

Opinion: Bharatpol Portal — Revolutionising Crossborder Collaboration For Crackdown On Crime

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Bharatpol marks a significant step in combating international offences such as cybercrime, financial fraud, and organised crime — including drug trafficking and human trafficking — through international cooperation.

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Earlier this month, Union Home Minister Amit Shah launched the Bharatpol portal, developed by the CBI to address the complexities of modern crimes, such as online radicalisation and cyber fraud. Launched on January 7, 2025, at Bharat Mandapam in Delhi, the portal marks a significant step in combating international offences such as cybercrime, financial fraud, and organised crime — including drug trafficking and human trafficking — through international cooperation.

The Bharatpol portal is designed to enhance crossborder criminal collaboration in India by addressing several key challenges and leveraging modern technology to improve efficiency and effectiveness in law enforcement. Effective crossborder collaboration for criminal investigation requires seamless exchange of information and coordination

between law-enforcement agencies. The Bharatpol portal facilitates this by providing a centralised platform for sharing intelligence and coordinating operations across jurisdictions.

Cybercrime encompasses a variety of criminal activities where technology is used to commit offences. It includes malicious acts aimed at exploiting technological vulnerabilities, stealing sensitive data, or disrupting digital systems. The rapid evolution of technology and the interconnected nature of the internet make cybercrime a global issue, posing significant challenges for governments and law-enforcement agencies. Financial fraud, meanwhile, refers to the act of intentionally deceiving someone to gain financial benefits unlawfully. It can take various forms and involves different types of schemes, ranging from simple scams to sophisticated operations such as the 'digital arrest' con playing out in different parts of India.

Organised crime — carried out by structured groups that engage in illegal activities, often for financial or power gains — poses a significant challenge to law-enforcement agencies. These groups typically engage in activities such as drug trafficking, extortion, human trafficking, arms smuggling, money laundering, cybercrime, illicit gambling, etc.

Given the growing occurrences of transnational crimes, it becomes imperative to understand the nuances of what precisely the Bharatpol portal is, what its relevance is, and how international criminal matters have been coordinated so far.

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Streamlining International Cooperation

The Bharatpol portal is a centralised digital platform designed to streamline international cooperation in addressing crimes by enabling real-time information-sharing and empowering field-level officers, resulting in enhanced efficiency of law-enforcement agencies. With the increasing complexity of modern criminal activities, the need for seamless international cooperation has become more pressing than ever. The Bharatpol portal addresses this need by fostering collaboration between Indian law-enforcement agencies and their international counterparts. The portal supports the digitalisation of criminal justice processes, which is crucial given the nature of modern crime and the need for electronic evidence. This aligns with global trends where digital platforms are increasingly used to manage and exchange electronic evidence.

Some of its key features that highlight its significance include expediting the process of issuing Red Notices, which are vital for tracking and apprehending fugitives; integrating stakeholders, such as state police forces, central agencies, and international organisations; and fostering a unified approach to global crime. The portal provides a strong legal and operational framework that respects human rights and data protection laws. This is essential to balance effective law enforcement and the protection of individual freedoms.

However, the success of the portal may depend on various factors such as ensuring privacy and security of data, and continuous training and capacity-building of law-enforcement agencies, taking steps to harmonise differences across the legal frameworks applicable to different jurisdictions, along with building mutual trust and confidence among participating agencies is crucial for effective collaboration.

Historically, international cooperation in criminal matters has relied on bilateral treaties, extradition agreements, and mechanisms like Interpol. In India, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), India's national central bureau for Interpol, has traditionally managed international criminal matters through liaison officers. While these approaches have been effective, they often suffer from delays and jurisdictional complexities. The Bharatpol portal represents a transformative shift by offering a centralised, technology-driven solution to overcome these limitations. The portal promotes collaboration not just among police forces but also with other sectors, such as community organisations and international bodies. This holistic approach is crucial for addressing complex crimes like human trafficking and terrorism.

The launch of Bharatpol marks a significant milestone in India's efforts to combat transnational crime. The portal is a powerful tool for addressing the complexities of modern criminal activities. India continues to enhance its law-enforcement capabilities through measures like capacity-building, strengthening international partnerships, continuous upgrades, etc. Bharatpol is poised to play a pivotal role in strengthening global crime-fighting efforts through increased public awareness about the portal's capabilities, which will foster trust and encourage cooperation with law enforcement agencies at the state and central levels.

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