

The Babu Committee (comprising inter disciplinary experts) was constituted by the Ministry of Environment and Forests in December, 2005 to go into issues relating to "Status of Forests and other allied matters in A&N Islands" flowing from the orders of the Hon'ble Supreme Court dated 7.5.2002. A copy of the order constituting the Babu Committee and its terms of reference is at Annexure - II. With regard to policy relating to Jarawas, the Babu Committee made recommendations suggesting empowerment of Jarawas through education and increasing their food resource base. The relevant extracts of the Babu Committee Report are at Annexure - III.

The Jarawa reserve area extends to 1028 sq. kms and covers an estimated Jarawa population of 349 persons i.e. about 3 sq. km. per person, which is more than adequate as per the norms for hunter gatherers. If Jarawa population increases further, as it has done in the last 10 years, the existing food resource base in the reserve area will become insufficient in due course and the Jarawa will increasingly be forced to change their lifestyle or encroach upon areas outside the Jarawa reserve areas. The Jarawas need to be prepared for this change.

It was reported in the Press that the Union Home Minister had observed at a function to mark Human Rights Day on 10.12.2009 that indigenous people have the right to acquire all modern amenities and become part of the mainstream while preserving their indigenous culture (Annexure-IV). Jarawas have similar rights and should not be deprived of their rights for the sake of preserving their mode of subsistence for all time to come.

While the Jarawas present a spectacular phenomenon in the evolutionary ladder, romanticism should not be allowed to prevent Jarawas from moving up the evolutionary ladder. The key challenge before A&N Administration at this juncture is to facilitate this movement, without the Jarawas losing their vitality and self confidence. This is a complex matter which requires detailed deliberations with Anthropologists and other experts. The focus of Jarawa policy needs to shift from **protection and preservation to empowerment.**

It is accordingly suggested that the Ministry of Home Affairs may constitute a Group of Experts in consultation with Ministry of Tribal Affairs and A&N Administration to review the Jarawa Policy and make course corrections, as is envisaged in Clause VI(e) of the Jarawa Policy. The Expert Committee could have the following terms of reference:

- (i) To review the Jarawa Policy notified in December, 2004, clarify policy objectives and suggest course corrections, so that the Jarawa Policy remains dynamic and takes into account the changing needs and circumstances.