

# Jarawa kidnap raises abuse fear

TAPAS CHAKRABORTY

Jan. 20: Activists today voiced concern over the growing menace of sexual exploitation of Jarawas by outsiders after poachers infiltrated a reserve zone deep inside the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and abducted eight women last week before police tracked them down.

The rescue took over two days and a police officer said two of the women had been sent for medical tests, though it wasn't clear yet if they had been sexually abused.

The January 15 kidnap was the latest instance of alleged exploitation of the indigenous tribals since a 2012 video clip showing Jarawa girls dancing to entertain tourists went viral on websites.

A social worker in Port Blair said local poachers have been causing havoc to the Jarawas for the past decade. "The poachers lure Jarawa girls with food and drink and exploit them sexually. This is worrying," said Satish Narayan.

The Jarawas, one of Andaman and Nicobar's threatened tribes, number 417, including 198 women, according to its apex welfare body, the Andaman Adim Janjati Vikas Samity (AAJVS).

"The growing incidents of sexual exploitation of Jarawa women are a matter of concern but a massive crackdown on poachers is under way. Security of the Jarawa habitat has also been stepped up," Arun Gupta, assistant director, tribal welfare, said over phone.

Satish Golcha, IG (law and order), Andaman and Nicobar Islands, said the eight women were abducted and taken to Hiren Tikrey, deep inside the reserve zone, in two motorised dinghies on January 15.

"During joint patrolling by the police and the AAJVS we came to know about the incident on January 16 and launched a drive to rescue the

women," he told The Telegraph over phone.

"The women were located deep inside less accessible creeks in two different places at Hiren Tikrey, an island north of the Jarawa reserve, from where they were rescued. The eight poachers who held them captive were arrested on January 18," he said.

Another officer said the women were abducted from Tirur, south Andaman, where the reserve zone — off-limits for outsiders — starts. Hiren Tikrey is 15km interiors and takes about three hours by motorboat to reach from south Andaman.

The police are yet to confirm if the women — aged between 15 and 21 — had been sexually abused. "We are in the process of recording their statements," inspector-general Golcha said. "Two of the girls were sent for medical examination on the basis of their complaint of sexual abuse."

The eight accused, sent to judicial remand, have been charged with abduction and encroachment under the Andaman and Nicobar Islands (Protection of Aboriginal Tribes) Regulation, 1956, and also under the SC/ST Act.

Under the 1956 regulations, anyone convicted of introducing alcohol, drugs and any explosive substance to aboriginal tribes can be jailed for up to seven years.

An officer investigating the case said the poachers, led by their kingpin Narayan Roy alias Sujoy, had infiltrated the region earlier, too, and were involved in exploiting women, a charge the IG confirmed.

Some of the poachers were assaulted after their arrest by a group of Jarawa men who had accompanied the joint patrolling team that rescued the women.

Police sources said the arrested eight had sneaked into the reserve zone to hunt as their dinghies had fishing nets and sharpened sticks for spear-fishing.

Sub Editor  
21/01/14

हायरी सं०... 8 Ru  
दिनांक... 21-1-14