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Dr. Syeda Hameed

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राष्ट्रिय  
योजना आयोग  
योजना समन  
नई दिल्ली-110 001  
MEMBER  
PLANNING COMMISSION  
YOJANA BHAWAN  
NEW DELHI-110 001  
19 July, 2010

D.O.No. M (SH)/PC//58/10

Dear and Hon'ble Mrs. Gandhi,

I am writing to you in the context of the upcoming meeting of the Standing Committee of the Island Development Authority. I am sure you must have seen some disturbing articles on Jarawa tourism, both in the national and international media, over the last couple of months. Increasingly tourists from the mainland and other countries are being lured to the Andaman and Nicobar islands to "see the naked stone age tribals inhabiting the forests." Newspapers, internet travel websites and travel brochures are full of such advertisements. The A&N administration is aware of this. They say that measures have been taken to check this but they are also saying that a relook needs to be taken at the existing Jarawa policy; "to move from protection to empowerment."

Madam, you will recall that in February 2006, the NAC had formed a Sub Group of Experts to suggest an action plan for the "protection" and "preservation" of the Jarawa. I was the co-chair of this Committee, along with Jairam Ramesh. We had gone to the islands, interacted with all the stake holders, travelled extensively through the Jarawa Reserve and even travelled on an alternate sea-route. However, as the NAC was dissolved, the recommendations of this Committee were never examined. Subsequently, the Babu Committee report was also tabled and despite the similarity in recommendations between these two reports, nothing has happened. With every passing day, the situation on the islands is worsening. As the administration continues to await "a new policy" and a decision on the Andaman Trunk Road, the Jarawa are being put on voyeuristic display and subjected to foreign foods and germs.

I know very well, your deep concern for the Jarawa. It was at your behest that the Sub-Group was formed. I would request you to take a new look at the report of the Sub-Group, so that some of its recommendations can be endorsed by the NAC. If not in time for the Standing Committee meeting (this month) the NAC advice can be given in time for the IDA which will be held in September. If you find it appropriate Mr. Jairam Ramesh and I could make a presentation to the NAC on the recommendations of the Sub-Group and the Babu Committee report in the context of the current situation and suggest an action plan. NAC's advice on this very sensitive issue of small voiceless people will be very useful input for IDA.

With respectful regards,

Yours Sincerely,

*Syeda Hameed*  
(Syeda Hameed)

Honorable Mrs. Sonia Gandhi  
Chairperson  
All India Congress Committee

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