

Protests erupt after sexual assault videos go viral in India

Student protests rock India's southern state of Tamil Nadu on Thursday

CHENNAI: A wave of student protests rocked India's southern state of Tamil Nadu on Thursday after a number of videos showing sexual assaults on college girls were posted online.

Outrage increased after police said the footage was part of wider plot by a group of men to befriend college students on social media, meet them to commit sexual assaults, and then use the video footage to blackmail victims.

"Watching the video of a girl begging her assailants to let her go was chilling," said Captain Prabhakar, 21, a graduate student who took part in a protest in Coimbatore.

"In many of these areas, girls stepping out of their homes to attend college is a big deal. We fear that cases like this will result in restrictions being imposed again on girls."

The number of crimes against women reported to police in India rose by 83 percent from 2007 to 2016, according to government data, which showed that four rape complaints were reported every hour in 2016.

Four men arrested

Four men in Pollachi were arrested after a 19-year-old woman lodged a complaint, the Tamil Nadu police wrote in a report to the government on Wednesday.

Police are now trying to identify other victims based on video footage recovered from the mobile phones of the four accused men. At least five sexual assault videos have been posted on social media.

In her police complaint, the student said she was sexually assaulted by a group of men inside a car, one of whom she knew, and that her ordeal was recorded.

Student protesters and women's rights campaigners demanded police swiftly investigate the assaults and provide protection for the victims, many of whom have since been identified through the video clips.



Shilpa Rathnam

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· Mar 13, 2019

60 women in Tamil Nadu have been sexually assaulted, harassed & blackmailed by a gang. These span college teachers, students, working professionals. If this had happened to even 2 women in the north it would be all over the media. Most of you don't even know of the Pollachi rapes



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This is the 'Pollachi sex scandal', and the term sex scandal is very problematic as it has dangerous voyeuristic appeal. A video of one of the victims begging her rapists to let her go has unfortunately gone viral, it was published by a male journo who urged people to 'go watch' pic.twitter.com/6hQXqxxMSc

697

12:46 PM - Mar 13, 2019

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To

The Editor
Nakheeran
Chennai

Sir,

We, the members of Network of Women in Media, strongly condemn the publication of audio visual content pertaining to a horrific incident of rape through various platforms. The content, unambiguously, belongs to Nakkheeran, and Mr. Gopal has also urged people to "watch the video". We speak as the representatives of everyone who has feel troubled, traumatised, and shaken to the very core by the content on the video, which includes the piteous cries of a woman pleading with the rapists to let her go. Contrary to the claim that the video has served the purpose of initiating outrage, it has only taken perversion into homes via mobile and television screens, as perverted and voyeuristic content, and we do hope you will take all efforts to remove that content forthwith from all fora, including social media.

Kindly desist from publishing such content in future, without a mind to playing by the law, and being sensitive while doing your job as reporters.
Sincerely

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Sexual violence remains taboo in India, where survivors fear stigma or retribution if they report attacks.

But the number of cases police register has been steadily rising following national outrage at the fatal gang rape of a student on a bus in New Delhi in 2012.

"The need of the hour is to help other victims break their silence and come forward with their complaints," said Henri Tiphagne, director of human rights' charity People's Watch.

"We need to create a safe atmosphere for the other victims," said Madurai-based Tiphagne.



[Shilpa Rathnam](#)

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[7,527](#)

[11:37 AM - Mar 13, 2019](#)

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The National Commission for Women, a statutory body that advises the Indian government on issues related to women, sent a letter to police stating that they were "seriously concerned about the safety and security of women in Tamil Nadu".

Pollachi case goes to CBI, stir still spreads

Although the Tamil Nadu government gave its nod for a CBI probe into the Pollachi sexual assault-cum-blackmail case, security was heightened and holidays declared in colleges here on Thursday with stirrings gaining momentum as more awful facts of the abuse came out.

All colleges were shut down in this town, 535 km from the state capital, by the authorities following student protest demanding action against the culprits -- Thirunavukkarasu, Sabarirajan, Vasanthakumar, Satish -- now in custody.

[Chinmayi Sripaada](#)

✓ [@Chinmayi](#)

Instead of telling the police and judiciary what to do, please see what we could do as a society to encourage more women to come forward and file a case against sexual abuse. 200+ girls only ONE woman complained. That says a lot about what we are.

[#PollachiSexualAbuse](#)

[879](#)

[2:17 PM - Mar 14, 2019](#)

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Stringent security has been put in place ever since details of how scores of women from college teachers to students even working professionals and others were sexually assaulted, harassed and blackmailed by the gang came to light.

Victims lured and molested

Videos have also emerged that apparently show that the victims were lured to secluded spots and molested, filmed in the process, and blackmailed for money.

On Wednesday, the Madras High Court even rapped the media for poor coverage of the huge crime that was being committed over days.

Cricketer Ashwin Ravichandran, who has been following the case closely has lamented on the social media.

"There are so many pressing issues that need to be addressed in my state and my country. Every morning, I open Twitter and tell myself "justice can be delayed and not denied" "change is inevitable etc," he tweeted on Wednesday.

On Thursday, the cricketer openly came out with his angst and said: "Protests in Pollachi?? Can anyone tell me what's happening there right now?? "

Probe goes on

The AIADMK government decided to hand the investigation to the CBI, soon after the probe was transferred to the Crime Branch-Crime Investigation Department (CBCID) from the Coimbatore police, said an official.

The government's move came as the probe involves analysis of mobile phones, social media posts of the four accused and the affected women.

It was not even 24 hours that the CBCID started its probe into the crime taking over from the Coimbatore police.

The CBCID even formed a special team to start the probe as "the number of people involved in the crime was yet to be known" one of the investigators said.

Tamil Nadu Director General of Police T.K. Rajendran had ordered the transfer to the CBCID only on Tuesday.

The case made national headlines after the high court rap and huge protests by students, and women groups on the social media.

<https://gulfnnews.com/world/asia/india/protests-erupt-after-sexual-assault-videos-go-viral-in-india-1.1552563256667>