

PARAWISE COMMENTS ON ISSUES RAISED BY NATIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL RELATED TO PROTECTION OF JARAWA TRIBE IN A&N ISLANDS

Para 1- Administration continues to regularly monitor the websites and publicity material of the tour operators/travel agencies to weed out any mention of our vulnerable tribes. As pointed out in the tour notes, publicity material promoting *Jarawa tourism* do not appear to be in circulation anymore. Further, provision for penal action has been included in the proposed amendment to the PAT Regulation, to punish those who misuse information, photos etc of our vulnerable tribes.

Paras 2, 3 and 4- The Andaman Trunk Road (ATR) is the lifeline of the Andaman group of islands, connecting South Andamans, Baratang, Middle Andamans and North Andamans. The main traffic on the road is of essential commodities (including items of daily use), agricultural produce from the outlying villages to Port Blair, construction material for household/ development purposes, local passenger traffic. Tourist traffic represents a small portion of the total load, and that too mostly restricted to the Port Blair- Baratang sector. To close the road would negate decades of development for the residents of these islands, and would also be counter-productive from the point of view of the Jarawa policy as it would make policing the borders of the Jarawa Reserve more difficult. Regulation of traffic including tourist traffic on the Andaman Trunk Road (ATR) which provides access to Baratang, Middle and North Andaman islands, is as per the policy of Jarawa Protection and various directives of the Hon'ble Supreme Court and Kolkata High Court. After the ban on commercial use of timber from the islands in 2002 and damage caused by the mega earthquake and the resultant tsunami of December 2004, the effort of government has been to promote nature based tourism in the islands. Accordingly steps have been taken to further develop tourist and related infrastructure. Due to various measures taken by the administration and GOI, the number of tourists coming to the islands started increasing after 2006. It has since then has grown at a healthy annual rate of about 20%. However A & N Administration is making all efforts to regulate and control traffic on ATR. Considering increasing tourist flow, some measures such as not allowing vehicles on the same day to reduce traffic on ATR, which were taken up earlier needs to be reworked. Also the large number of tourists has resulted in congestion of traffic and its proper movement on ATR as at two places vehicles have to cross the creeks by vehicle ferry.

We are presently looking at the traffic pattern and fresh ways to reduce number of vehicles and chances of any incidental interaction between the Jarawas and visitors using the ATR passing through the Reserve. However for maintenance of ATR, there is deployment of workers and vehicles on ATR during day time only and this sometime leads to their meeting with Jarawas. It has been observed in recent times, that the younger generation of Jarawas are coming out more, interacting with villagers outside the Jarawa Reserve, coming onto the road and nearby jetties including where tourists frequent and are sometime seen whetting their curiosity seeing the modern equipment and technology. The time has come for a review our policy of 'no' or 'least' interference, for whether we like it or not, the days of the Jarawa preferring isolation and no contact with the outside world are over. If we do not equip the Jarawas with the capabilities required to cope up with our society, the consequences would be tragic for them. As with the Nocobarese who are able to navigate their way through 'modern' society with considerable confidence, without loss of tribal identity and without being reduced to dependency on government handouts, we need to empower the Jarawas to fend themselves in changed circumstances. A copy of letter written by the Lieutenant Governor to the Secretary, NAC on the subject (DO No.1-505/2009-TW, dated 28<sup>th</sup> October 2010 with annexures) is attached.

Action is taken for any infringement of the existing laws and regulations within the Jarawa Reserve and further stringent measures are proposed in the proposed PAT Regulation amendment. In fact, satellite imagery confirms that there is absolutely no encroachment in the Jarawa Reserve. The Administration has been not just conscious of the need to protect the Jarawa Reserve, but to proactively strengthen the resource base of the Jarawas who are hunter-gatherers and to reduce impact of growing development specially tourism. This has been done by notifying a 5 kms. Buffer Zone around the