

STONE AGE TRIBE IN 21st-CENTURY PLEA



NOMAD: A Nukak child

A LOST tribe who think planes run on invisible sky roads has emerged from the jungle.

The Nukak-Maku people, who have lived a stone-age existence in the Amazon rainforest for centuries, say they want to join the modern world.

A group of around 80 half-naked tribesmen wandered out of the wilderness with their children and pet monkeys in tow.

Their emergence has stunned the authorities in southern Colombia.

"We do not want to go back," said one man named only as Ma-be. "We want to stay near (the) town. We can plant food."

All the western world knows about the Nukaks is that they are nomads and

■ by MICHAEL KNAPP

hunter-gatherers. They have no understanding of the trappings of modern life, such as money, property and transport.

"The Nukak don't know what they've gotten themselves into," warned Dr Javier Maldonado, 27, who is working with them.

War

Relatives of the tribe first surfaced three years ago when they complained a civil war was threatening their habitat.

They have no immunity to even the common cold and the tribe is now reckoned to be only 250-strong after encounters with disease-bearing Westerners hit their numbers.