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Joint Memorandum presented by
Ranchi Association and A & N Catholic Association

19.01.2003

Shri. A.B. Vajpayee
Honorable Prime Minister of India
Government of India

Sub: Requisition to intervene on behalf of the affected people due to the Supreme Court Order on encroachment and other problems faced by Chotanagpur Adhivasies living in A & N Islands.

Your Excellency,

On behalf of Andaman and Nicobar Catholic Association and Ranchi Association A & N Islands, we would like to bring the following grievances arising out of recent Supreme Court pronouncement on encroachment and other problems faced by Chotanagpur Adhivasies living in A & N Islands for Your Excellency's kind perusal.

Eviction Issue reg:

About 7000 families are going to be affected by this order of the Hon'ble Supreme Court. Most of these people have no place to go to. They are poor who live from hand to mouth toiling in the fields, which they have been cultivating for the last about 25 years and more.

About 40% of these who are affected by this order of the Supreme Court are adhivasies from the tribal area of Chotanagpur. These people were brought to the Andaman Islands as labourers to work in the Forest and APWD department. There are records that the Forest Department had started recruiting labourers from Chotanagpur as early as 1918.

These adhivasies from Chotanagpur have worked in very inhuman situations for the development of the islands. It is, therefore, a very ungrateful way to treat them by asking them to leave and go without providing any alternative land for them to help make both ends meet and to provide for themselves and their families.

Therefore we would like to draw Your Excellency's Kind attention to the following points:

1. There are many families still to be identified as having encroached on Forestland prior to 1978. Unfortunately they have been termed as post 1978 encroachers and hence have been deprived of the benefits available to pre-1978 encroachers. As a matter of fact there is no clear-cut official record regarding the demarcation of the pre and post 1978 encroachment and there is no clear-cut official record regarding the demarcation of forest and revenue land as well. It is good to note here that adhivasies do not have the tradition of keeping documentary records whereas all that they have as proof are trees and plants, planted by them.
2. Among the pre-1978 settlers most of them have not been shown, provided or given physical possession of the alternate sites. Even such people have been served with eviction notice and the eviction process has already begun.