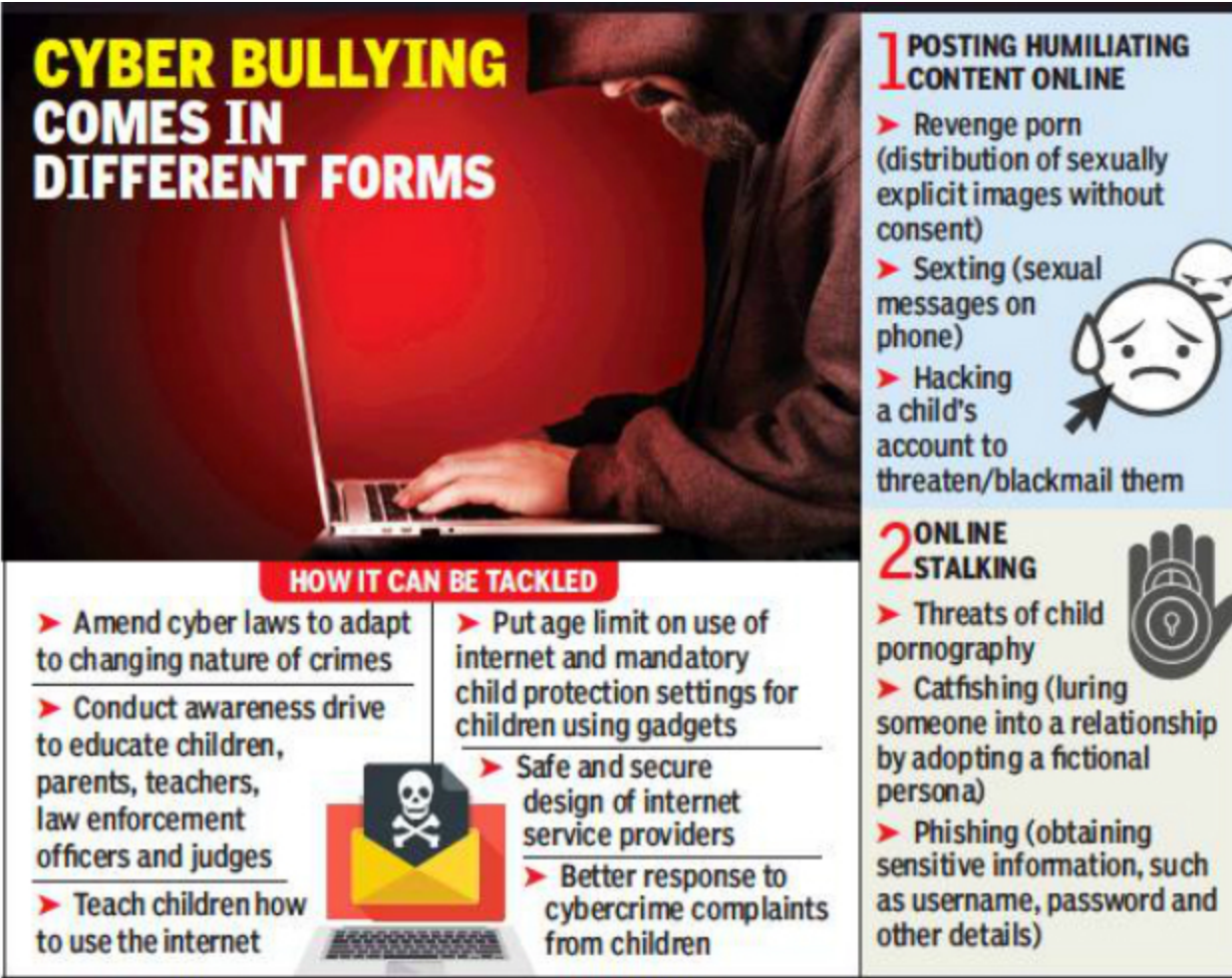Printed from

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Age limit for going online? How threat to children can be tackled

TNN | Mar 15, 2018, 03.09 AM IST

NEW DELHI: "If there can be an age limit for driving a car, then why shouldn't there be one for using the internet?" This was one of the suggestions given by an expert on cyber security and law at a discussion on Wednesday to curb cyber bullying and threats to children.

Ruing the poor response to cyber threat cases and awareness about online security, the experts called for updating laws and improving response of law enforcement agencies. They also suggested the use of smarter technology to avoid cybercrimes liking child pornography, Catfishing, revenge porn and other online sexual harassment of children.

4/24/2018

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CYBER BULLYING COMES IN DIFFERENT FORMS

1 POSTING HUMILIATING CONTENT ONLINE
- Revenge porn (distribution of sexually explicit images without consent)
- Sexting (sexual messages on phone)
- Hacking a child's account to threaten/blackmail them

2 ONLINE STALKING
- Threats of child pornography
- Catfishing (luring someone into a relationship by adopting a fictional persona)
- Phishing (obtaining sensitive information, such as username, password and other details)

HOW IT CAN BE TACKLED
- Amend cyber laws to adapt to changing nature of crimes
- Conduct awareness drive to educate children, parents, teachers, law enforcement officers and judges
- Teach children how to use the internet
- Put age limit on use of internet and mandatory child protection settings for children using gadgets
- Safe and secure design of internet service providers
- Better response to cybercrime complaints from children

Karnika Seth, a cyber-law expert and Supreme Court advocate, said, "We see kids aged 10-14 years using the internet today. If there's a rule of not allowing children to drive before they turn 18, then they should also be taught netiquettes (the correct way to use the internet) at the school level."

Child rights activist Sonal Kapoor said that though India has several laws against sexual harassment of children, including POCSO Act, there was not been effective implementation. "There is a need to improve awareness of people, especially from the slum areas," she added. She was speaking at the CSR Leadership conference organised by Nasscom Foundation.

Kapoor also explained that many Indian laws are protectionist in nature and they need to be protective. Seth added, "There is an urgent need to amend the laws to make them compatible with the changing times where we see new kinds of cybercrime taking place."

Technology expert Deepak Maheshwari said proper use of technology could stop cases of cyber harassment and tech firms should include safety, security and privacy as the default settings in applications and software. One such method was internet browsers having a safety feature in which settings would need to be changed to access certain websites.

Seth suggested using Photo DNA technology that can block child pornography on the internet. "Consumers can also complain to internet service providers who have a public grievance redressal in case of online abuse," she added.

Nasscom Foundation CEO Shrikant Sinha said that such programmes are necessary as they provide ideas to corporates for corporate social responsibility.