

sugar. They are sharp, intelligent and confident. Their articulation is clear and self assured. Jarawas no longer live in splendid isolation. The effort to protect the Jarawa tribe from external influences is therefore an exercise in futility. Their isolation has been breached irretrievably.

A&N Administration follows this policy of non-intervention strictly; **the dilemma is about what should be done as the Jarawas reach out to the modern world as per their conscious will.** The Jarawa Policy is silent about the manner in which the A&N Administration should respond to these overtures of the Jarawa tribe. The response at present is to persuade the Jarawas to remain confined within the Jarawa Reserve areas and stop interacting with their brethren in the modern world. This response is wholly inadequate. It cannot be the mandate of A&N Administration to confine Jarawas within the Tribal Reserve Areas and prevent them from reaching out to the modern world for all time to come. As free human beings, Jarawas should be free to move beyond the Tribal Reserve areas and interact with whomever they want. The challenge is to ensure that the Jarawa are **empowered** to deal with the outside world without losing their vitality. **The key policy issue facing A&N Administration is about how Jarawas should be empowered to deal with the modern world as per their free will.**

The Babu Committee (comprising inter disciplinary experts) constituted by the Ministry of Environment and Forests to look into the "Status of Forests and other allied matters in A&N Islands recommended empowerment of Jarawas through education and increasing their food resource base.

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.

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.**

An Experts Group has already been Ministry of Tribal Affairs to review the Jarawa Policy. The Expert group needs to deliberate on these issues and come up with a time bound action plan for implementation by A & N Administration.

Point for Decision

Ministry of Tribal Affairs may set up a Committee of Experts on modifications if any required in the Jarawa policy keeping in view the suggestions of ANI Admn. and MP-ANI.
