

27

# **POLICY FOR THE WELFARE OF JARAWA TRIBE OF ANDAMAN ISLANDS.**

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

1. Jarawa, a hunting-gathering primitive tribe of Andaman Islands and numbering around 266 is one of the six Scheduled Tribes in the Union Territory of Andaman and Nicobar Islands. The Island's aborigines have been in isolation in their unique habitat. They defended their territory against visitors all along.

Subsequent to the First War of Indian Independence, the British Indian Government succeeded in establishing a Penal Settlement in the Islands in 1858. The colonial Government adopted a punitive approach followed by pacificatory approach in respect of the aborigines. Over a period of time, the primitive tribes of the Andamanese and the Onges relented in their resistance towards outsiders and became friendly, thereby leading to the end of their isolation.

The Jarawa tribe too shed its hostility towards outsiders in 1997 thereby rendering itself vulnerable to outside influence. It is in this juncture and in compliance with directives of Hon'ble High Court of Calcutta in the Public Interest Litigation, W.P.No.48 of 1999 (Ms.Shyamali Ganguly - Vs - Union of India & Others) Government of India, Ministry of Home Affairs constituted a Expert Committee under the convernorship of Lt. Governor of A & N Islands (vide Notification No. U-14040/24/99-ANL dated 21/7/2001) to study issues relating to the Jarawas and suggest measures for their welfare. The Multi-disciplinary Research Teams conducted survey among the Jarawa tribe for nearly one year under the guidance of the Expert Committee. The Committee submitted its report in July 2003 and the same was made public by placing it in the website of the A&N Administration. In pursuant to the directions of Hon'ble High Court of Calcutta seminar and open house discussions were held at Kolkata in April 2004 and at Port Blair in May 2004 wherein experts, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) MP, Panchayat Raj representatives and individuals deliberated on various issues relating to the Jarawas and their well-being. On considering the recommendations of the Expert Committee, views and opinions of experts, NGOs and others, a policy for the protection & welfare of the Jarawas has to be finalized by Govt. of India before 15<sup>th</sup> December, 2004. If it cannot be done by end 15<sup>th</sup> December, High Court of Calcutta will have to be approached for further extension of time to avoid contempt of Court by the assured respondent, namely, Secretary in the Ministry of Home Affairs.