

OPERATION MEGH CHAKRA: 50 UNDER CBI SCANNER OVER CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

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The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Saturday conducted searches at 59 locations across 20 States and one Union Territory, as part of a pan-India drive against the circulation and sharing of child sexual abuse material. The operation code-named “Megh Chakra” was carried out following the inputs received from the Interpol’s Singapore special unit based on the information received from the authorities in New Zealand.

The CBI has registered two cases alleging that a large number of Indian nationals were involved in the online circulation, downloading and transmission of such material using cloud-based storage. Over 50 persons have come under the scanner.

The searches were carried out in Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Goa, Karnataka, Telangana and Tamil Nadu. The agency seized electronic devices belonging to the suspects.

A preliminary scrutiny of the devices using cyberforensic tools allegedly revealed that a huge quantity of child pornography material was stored in them. “The suspects are being questioned to identify the victims and the abusers,” said an official, adding that the operation was one of the CBI-led global operations in recent times for a prompt response to online child sexual exploitation cases with international linkages.

The official said the operation sought to collate information from various law enforcement agencies in India, engage with the relevant law enforcement agencies globally and coordinate closely through the Interpol channels on the issue.

Last November, the agency had launched a similar exercise code-named “Operation Carbon”, searching the premises of suspects in 13 States and one Union Territory.

The previous operation was conducted at 76 locations. The persons named in the FIRs were booked under the relevant provisions of the IPC and the Information Technology Act, for allegedly being part of the syndicates that uploaded, circulated, sold and viewed such material.

The CBI had later decided to send requests to several countries for sharing and gathering information under the Mutual Legal Assistance Treaties (MLATs) on those involved in the racket.

The probe had led to the identification of over 50 groups with more than 5,000 offenders

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