

Web portal to help track missing kids

Tracking down India's missing children, who number about 44,000 a year, will be easier now because of a cyber initiative taken by the central government. The Union women and child development ministry will launch a national web portal – six years after it was conceptualised – with a comprehensive data bank for tracking down missing children across India.

“The software is ready and we are testing it in 10 states. We plan to roll it out nationally in the next four to five months,” said a ministry official. The National Informatics Centre was tasked with developing the portal in 2006 following the Nithari case, in which more than 12 children went missing from a small residential area in Noida and were later found killed.

Called “Track Child”, the portal will have detailed data about all missing children reported by the police across India. The software will automatically match this with the data on kids the police, child welfare centres and voluntary organisations have unearthed. If the data match, it is one step closer to sending the child to his or her parents.

The police and the authorities concerned in any state can access and share the data. Even the public will be able to access restricted data and post information on missing children.

In 2008, Track Child was launched on a pilot basis in West Bengal and was a success. Women and child development minister Krishna Tirath said: “After this, we decided to scale it up nationally.”

Execution challenges remain. “The main issue would be linking all the police stations and district offices in interior parts of the country with computers and train the staff,” an official said.

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