

Two reports dated 05/11/2008 (Flag-A) and 21/11/2008 (Flag/B) brought out by the Andaman Express, pertaining to Jarawa tourism and Jarawa killing fishermen at Mahuwa Tikry respectively, may please be seen. Such incidences have been waiting to happen, in view of the increasing interest in the Jarawa and resultant fall-out on their security and well being.

In anticipation of these eventualities, this Department had notified a 5 km area around the Tribal Reserve as a Buffer Zone, which however was challenged in the High Court and is now under consideration by the Double Bench of Calcutta High Court. The hearings on this matter are taking place and the order is expected very soon.

The Department had also proposed two notifications for declaring an existing belt of 30 mts. on either side from the central line of Andaman Trunk Road as Tribal Reserve, and for requirement of Tribal Pass for any non-tribal other than Pre 1942 settlers and their descendents, Islanders with valid Identity Card issued by the A & N Administration and their dependents and Govt. servants, traveling through the Andaman Trunk Road. The then Chief Secretary's approval for publishing these notifications as draft inviting claims and objections from the public is available on file (pg-41/N) and if approved the same may be implemented.

This problem about the Jarawas is to be seen in the light of the Eco Tourism Project developed by the Forest Department at Baratang, which is a popular destination for tourists as there are three unique sites which elicit awe and wonder in visitors - Lime Stone Cave, Mud Volcano and Tota Tikry. In respect of the first two sites, the Forest Department has laid out walk ways to make the trek through the jungle and mangroves more fascinating. However, the cost and the negative externalities imposed upon the environment has been ignored even though it is touted as Eco Tourism, because the number of visitors is not regulated, and there is a whole sale degradation of the area. The litter and garbage at the jetties and the village is unbelievable. The emission of noxious fumes and noise pollution created by the boats has driven away most of parrots from Tota Tikry. Thus there seems to be an attempt to green-wash the harsh ground realities.

This Eco Tourism venture also has the adverse effect of large numbers of visitors on the Jarawas, the two incidents referred to above bearing ample evidence to this effect. The attack on the fishermen is a stark reminder that this tribe is still primitive and not to be taken lightly. These incidents give us an opportunity to put an end to the Jarawa Tourism that is gaining ground day by day.

It is, therefore, suggested that - : the number of tourists to Batratang be regulated. There should be a limit of not more than 100 per day so that the carrying capacity of the place is sustained and the destination is not over exploited.

The Forest Department should not have any problem with limiting the number of visitors as they follow the same practice in Red Skin and Jolly Buoy Islands.