant that is situated close to Shompen settlements; "location isn't known", say officials

12 Mar 2025

Jual Oram refuses to comment on project impact on tribal communities in the parliament, says the matter is sub-judice

07 Mar 2025

Lumpy Skin Disease virus from 2022 outbreak in GNI found related to East & SE Asia strain indicating exotic source of introduction

12 Mar 2025

Department of Expenditure granted an in-principle approval for the project in August 2023, says Minister of Planning in parliament

12 Mar 2025

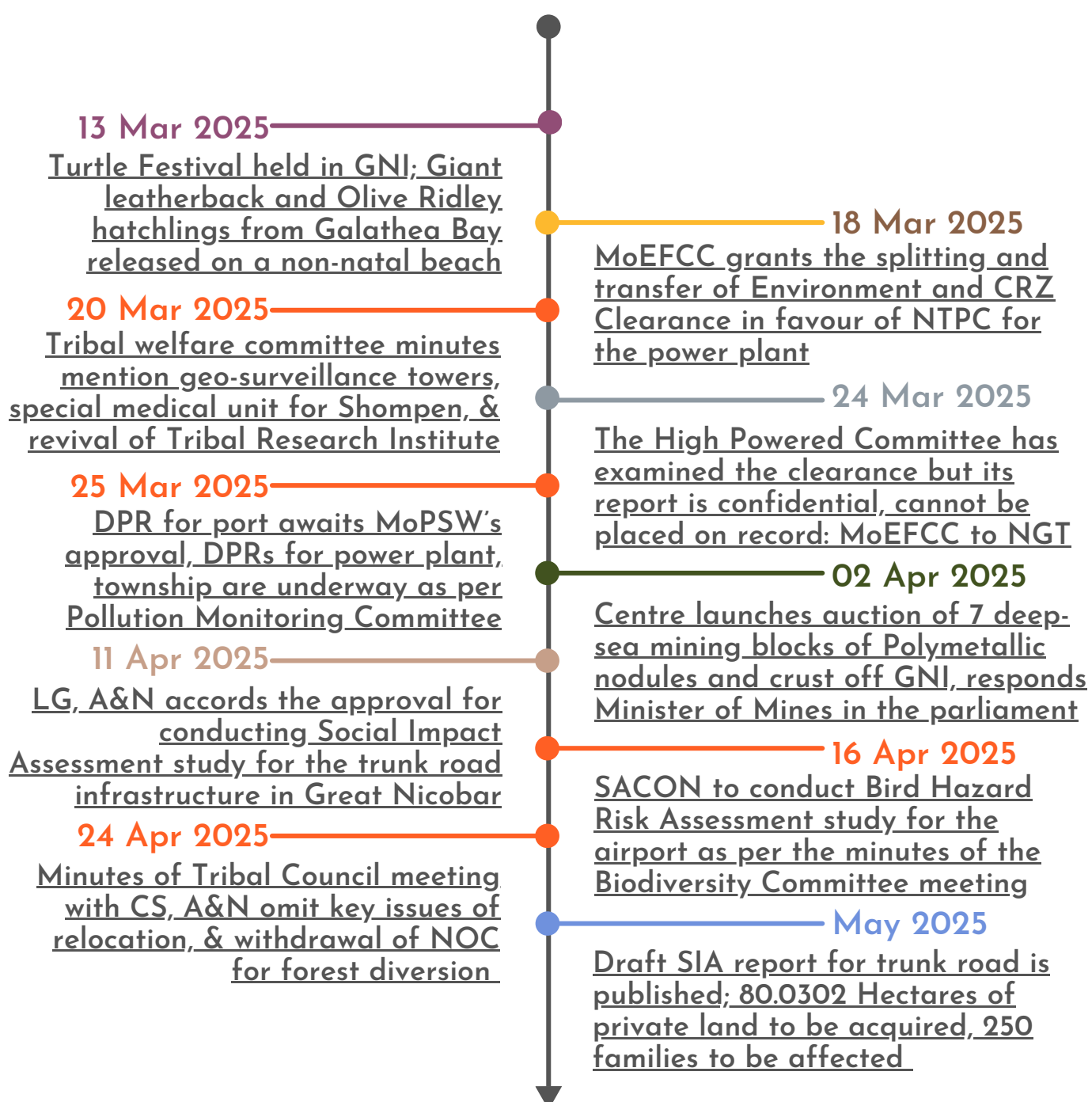
Jual Oram tells parliament that no objections were received from tribal councils or activists, despite documented opposition

