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Tourism development on Thailand's islands, including Phuket, has been grotesquely unplanned, with construction on beaches and within national parks, and waste and sewage dumping in the sea. Such activities have destroyed corals, dirtied beaches and otherwise destroyed tourism assets, making the tourism industry heavily dependent on the sex trade. In September 2004 an international newsletter for scuba divers ran an article entitled "Thailand's dirty little secret: Phuket's coral reefs are dead." It noted that most of the destruction was due to sludge from construction and coral bleaching facilitated by water pollution, and, adding that Thailand's tourism officials were "aggressively promoting" linked tourism spots in the region, asked, "Will the Andamans be next?"

We have the same question for you, and more. What can the Andamans learn about tourism from islands:

- Where fecal contamination from too many tourists has led to embargos on further development in many locations?
- Where the majority of tourists are males in search of sex?
- Where sludge from construction has so badly damaged corals that desperate attempts have been made to artificially reconstruct coral reefs?
- That dump a large part of their wastes into the sea?

Many fishermen, including a tribal group called Sea Gypsies have been displaced by tourism development on Thailand's beaches, and have opted instead for the income-generation option of seeking to have more daughters whom they can force into the sex industry. Local inhabitants believe that the mostly foreign owners of the tourism businesses are not concerned about local issues because "they just came to make profit. When the Island is totally destroyed and cannot give benefits to them any more, they will leave." Notably, Phuket suffered far more tsunami damage than did the Andamans, in large part because its model of development had devastated the coral and mangrove barriers. It is scarcely surprising that, having trashed Phuket, its resort owners are looking avidly to the Andaman Islands' pristine beaches and corals to prop up their flagging profits. What they have to gain from access to the Andamans is very clear; what the Andamans have to gain from the twinning is not at all clear.

Let us note that the Island Development Authority, under the leadership of Sri Rajiv Gandhi, agreed on 11<sup>th</sup> July, 1989 that tourism development on the Andaman Islands would ensure (and we quote):

- A) Fullest involvement of the local population from the viewpoint of decision-making, employment opportunity and economic benefits, etc.
- B) Protection of the environment and ecology and natural beauty of the islands
- C) Be within the carrying capacity of the islands
- D) Relate to the rich natural environments of oceans and forests that characterize these territories. Construction, food, recreation, etc. will all relate to them.

Why have these ideals been thrown to the winds?