

ANDAMAN AND NICOBAR ADMINISTRATION

Directorate of Tribal Welfare

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Port Blair, dated the 29th September, 2003

To

Shri Bishnu Pada Ray
Member of Parliament (Lok Sabha),
A & N Constituency, Port Blair,
Andamans- 744101

Sub: Inclusion of Karen Community in the ST list- Reg.

Sir,

I am directed to refer to your letter No. BPR/ND-MyDoc-Tribal/2003 dated 12/08/2003 addressed to the Hon'ble Lt. Governor, A&N Islands regarding the above mentioned subject.

In this connection it is stated that the President and the Joint Secretary, Karen Youth Organization, Webi- village, Mayabunder Tehsil had submitted a memorandum dated 18.1.2003 to the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India during his visit to A&N Islands demanding inclusion of the Karen community in the list of Scheduled Tribes of the A&N Islands.

The Deputy Director, Govt. of India, Ministry of Tribal Affairs vide his letter No.12016/35/2001-TA (RAL) dated 6th February 2003 forwarded a copy of the above said Memorandum seeking the comments of the Administration on the demand of the Karen Youth Organization. A report in the matter was furnished to the Govt. of India, Ministry of Tribal Affairs vide the Administration's letter No.1-554/2000-TW/569 dated 1st April 2003. The relevant portion of the letter is quoted below:-

"That the Karens were far more developed than even the Nicobarese, let alone the other five Primitive Tribes and the Karens already are getting preference in recruitment to Group-C and D posts under the Administration alongwith the other locals. So classifying them as a ST in respect of this UT would be detrimental to the interests of the Scheduled Tribes of this UT. Therefore the Administration did not recommend classification of Karens as ST earlier. The same view is still held by the Administration so far as according ST status to the Karens is concerned, as the aboriginal tribes of this UT are much backward when compared to the Karens. Moreover, the Karens are not original inhabitants of this UT unlike the six STs namely - Great Andamanese, Onges, Jarawas, Sentinelese, Nicobarese and Shompens. The Karens were brought to this UT by the British colonial Administration to work as labourers in the forest in 1925-26 and subsequently settled.

In the meanwhile the Karens have opted for Other Backward Class status and the OBC Commission of A & N Islands have since recommended for declaring them as OBC alongwith a few other communities in respect of A&N