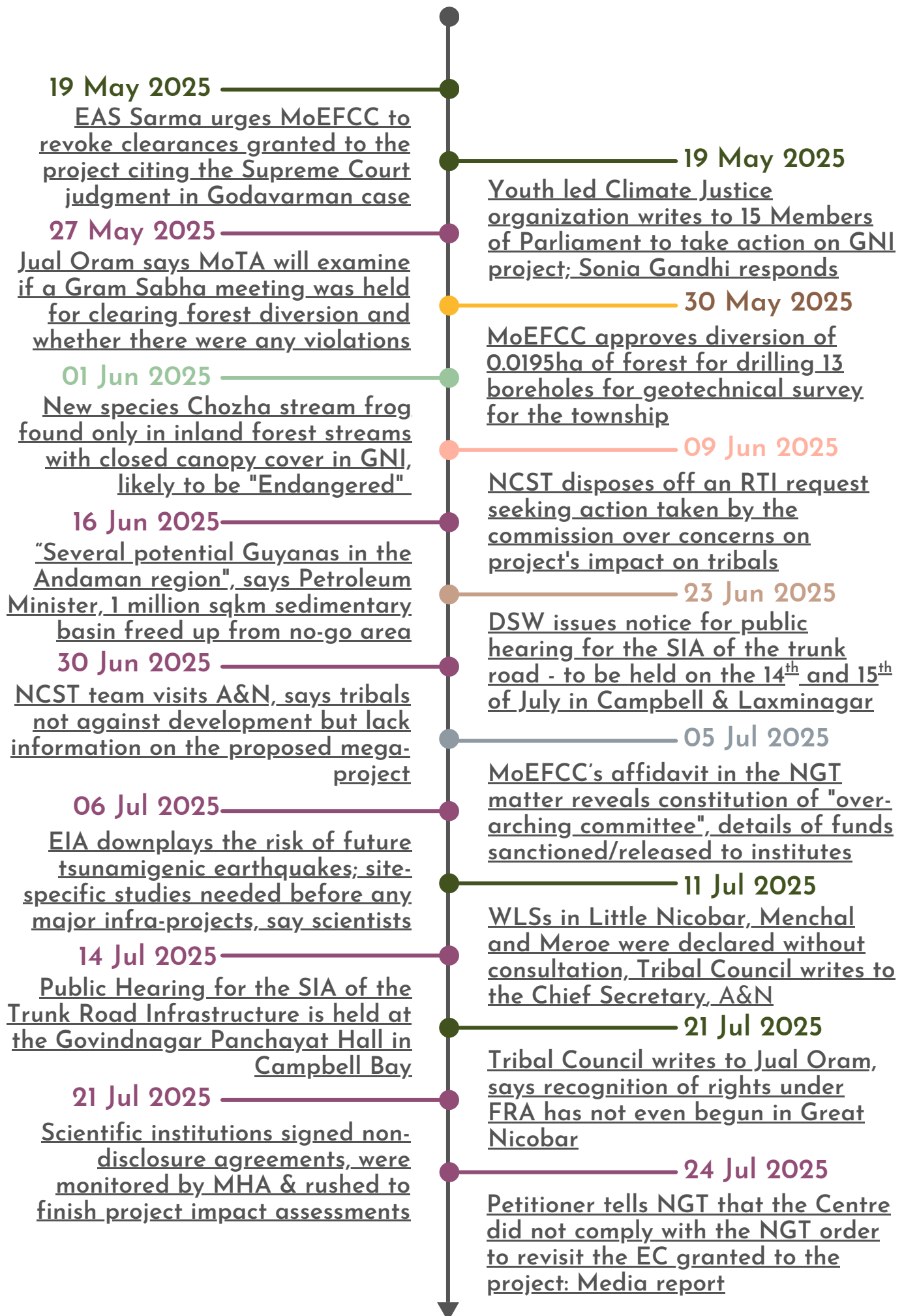
Turtle hatchery at Galathea Bay - the site of the transshipment port. The serial numbers on the plates indicate that there have been about 900 turtle nesting events in the last nesting season between November 2025 to March 2026. Four species of sea turtles - Giant leatherback, Olive Ridley, Hawksbill and Green sea turtle nest in Galathea. The 3 kilometres approach area to the bay will reduce to 300 metres once the port is built.

