

Check lynchings, MHA tells States

Says more than 20 people have been lynched in the last two months on suspicion of child-lifting

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

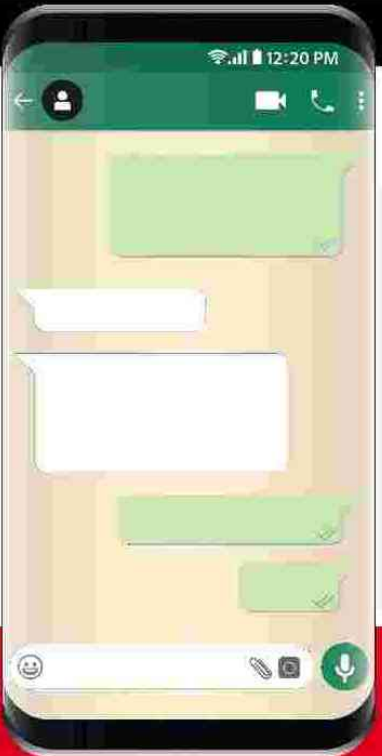
The Home Ministry on Thursday asked the States and Union Territories (UTs) to check incidents of mob lynching fuelled by rumours of child-lifting on social media.

More than 20 people have been lynched over the last two months on suspicion of child-lifting, the latest being the killing of five men in Maharashtra's Dhule district.

In an advisory, the Ministry has urged the States and UTs to "keep a watch for early detection of rumours of child-lifting and initiate effective measures to counter them."

Outreach programmes

"The Centre has asked the States and UTs to take measures to prevent incidents of mob lynching fuelled by rumours of child-lifting circulating on social media," a Ministry spokesperson said.



Fatal rumours

More than 20 persons have been lynched in the past month due to rumours on WhatsApp that child abductors were on the prowl

SOME KEY INCIDENTS

June 8: Nilotpal Das, 29, a sound engineer, and his friend Abhijeet Nath, 30, a businessman, were attacked by a mob near Panjuri Kacharigaon village, nearly 200 km from Shillong, on suspicion of being child lifters	June 28: Sukanta Chakraborty, hired by the Tripura government to dispel rumours about child-lifters on social media was lynched in Kalacherra Bazaar of South Tripura	July 1: Five persons were lynched in Maharashtra's Dhule district on suspicion that they were child lifters
---	--	--

CRIMES AGAINST CHILDREN: As per National Crime Records Bureau, kidnapping and abduction account for almost half of the total crimes against children in the country in 2016

1,06,958 total crimes against children	52,253 cases of abduction	19,675 Number of child rape cases in 2016
--	-------------------------------------	---

The States and UTs have been asked to direct district administrations to identify vulnerable areas and conduct community outreach programmes for creating awareness and building confidence.

They have also been directed to properly investi-

gate the complaints of child abduction or kidnapping to instil confidence among the affected people.

Two people were lynched in Tripura on June 28 and two in Assam last month on suspicion of child-lifting.

In Chennai, two men employed with a construction

company engaged in Metro Rail work were attacked last week when they tried to stop a boy from crossing a busy road and a bystander raised an alarm, suspecting them to be child-lifters.

However, they were rescued by the police.

On Wednesday, the go-

vernment had directed WhatsApp to immediately take steps to prevent the spread of "irresponsible and explosive messages," saying the social media platform cannot evade its responsibility.

WhatsApp has also been asked to immediately contain the spread of such messages.

Responding to the directions, the U.S.-based social media platform said on Wednesday that fake news, misinformation, and hoaxes can be checked by the government, civil society and technology companies working together.

Outlining steps it has taken to curb abuse of its platform, WhatsApp – in its response to a notice sent by India's IT Ministry – said it has the ability to prevent spam but since it cannot see the content of private messages, blocking can be done only based on user reports.