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Mr. V. V. Bhat
Chief secretary
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Port Blair
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Subject: To seek permission to visit the Strait Island for linguistic research.

Dear Dr. Bhat,

This is to inform you that the Jawaharlal Nehru University has decided to launch a major project of documenting the Great Andamanese language under my directorship. The project aims at a detailed descriptive grammar, a sociolinguistic description, a trilingual dictionary in Great Andamanese, Hindi and English, and an extensive archive of folklore, oral texts, and video recordings of the surviving 37 Great Andamanese speakers residing in the Strait Island and Port Blair. Digitally encoded text files with interlinear translation and running translation in English will be provided. Two graduate students and one Post-Doctoral fellow will be working on the project.

It is believed that the isolated Andamanese languages are spoken by the descendents of the aboriginal population of Southeast Asia and are, at present, 'very critical' stage. Our survey in 2001-2002 confirmed that some sounds and structures are used by one or two speakers but not shared by all. This implies that once these speakers are gone we lose all evidence of the linguistic structure ever used in the language.

The proposed study, when completed will answer many questions relating to the history of population in the world in general, and South, Southeast Asia in specific. The nature of the grammar and the lexicon will give us an indication of the typological framework of the language which will in turn, facilitate the comparative study of the Great Andamanese and languages of the Southeast Asia and those of the Australia New