

existing Tribal Reserve, where we have stopped construction and operation of hotels, resorts, bars etc. This buffer zone, which is outside the Jarawa Reserve, comprises not just forests but 34 villages in South Andaman, Baratang and Middle Andaman islands; with many villagers seeing it as an attack on their livelihoods. These villages were set up by the Government in the 1950s-60s, as part of the Settlement Plan for refugees from erstwhile East Pakistan. Presently, there is a sustained campaign against the Buffer Zone notification including by the local MP, with daily rasta rokos etc. This is despite sufficient clarifications to leaders of Panchayati Raj Institutions, and directly to the public by the LG in his tours of the affected areas, in his Republic day address etc. The decision on the Buffer Zone has also landed the Administration in litigation. An affected party took us to the High Court, which ruled against us and quashed the Buffer Zone notification. However, we have filed an SLP in the Supreme Court against the order of High Court and obtained a stay order against the High Court decision. The matter is being heard in Court these days. The proposed amendment to A & N (Protection of Aboriginal Tribes) Regulation, 1956 (PAT Regulation), once implemented will bring greater focus on reducing the impact of unwanted development around the Tribal Reserve.

With a view to regulating traffic on the ATR, police do not allow commercial vehicles that go to Baratang from Port Blair the same day. However, nothing prevents the individual tourist from coming back the same day using another vehicle. In fact, there is no legal basis for this same-day-return restriction, and individual operators have gone to Court successfully. The Administration also agrees that this restriction does not serve any purpose. Additionally, the residents of Baratang has gained substantially, many of whom are very poor, have gained considerably and have seen their economic status improve through this tourist traffic, by providing services including running country boats and that ferry tourists to the Limestone cave, mud volcano, providing guide facilities, running eateries etc. There are an estimated 200 tourist taxis in Port Blair that service tourists on the Port Blair-Baratang sector. It must be kept in mind that with the closure of commercial timber activities consequent on the orders of the Supreme Court, there is not much scope for employment generation other than through tourism, which is being promoted in a very controlled and incremental manner. It must also be kept in mind that the Andaman & Nicobar is a land-scarce territory, with almost 90% of the land area being under forest cover, and about 5% being water bodies (Intertidal zone, mangroves etc). The Nicobar district, besides from 6 villages of Great Nicobar, is a tribal district with all land ownership with tribals; the balance is forests. Hence, the scope for economic activities that could generate employment or raise the standard of living of the people is extremely limited. Contrary to the general notion that our population is growing rapidly due to migration from the mainland, the National Population Register (NPR) and Census House-listing exercises in 2009-2010 indicate that the population has grown from 3,56,000 in 1991 to around 4,00,000 at present.

Para 5: Combined teams of officials from the Departments of Police, Forests and Tribal Welfare/AAJVS, specially constituted in September 2006 in the vulnerable areas close to Tribal Reserve at Tirur, Middle Strait and Kadamtala, regularly patrol and monitor the illegal activities in and around the Reserve and cases are booked against the offenders. Enhanced penalty provisions for the offenders are already proposed in the amendment to the Section 8 of PAT Regulation.

Para 6: A proposal for developing an alternate sea route to reduce traffic on ATR is prepared by the Administration and is being sent to MHA. However this arrangement will not be cost or time saver for tourists as mentioned in the para in PUC. It will need more time to travel and boat operations are costlier than traveling by road. There will also be some restriction on boat movement due to adverse weather conditions during the SW and NE monsoons.

Paras 7 and 8: We are in the process of re-structuring the AAJVS, which will bring better coordination and implementation of welfare and protection measures which are permissible and required under the current policy directives. The meetings of Executive Council of AAJVS could not take place regularly after 2004 earthquake and tsunami as most of the resources and time were put for rescue, rehabilitation and reconstruction work. We are still not having sufficient officers to man the administrative and