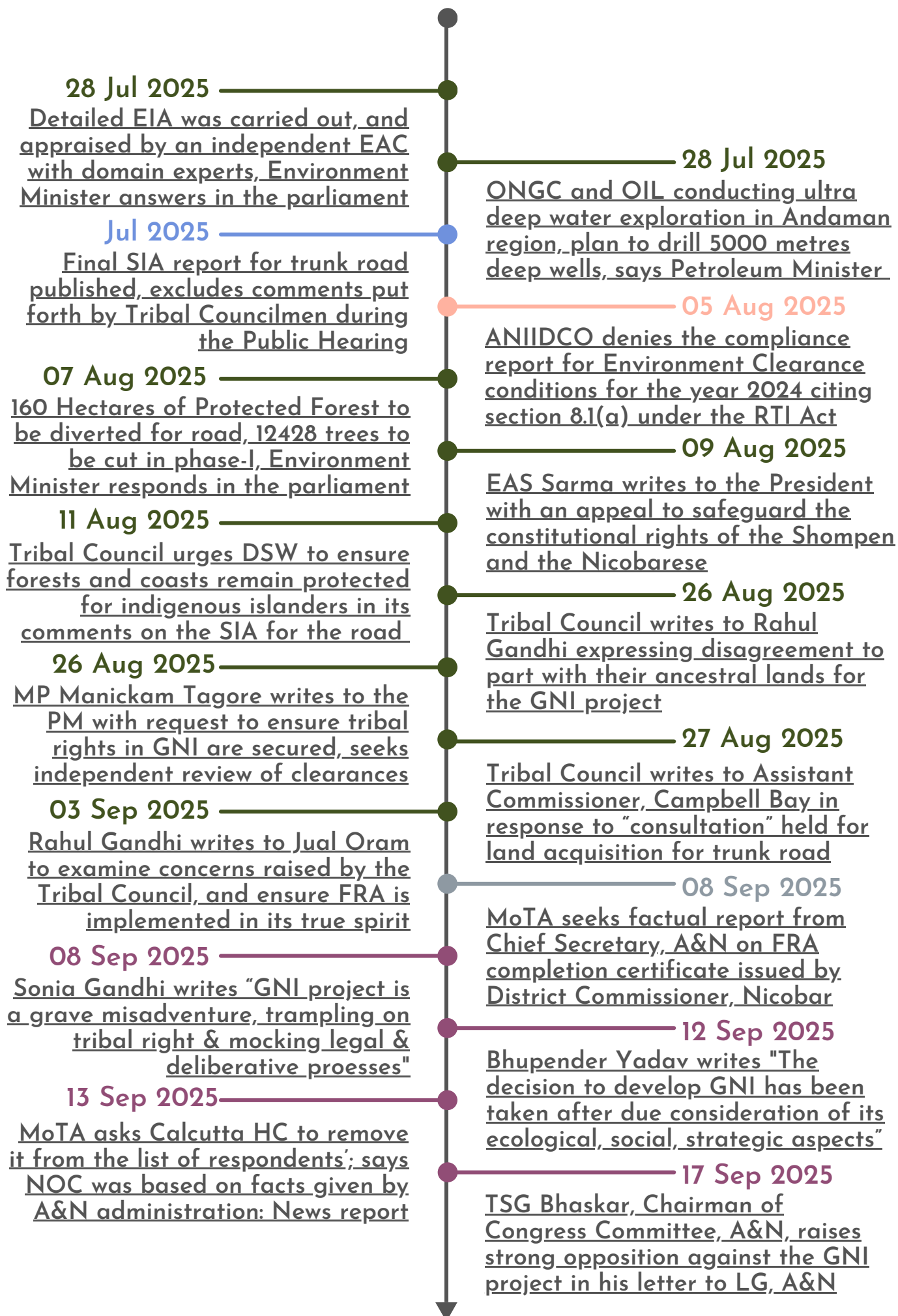


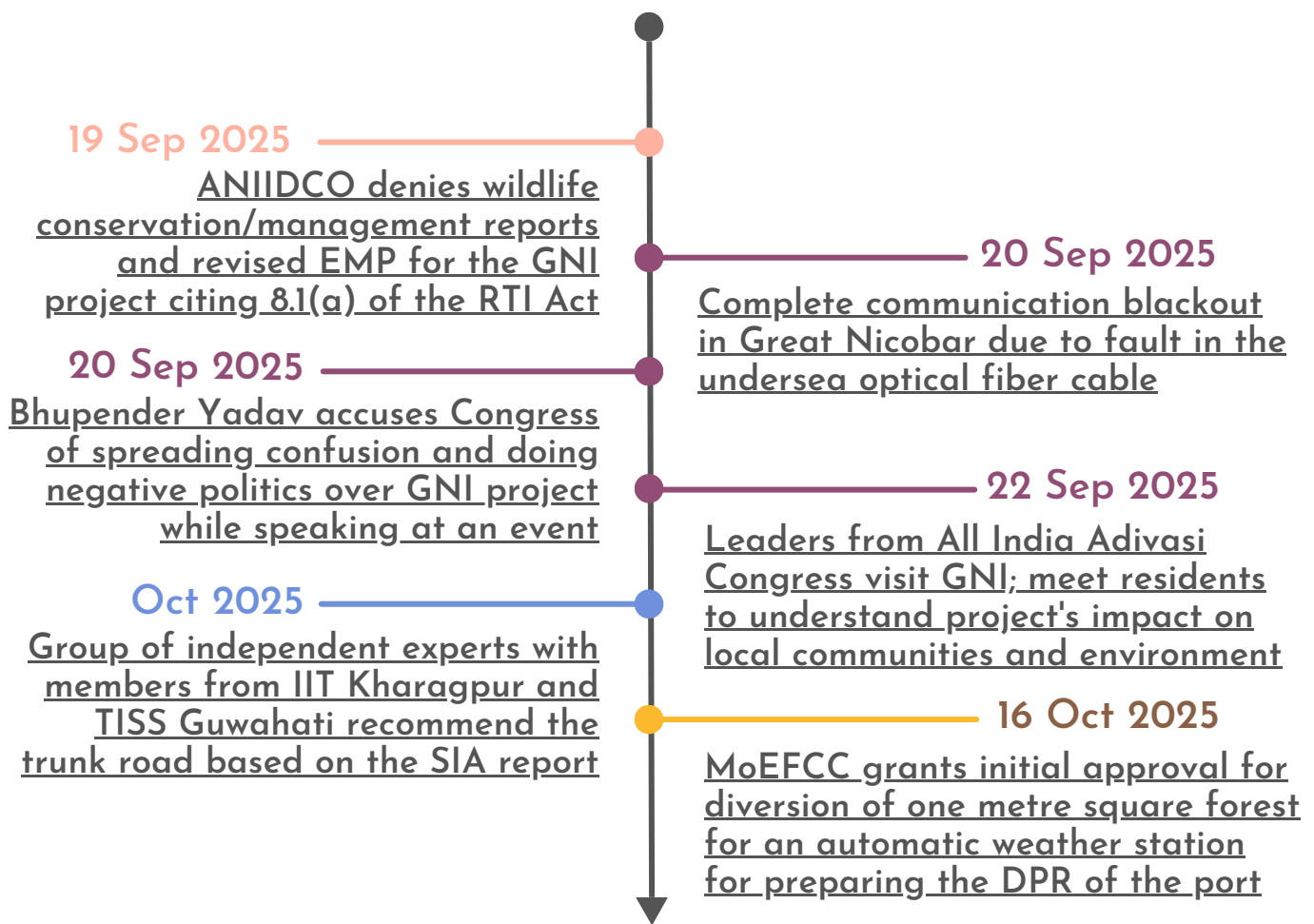


Emerald tree skink or "Palainh" as known in the Southern Nicobarese language is an arboreal lizard. It is active during the day and is often spotted on large tree trunks and crevices of boundary walls, hunting for insects.







