

New initiative to fight cyber crime, bullying among youth

Pranali Lotlikar

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With the alarming rise in cybercrime, particularly targeting the youth, a Mumbai-based law firm AU Corporate Advisory and Legal Services (AUCL) and non-governmental organisation L B Trust under the programme WHT NOW programme have joined forces to address this growing threat. Recognising the vulnerability of young people to cyberbullying and the urgent need for intervention, the initiative aims to foster a safer digital environment. During a press conference, experts emphasised that cybercrime is spreading at a 'forest fire rate,' requiring immediate and coordinated action from both authorities and parents.

A key element of the initiative, now two months in operation, focuses on counseling victims of cyberbullying. According to the panel, they have successfully counselled 17 people via phone, preventing them from taking their own lives. "Counseling plays a critical role in addressing the emotional toll of cyberbullying," the panel stated, underscoring the importance of mental health support in these cases. Advocate Akshat Khetan, representing AUCL, revealed that the firm is com-



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Neeti Goel

mitted to tackling cybercrime, which has become a serious issue for youth in India. He announced that AUCL and WHT NOW are working on an "Anti-Cyber Bullying/Ragging Policy," with plans to present a white paper to the government.

We need to adopt a 'prognosis' approach, focusing on preventing cyber threats before they escalate," Khetan said. "Through this collaboration, we aim to offer not just awareness but practical support such as legal aid, mental health counselling, and mentorship for young people. Our goal is to empower and protect youth, ensuring a safer digital space for all." Neeti Goel, who started the WHT NOW, said that the programme has already saved 17 lives from suicide. "Our team of psychologists, doctors, law-

yers, and suicide prevention experts are available to support victims during critical moments," Goel said.

One of their key techniques involves asking victims to hold ice in their hand, which distracts them from the intense emotional distress they may be feeling, allowing the deadly impulse to pass. "We ensure follow-up care for at least a week after the initial call to monitor their well-being and provide ongoing support," she added. Goel stressed that cyberbullying and its consequences should no longer be treated as a taboo topic. "When we receive a call, we make sure that the parents are informed and that we address the issue with the nearest police station. The children are often too scared to tell their parents themselves, so we step in to ensure the matter is handled appropriately," Goel said.

Dr Nivedita Shreyans, co-founder of the programme and an educationalist, called for schools to play a more active role in creating awareness about cyberbullying. She emphasised that early intervention through education could help prevent cybercrime and bullying from escalating. A helpline number was announced during the conference for anyone in need.

Cons using cyber-crime helpline now

Somendra Sharma

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The Maharashtra cyber department has issued an alert for citizens warning them about exploitation of cyber-crime helpline (1930) by cyber-criminals. Fraudsters pretended to be police officers using a Skype ID called 'POLICE 1930' to trick victims into thinking they were real law enforcement.

According to the alert, the scammers falsely claim that the victim's Aadhaar ID was used for shipping illegal items like drugs and credit cards. The criminals then threaten the person with imprisonment and freezing bank accounts unless the person transfers a large amount of money to them.

"If you are a victim of such a scam then report to www.cybercrime.gov.in or helpline number 1930," the alert further stated.

The police sources said that scammers are using new tactics to trick people wherein they impersonate law enforcement and threaten citizens with fake arrests via phone or video calls. "If contacted by someone claiming to be law enforcement, terminate the call and verify it.