

Sex offenders' registry launched

TRACKING TOOL The national database will be available to law enforcement agencies; govt assures privacy won't be compromised

HT Correspondent

■ letters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: The government on Thursday launched an online National Database on Sexual Offenders (NDSO) which will have name, address, photograph and fingerprint details of persons convicted on the charges of rape, gang rape, offences related to the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, and stalking.

The National Database on Sexual Offenders will not be available to the general public but only to the law enforcement agencies to effectively track and investigate cases of sexual offences.

The government has promised the database will not compromise the privacy of individuals.

All states in the US have sex offender registries where information is available to the public online, except in cases where the offenders are juveniles.

The government also launched another portal, the Cyber Crime Prevention against Women and Children (CCPWC), to help citizens anonymously report complaints pertaining to child pornography, child sexual abuse material, or other sexually explicit material involving rapes and gang rapes.

The portal can be accessed at "cybercrime.gov.in" and allow complainants to upload the objectionable content. The complaints will be handled by the respective state police authorities.

If a victim or a complainant wishes to, he or she can track the report.

The portals were launched by Union home minister Rajnath Singh in the presence of Union women and child development minister Maneka Gandhi.

Top police and civil officers of the states attended the event through video conferencing.

Speaking on the occasion,

Gandhi said that state police chiefs need to keep a close eye on all shelter homes under their jurisdictions where women and children stay.

"Twenty to thirty per cent of sexual assaults take place in shelter homes. In Muzaffarpur (Bihar), the head of a shelter home allegedly sexually assaulted several children, but he was not arrested immediately.

"There was a tunnel from the shelter home to his residence. That means the crimes must have taken place in his residence. I appeal to all the DGPs (director generals of police) to keep a close eye on shelter homes," she said.

She pulled up the state governments saying they didn't respond to a letter from her ministry asking how many 'rape kits', a specially-designed kit which helps carry out immediate medical investigation into sexual assault cases, were procured by them.

Home minister Rajnath Singh said the two portals will help in strengthening security of women and children.

However, he added that the police will still have to tackle field challenges at the ground level to ensure speedy justice to the victims.

Officials said the registry is a central database of "sexual offenders" and will be maintained by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) as part of a regular monitoring and tracking exercise by the state police.

"At present, the database contains 4.4 lakh entries. The states' police have been requested to regularly update the database from 2005 onwards. The database includes name, address, photograph and fingerprint details for each entry. However, the database will not compromise any individual's privacy," said a government statement.