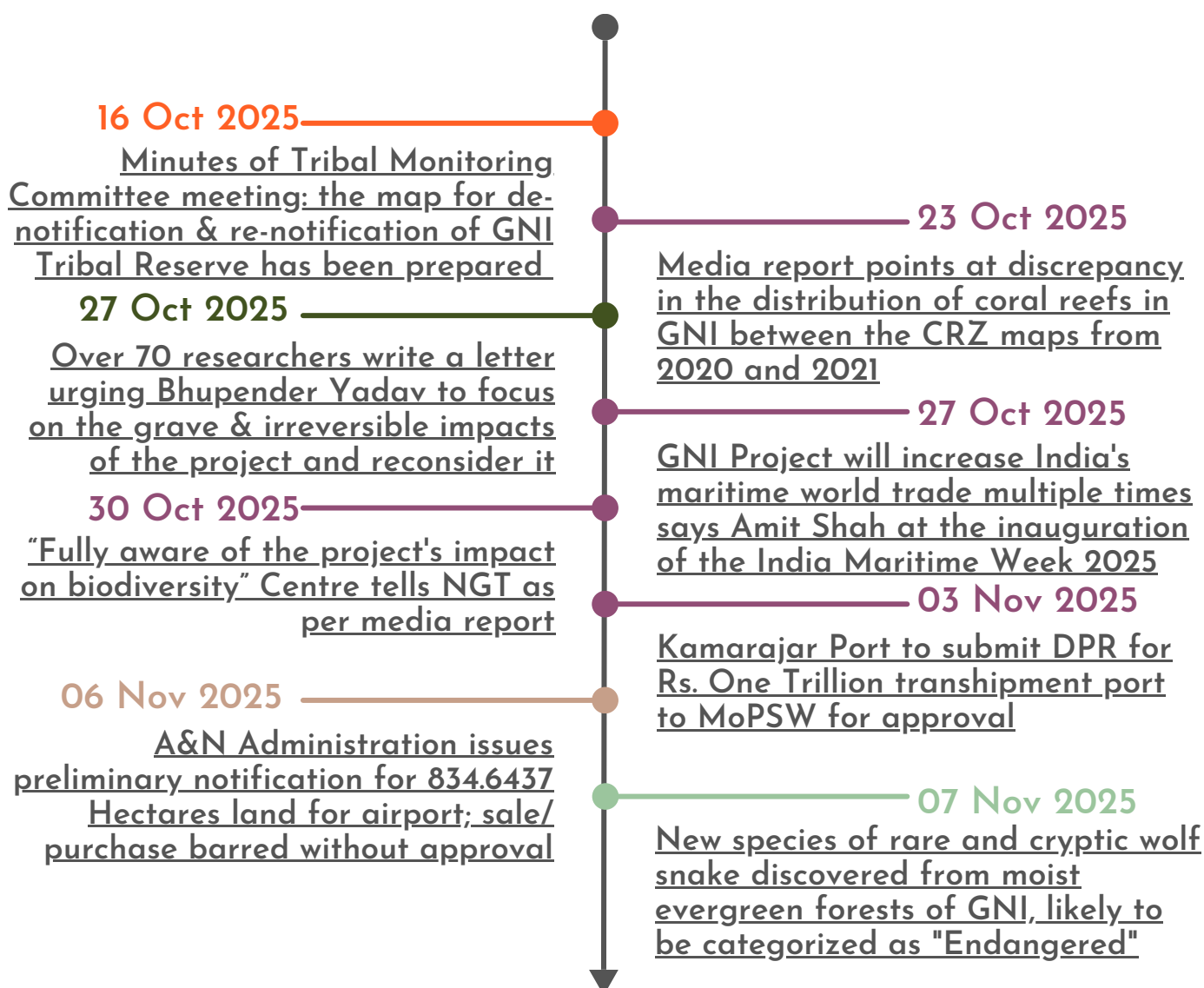


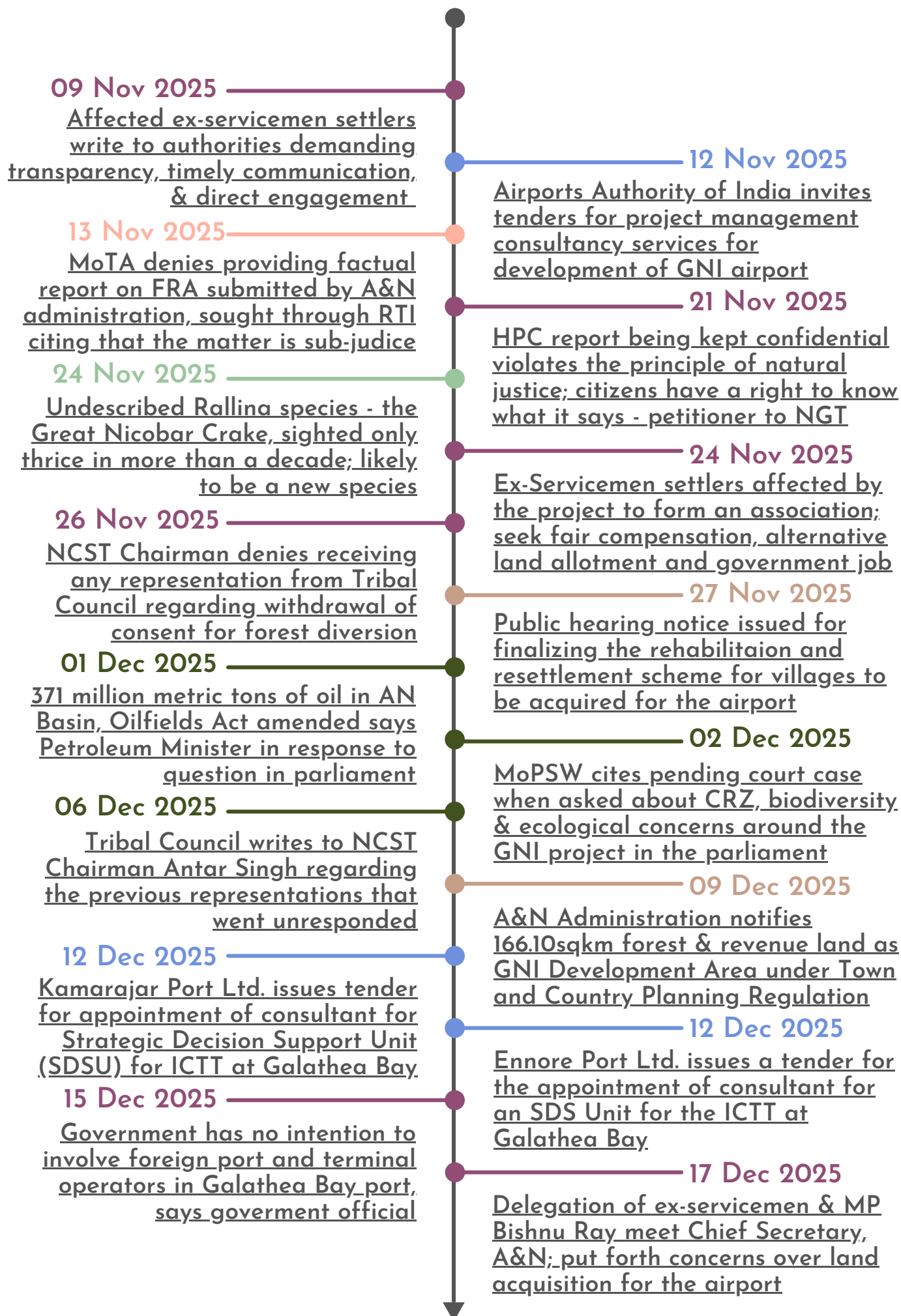
A bund that was built in 2020 to enable construction of a bridge across the Galathea river. The old bridge was completely damaged in the 2004 tsunami.





A Blue button on the Murdakhaadi Beach. The *Balab aow*, as the southern Great Nicobarese call it, drifts with the ocean currents, and hunts on crabs and fish. The young ones of Malabar Trevally - a fish, are known to take shelter beneath its tentacles.





18 Dec 2025

Standing Committee on Rural Development and Panchayati Raj recommends strict implementation of RCTLARR Act in GNI

22 Dec 2025

A&N Administration notifies 35.05 Ha of private land for acquisition for extension of runway at Naval Airforce Station in Campbell Bay.

22 Dec 2025

NCST Chairman says the representations by Tribal Council were sent before his tenure; will seek information & look into it

A room being built in Rajiv Nagar Tribal colony at Campbell Bay in 2025, to mark the beginning of Christmas, or Bada din. The Southern Nicobarese who originally belong to the villages situated all across the West coast of the island were brought to Campbell Bay after the tsunami. Their ancestral lands where they wish to resettle are earmarked for the port, coastal tourism, and logistical and institutional areas as per project maps..



