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Smt Maneka Sanjay Gandhi launches POCSO e-Button for children to file complaints of sexual abuse

An online complaint box for reporting child sexual abuse, the POCSO e-Box was launched by the Minister for Women and Child Development, Smt. Maneka Sanjay Gandhi in New Delhi today. Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO), e-Box, is an online complaint management system for easy and direct reporting of sexual offences against children and timely action against the offenders under the POCSO Act, 2012. Minister of State for Women and Child Development, Smt Krishna Raj, Secretary WCD, Ms Leena Nair, NCPCR Chairperson, Smt Stuti Kacker and other senior officials of the WCD Ministry and NCPCR were present on the occasion.

Speaking on the occasion, Smt Maneka Gandhi said that the idea of an e-Box came out of a police initiative in which physical complaint boxes were placed in schools. The e-Box will make it possible to implement it on a large scale throughout the country. A large number of incidents of abuse are against close relatives and so they get pushed under the carpet, the Minister said. E-Box is very simple to operate and will help to maintain the confidentiality of the complaint, Smt Maneka Sanjay Gandhi explained.

Smt Krishna Raj said that all efforts should be made to generate awareness about the e-Box so that more and more children can come out with their suffering. Highlighting the lifelong trauma of a child suffering from abuse, Mrs Stuti Kacker said that the online facility has been created so that the child can be given immediate help.

The e-Box is incorporated prominently in the home page of National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) website <http://ncpcr.gov.in/> where a user has to simply push a button named POSCO e-Box. This will navigate to a page with a window containing an animation movie. The animation movie reassures the child that whatever has happened to him/her is not his/her fault and she/he need not feel guilty and that NCPCR is a friend which will help her. After the user presses the arrow on this page, it navigates to another page where he/ she has to select at least one picture option (describing the category of harassment) and fill the form with details such as mobile number, e-mail and description of the harassment followed by the 'submit' button. The complaint is then registered and a unique auto-generated complaint number is flashed.

Sexual offences against children are rampant but only a small percentage gets reported. According to a study, about 53% of children surveyed, reported having faced one or the other form of sexual abuse in their lifetime. In most cases, the offender is a family member/near relative or an acquaintance. The child victim in such cases generally does not report these offences. Sexual abuse scars the psyche of the affected child for entire life. A child who is sexually abused has to face very serious consequences such as cognitive impairment, violent and

risk behaviour including depression and anxiety. Feeling shame and guilt with poor interpersonal relationship & self esteem are other consequences of sexually abused children.

Being concerned about such offences against children, the Government enacted POCSO Act, 2012 to protect them from offences of sexual assault, sexual harassment and pornography, while safeguarding the interest of the child at every stage of the judicial process, by incorporating child friendly mechanisms for reporting, recording of evidence, investigation and speedy trial of offences through designated Special Courts. Any human being up to the age of 18 years is recognised as a child under the POCSO Act.
