

KARENS OF ANDAMAN ISLAND

Annex - K/1(a)

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The Karen is a community living at present in the Mayabunder Sub-Division in the Union Territory of Andaman & Nicobar Islands. The total population of the community is 1525, and the Karens are living in the nine villages. Karens belong to the Mongoloid race. The Karens is not the aboriginal community but it is a tribe originated from Burma.

Arrival of Karens in Andamans

Karens like other communities in Andaman & Nicobar Islands were brought to these islands during the British Administration. To meet the labour requirements in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands the British Administration brought Karens from Burma like the Ranchis from the mainland India. The then Chief Commissioner of Andaman and Nicobar Islands Col. Ferrar incidentally knew a Father of American Baptist Church working among the Karens in Burma. It is through this American Baptist Church the Karens families came to Andaman and Nicobar Islands in 1925-26 in batches to work as labourers in the Forest Department. The Karens of hills in Burma were reputed elephantmen and hence they were considered as an excellent labour force to work in the forest.

The Karen families were allowed to settle in pockets near Mayabunder by clearing the jungle by the British Administration. In due course the Karens worked not only as labourers in the Forest Department but also started the cultivation in the cleared patches. The population of the Karens increased over the years.

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