

## Aboriginal Tribes in Andaman & Nicobar Islands

Andaman & Nicobar Islands were inhabited solely by the aboriginal tribes prior to the colonisation and establishment of the penal settlement by the then British Govt. As per 1991 census, the population of these islands was 280661 and the population of tribals was 26770.

There are six tribes in Andaman & Nicobar Islands namely Great Andamanese, Onges, Jarawas, Sentinelese, Nicobarese and Shompens, out of which the first four are located in Andaman District and belong to the Negrito Group while the last two are located in Nicobar District and belong to Mongoloid group. All the tribal groups in the Andaman & Nicobar Islands are in areas covered by the Andaman & Nicobar Islands (Protection of Aboriginal tribes) Regulation - 1956. Under this regulation, no non-tribal can enter into tribal areas without a permit / pass issued by the Deputy Commissioner concerned.

Out of these tribal groups, Nicobarese have advanced while other five tribes are still in primitive stage. For the welfare of primitive tribes, an autonomous body, called Andaman Adim Janjati Vikas Samiti (AAJVS) was constituted in 1976 on the recommendations of the advisory body for the welfare of primitive tribes. Hon'ble Lieutenant Governor of Andaman & Nicobar Islands is the Chairman of this body.

The aboriginal tribes, particularly primitive tribes have been hostile to the outsiders since beginning. However, over the decades all of them have shed their hostility except Jarawas and Sentinelese. Out of the primitive tribes, the Jarawas have been in news due to sudden change in their behaviour recently. The Jarawas occupy an area of 649 Sq. Kms in the reserved forests along the west coast in South & Middle Andaman islands. The estimated population of Jarawas is 350.

The British Administration had started the practice of contact expedition with the hostile tribes and same was continued by A&N Administration also. The first recorded non-hostile contact with the Jarawas by the Administration took place on 05-04-1974. Thereafter, over the last 25 years the administration's contact groups have been in periodic touch with the Jarawas in day time only and were limited to gifting them with coconuts, bananas and red clothes.