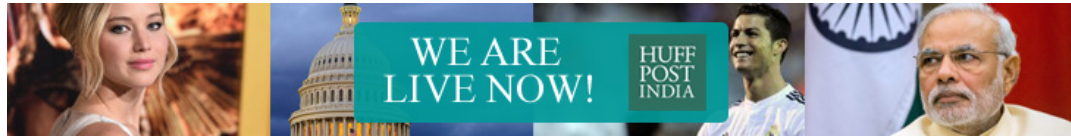


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From next week, 3 one-stop centres for rape survivors

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MUMBAI: In the first week of January, three civic hospitals will start their one-stop crisis centres for survivors of sexual assault. This is in response to the Centre's directive to set up Nirbhaya crisis centres at hospitals to help rape survivors and gather evidence for speedy justice.

However, there is no clarity over whether these Mumbai centres will be called Nirbhaya, as directed by the Centre. There also is no sign of the central funds promised to set up and operate these centres.

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On Monday, additional municipal commissioner (health) Sanjay Deshmukh said woman doctors would head the crisis centres to make the survivors feel comfortable.

The first centres at BMC's three big hospitals—KEM Hospital in Parel, Nair hospital in Mumbai Central and Sion hospital—will begin "immediately", with a fourth one scheduled to come up soon at the newly spruced-up Cooper Hospital in Juhu. Plans are also afoot to set up a few more such centres in other suburban civic hospitals.

Incidentally, an one-stop crisis centre, called Dilaasa centre, set up in civic-run Bhabha Hospital over a decade back served as a model for the Nirbhaya centres. In fact, the Dilaasa model had been recently praised by the Lancet medical journal (see box).

Deshmukh said the new centres would operate on the lines of Dilaasa and they will have counsellors to help the survivors. "We will largely follow the state government guidelines for intervention and medical assistance for survivors," he added. "The centres will have counsellors trained from the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Deonar."

But civic officials said that a group of doctors were against according names to such centres. A source said, "Having a name or a dedicated space for such a centre could lead to labelling for the

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people visiting it." The source added that the Union government, which was supposed to release funds for these one-stop crisis centres, would not be doing so this year.

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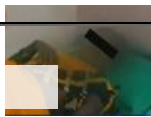
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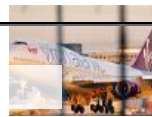
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