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 \(Sanctuary Special Issue, April 2023\).](#)

[Fact-checking report on questions about Great Nicobar Island and the project raised in the Parliament \(Maadhyam, December 2024\).](#)

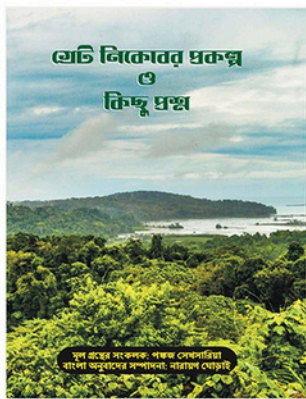
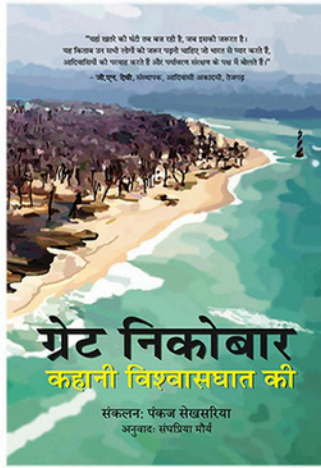
MAPS:

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



For a bird's eye view with some sharp writing
on a range of issues with the GNI project please see



The Great Nicobar Betrayal: Pushing a vulnerable island knowingly into disaster

A Frontline Publication
Curated by Pankaj Sekhsaria

Available in English (INR 499), Hindi (INR 395),
Bangla (INR 300), Tamil (INR 240).

Synopsis:

Dreams of mega development herald disaster for a highly vulnerable island. A Rs. 72,000 (now Rs. 82,000) crore project that is planned for the development of this island will result in ultimately destroying both the island's delicate rainforest ecosystem and its indigenous people.

The Great Nicobar Betrayal brings together a set of articles written by various experts across publications that examine the proposed project from every angle—environmental, geological, impact on local communities, law, due process, and ecology.

The book is a warning and a catalogue of the manmade catastrophe that lurks on the horizon, one that will destroy more than the tsunami of December 2004 ever did.

Island on Edge: The Great Nicobar Crisis

A Westland Non-Fiction Publication
Edited by Pankaj Sekhsaria

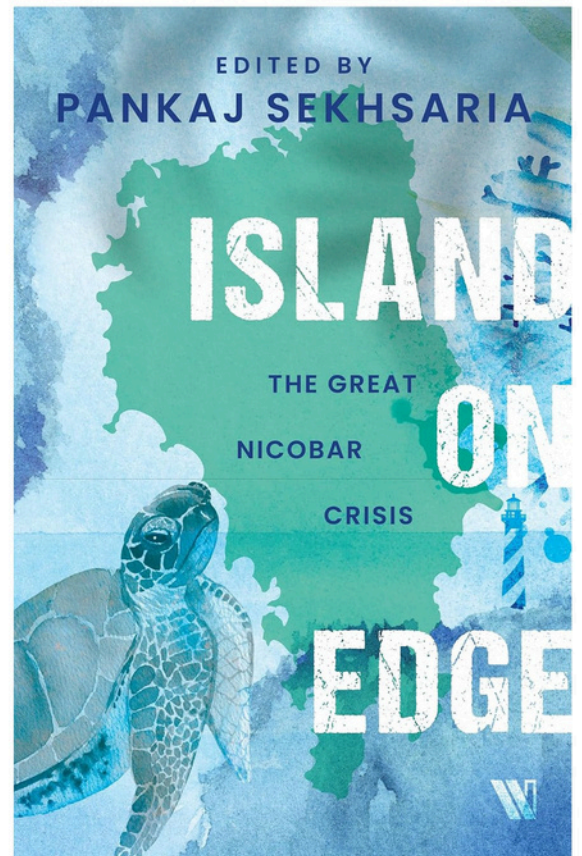
Price: INR 499

Synopsis:

A Rs 82,000 crore infrastructure mega project has been planned and given clearance to take place on the Great Nicobar Island. The plan to build a transshipment terminal, airport, powerplant and an entirely new township comes at great cost to an already fragile biodiversity, the culture of indigenous communities and even their languages.

Island on Edge follows up on *The Great Nicobar Betrayal* in an equally sharp and punchy fashion, covering new grounds to investigate the pitfalls of the Great Nicobar megaproject. This collection of articles presents research and data gathered about legal proceedings, diplomatic exchanges and on-ground realities on the Great Nicobar Island in a simple but in-depth manner.

An urgent and astute study of this moment in Indian legal history, *Island on Edge* is a crucial addition to modern environmental thought.



To order copies please write to psekharia@gmail.com