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17004/2/08/180

No. Ling. 2007/

Dated : 18 February, 2008

To,
The Joint Secretary (Union Territory),
Ministry of Home Affairs,
New Delhi

Dear Madam/Sir,

Through: The Dean of Arts, University of Delhi.

I am writing to request permission to carry out linguistic research in the Nicobar Islands between the months of March and April 2008. The purpose of my research trip is to study the languages of the tribal communities living in this area. This work is of utmost importance because linguists estimate that languages like these, which are spoken by tiny groups with very small populations, are in danger of dying out within the next 100 years. These languages are, therefore, considered endangered languages. Just as scientists work hard to study and protect endangered animals and plants, linguists consider it an urgent priority that endangered languages should be studied in depth as quickly as possible and that every effort should be made to help preserve them.

As a Reader in the Department of Linguistics, University of Delhi, my research specialization is the documentation of endangered languages. As the enclosed CV shows, I have worked previously on Betta Kurumba, the language of a tribal community living in the Nilgiri Mountains of Tamil Nadu. My goal is to work next on the tribal languages of the Nicobars. For this work, I will need to visit settlements on various islands, where I will interview speakers of Nicobarese. In my interviews, I will ask speakers for words, sentences, and folktales in their mother tongue, which I will analyse so as to discover the rules of their languages. This basic method will be used to gradually gather more and more language data, which will be analysed to discover the unique structure of each of these languages.

I have contacted the Deputy Commissioner of South Andaman district, as well as the Deputy Commissioner of Nicobar district. They have told me that they will give permission for my work, but that I should first get a letter from the Home Ministry