



Press Release

Parental Vigilance Advised For Online Child Sexual Abuse On The Rise Due To Pandemic

Kolkata, 8th April, 2020: In 2017, a 42-year-old law lecturer from Australia was charged with 931 counts of child abuse. The lecturer pretended to be Justin Bieber. The lecturer Gordon Douglas Chambers used *Facebook* and *Skype* to impersonate himself. While pretending to be Justin Bieber, he groomed and persuaded children to send him explicit images.

During investigation, it was found that his offences dated back to 2007. He was found to have tricked 157 children. His charges included making child exploitation material, using technology to procure a child under 16 for sex and pornographic material.

Global agencies are anticipating that children are at increasing risk of falling prey to crimes perpetrated through online and social platforms.

Parents are advised to be vigilant and track the internet usage of children. While the government machinery is focused on thwarting the spread of the coronavirus, criminals and predators anywhere in the world can exploit the closure of schools and increased usage of internet by children.

Criminals can take advantage by engaging children who are now expected to be vulnerable due to isolation and less supervision.

“Recent statistics indicate that children are spending time online more than ever. This has developed a lot of room for online child exploitation. We have observed that there has been an increase on online grooming cases globally.” said Guillermo Galarza, Director of Law Enforcement Training & Technology, International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children (ICMEC).

A report released by Europol titled *Pandemic Profiteering*, stated that there is an increase of online activity by those who are seeking child abuse material. The report found a correlation between this increased activity being consistent with online postings in forums by offenders.

Another data released by the National Crime Agency (NCA) data believes there are at least 300,000 individuals in the UK posing a sexual threat to children, either through physical contact abuse or online.

“While there haven’t been any cases reported yet in India, it is highly possible that seasoned human trafficking criminals will exploit the current situation. Sex-traffickers were found to use social media applications to engage customers in 90% of cases that IJM supported the Police to rescue children in the last two years.” said Mr. Saji Philip, Director of Operations, International Justice Mission, Kolkata.

The most recent incidents of online sex-trafficking in India were brought forward by the Telangana Police. They busted an international racket who were selling minors through an online classified website network.



Some worrying factors are the surge viewership of popular porn sites in the last few days. Emerging technology like Deepfake app further aides to the child abuse. The app can easily superimpose a child's image onto someone else's body using artificial intelligence.

Cyber-trafficking, Grooming, Sextortion, Sexting, Live Streaming of child sexual abuse are some of the new norms of crime against children and vulnerable communities.

As per a report by the International Labour Organisation, Terminology Guidelines for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse, the following crimes are defined as:

What is grooming: "The process of establishing/building a relationship with a child either in person or through the use of internet or other digital technologies to facilitate either online or offline sexual contact with that person. A report presented to the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha in January 2020 by an ADHOC committee, stated that grooming needs to be explicitly recognised as a crime in India.

What is sexting: Sexting is a form of sexual bullying, where a child is pressured to send a picture to a boyfriend/girlfriend/peer, who then distributes it to a peer network without their consent. Another form of Sexting, sharing of self-generated images by consenting adults.

What is Live online child sexual abuse: It is a practice on the rise, related both to the sexual exploitation of children through prostitution and sexual performances and to the production of child sexual abuse material.

What can Parents do:

- Take advantage of Parental controls
- Make social media accounts private
- Delete, Report and block if your child receives any unwanted contact from strangers
- Talk regularly with your child about their internet and social media interests and build a trusting relationship about the usage of technology.
- Parents can look to do joint activities with children and engage them in a meaningful way.

About International Justice Mission:

International Justice Mission (IJM) is a global organization that protects the poor from violence throughout the developing world. IJM partners with local authorities to rescue victims of violence, bring criminals to justice, restore survivors, and strengthen justice systems. Since 2006, IJM Kolkata has been working alongside government agencies to rescue and rehabilitate victims of sex trafficking, prosecute offenders and train public justice officials.

For further information please contact:

SreerajMitra / Risha Hazra / Kakoli Das

Sagittarius Communications

Ph: 9007307884 / 9051043255 / 8981851281