

25) The forest department should be strengthened and appropriate village institutions set up for the purpose, as detailed later.

D. ROAD THROUGH THE JARAWA TRIBAL RESERVE

Perhaps the best remaining natural forests in the Andaman Islands are in the tribal reserves. The most significant of these are the Jarawa Reserve in South and Middle Andaman and the Ongge Reserve in Little Andaman. Due to the earlier hostility of the Jarawas, these areas were left alone. However, in recent years the Andaman Trunk Road has opened up and passes contiguous to and in some cases through the tribal reserve (map at annex 21). This road, and the increased access to the Jarawas, poses a major threat not only to the Jarawa tribals but also to the forests that they have protected for so many years. The road has also made it easier for encroachments to take place in the forests by allowing easy access to many forest areas that were earlier not easily approachable.

Interestingly, a high level committee constituted at the behest of the then Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, had suggested in the early 1980s that, as regards the Andaman Trunk Road:

- (i) though the absence of any road would be the ideal condition for the Jarawa, the next alternative would be
- (ii) to realign the road so as to orient it as far away from the boundary for the Jarawa Reserve as possible."

Recommendation

26) The Andaman Trunk Road should be closed to all vehicular traffic from Miletalak in South Andaman to the northern boundary of the S. Andaman Island. Similarly, it should be closed to all traffic from Kadamtala (corresponding to Protobjig camp No.3) in Middle Andaman up to Kaushalya Nagar (corresponding to Portobjig camp No. 15). This should be done within three months. Further, no person except for the Jarawas living in the Reserve should be allowed to enter the Reserve by any means unless he/she is permitted by the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, and the Secretary, Tribal Welfare, ANI Administration, and no such permission should be granted unless the person is proceeding on bonafide work related to the welfare of the tribals or the protection of the area.