

(98) (15)

*"Recommendation (26) that the Andaman Trunk Road should be closed for all traffic, in the stretch passing through the Jarawa tribal Reserve, within three months, for the reasons that the road poses a threat to the Jarawas and the forests within the tribal reserve, will have serious implication if implemented. The Administration humbly submits to the Hon'ble Court that the threats perceived by the Commission in the Jarawas as well as the forests were infact examined before taking up the construction of the road. It is submitted that a conscious decision was taken up by the Govt. of India in early fifties and sixties to settle people in these islands under a Colonization/Rehabilitation Scheme. As part of the Scheme, the ATR was approved for construction after weighing the pros and cons and all implications including its impact on the Jarawas and forests. The construction was completed over a period of 40 years and the said road is now serving as lifeline connecting the remote North Andaman to the South Andaman through Middle Andaman Islands. The Administration considers that the provisions under Andaman & Nicobar Islands Protection of Aboriginal Tribes Regulation, 1956 is adequate enough to afford the required protection to the Jarawas. With respect to the protection of forests in the Jarawa area, the Administration is already effectively enforcing various provisions of Indian Forest Act, 1927. Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 and Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980. So far no encroachment has occurred within this territory between Middle Strait and Jirkatang, the two boundary points of Jarawa reserve on the ATR. Similarly no encroachment has occurred in a similar stretch from Prolobjig camp No. 3 to Prolobjig camp No. 15 (Kadamtala to Kaushalaya Nagar). Closing the ATR would throttle the life line of the people living in Baratang, Middle and North Andamans and Diglipur. About 1300 passengers move on this road daily in 28 buses including emergency patients in ambulances taken to referral hospitals in Port Blair. About 250 tonnes of cargo including food and LPG are transported in 25 trucks through ATR to distant islands. About 300 persons are engaged in transportation sector for their livelihood and about 2000 persons are directly or indirectly involved in tour and travel sector. As regards the suggestion for introducing more stringent measures for the Welfare of tribals and the protection of the area is concerned, the Administration is already taking the required steps. None of the local stakeholders, except the petitioners, have pressed before the Commission for closure of the Andaman Trunk Road.*