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To  
Mrs. Sonia Gandhi  
Chairperson  
National Advisory Council  
10, Janpath  
New Delhi 110 011

28<sup>th</sup> July 2005

**Re. Andaman & Nicobar Islands 2: Twinning of Port Blair with Phuket**

Dear Mrs. Gandhi,

The recent earthquake-and-tsunami catastrophe highlighted the validity of the Supreme Court orders, which were designed to augment the Andaman archipelago's natural protections—such as beaches, rainforests, mangroves and coral reef barriers. Experts in disaster management agree that all developmental activities should ensure that such natural barriers and resources are vigorously defended. The agreement recently signed by the Andaman and Nicobar Administration for “twinning” between Port Blair and Phuket demonstrates disregard of all such norms. The agreement lists joint “promotion of tourism, education and culture, urban development, solid waste management, commerce and investments” as its goals, and includes facilitating the travel of international tourists between the two islands.

This letter will address the inappropriate choice of Phuket as model of tourism for the Andaman Islands and the compelling need for an ecosensitive model of tourism which ensures that tourism assets remain unharmed and local inhabitants make long-term gains.

The idea of Phuket as a model for tourism on the Andaman Islands is frightening. In a 2004 summer survey by National Geographic Traveler magazine of 115 popular travel destinations worldwide, Phuket came out number 113, being described as “getting ugly.” Academic publications (cf. [www.american.edu/TED/thaitour.htm](http://www.american.edu/TED/thaitour.htm)), note that because of rampant destruction of coral and marine life, waste dumping by restaurants and hotels, and “the slavery of young children and women in the prostitution industry that has led to the rampant spread of AIDS,” Thailand and in particular its resort islands are fast approaching “a crisis situation.” (We are sending for your viewing, by a separate mailing, a revealing documentary entitled *Thailand for Sale*.)