

MHA Directive: Ensuring Translations for Zero FIRs Across States

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Why in News?

The Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has directed Union Territories (UTs) to ensure that 'zero FIRs' recorded in local languages are accompanied by a translated copy of the same when forwarded to states with different languages.

This directive aims to preserve the legal value of FIRs. Complying, the UTs have started sending out the original zero FIRs along with their English translation.

Zero FIRs

- **About FIRs**

- The term first information report (FIR) is **not defined** in the Indian Penal Code (IPC), Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) 1973 or in any other law.
 - In police regulations or rules, **information recorded under Section 154 of CrPC is known as FIR.**
 - **Section 154** states that every information relating to the commission of a cognizable offence, if given orally to an officer in charge of a police station, shall be reduced to writing.
 - **A copy of the information** (as recorded) shall be given (free of cost) to the informant.
 - **In essence, 3 important elements of an FIR:**
 - the information must relate to the commission of a cognizable offence,
 - it should be given in writing or orally to the head of the police station and
 - **it must be written down and signed by the informant, and its key points should be recorded in a daily diary.**
 - **Zero FIRs**
 - A **zero FIR** can be filed in any Police Station by the victim, irrespective of their residence or the place of occurrence of crime.
 - A police station that receives a complaint regarding an alleged offence committed in the jurisdiction of another police station, **registers an FIR and then transfers it to the relevant police station for further investigation.**
 - **No regular FIR number is given** and after receiving the Zero FIR, the relevant police station **registers a fresh FIR** and starts the investigation.
 - It came up after the recommendation in the report of the **Justice Verma Committee** set up after the 2012 Nirbhaya gang rape case to suggest amendments to the Criminal Law.
 - **The objective of a Zero FIR** is to ensure the victim doesn't have to run from pillar to post to get a police complaint registered.
 - The provision is meant to provide **speedy redressal to the victim so that timely action can be taken after the filing of the FIR.**
 - **FIR under new criminal laws**
 - The three new criminal laws came into effect from July 1, 2024.
 - The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita 2023, Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita 2023 and Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam 2023, replaced the British-era Indian Penal Code, Code of Criminal Procedure and the Indian Evidence Act, respectively.
 - Under the new laws, a person can now report incidents by electronic communication, without the need to physically visit a police station.
 - This allows for easier and quicker reporting, facilitating prompt action by the police.
 - Under the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) police are now bound to register a 'zero FIR'.
 - Under Section 176 (3) of BNSS, collection of forensic evidence and video-recording of the crime scene in case of offences punishable with seven years or more is mandatory.
 - If the forensic facility is not available in a state, it can notify the utilisation of such facility of any other state.
 - Victims will receive a free copy of the FIR, ensuring their participation in the legal process.
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Q.1. What is a Zero FIR?

A Zero FIR is an FIR that can be filed at any police station, regardless of jurisdiction. It ensures the victim can register a complaint without delays, and the FIR is later transferred to the appropriate police station for investigation.

Q.2. Why must Zero FIRs be translated?

The MHA has mandated translations of Zero FIRs when forwarded to states with different languages to preserve their legal accuracy and value, ensuring clear communication during cross-state investigations under the new criminal laws.

Source: Zero FIRs filed in local languages must have translated copy: MHA to UTs | Indian Express | Hindustan Times

Source: <https://vajiramandravi.com/current-affairs/mha-directive-ensuring-translations-for-zero-firs-across-states/>

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