

## PEER-TO-PEER LESSONS AT SUSHILA BIRLA

# Schoolgirls lead cyber safety squad



Stills from videos posted by the cyber squad of Sushila Birla Girls' School on social media

### JHINUK MAZUMDAR

Calcutta: A seemingly harmless gift card on a parent's phone may not be as innocent as it appears — it could be a trap set by cybercriminals, warns a schoolgirl in a video message.

"Cyber criminals look for just one mistake that you make when you use the phone," she says.

The video is part of a social media campaign by the cyber squad of Sushila Birla Girls' School, an initiative designed to spread awareness about cybercrime among students through peer-led conversations.

From phishing and cyberbullying to compromised passwords and hacked accounts, the squad addresses the risks that increasingly define young people's online lives.

With children relying heavily on digital devices for both entertainment and education, screens have be-

come nearly indispensable — along with the vulnerabilities they bring.

"We have created a cyber squad who interact with girls to talk to them about the perils and dangers of the cyber world. Unless they are aware, they will become more vulnerable online," said principal Koeli Dey.

The idea, she explained, was to move away from top-down instruction. Instead of teachers delivering warnings from behind desks, students would speak to one another, making the message more relatable and effective.

The 30-member squad, comprising students from Classes VI to XII, has been trained by an IT professional. They conduct sessions during assemblies and in classrooms, and have recently extended their outreach to social media platforms.

Their approach draws from everyday scenarios. In

one video, a girl recounts finding a "free gift card" while scrolling through her mother's phone. Her friend expresses excitement, "I want one too", only to be interrupted by a senior student who explains how such offers are often phishing attempts — designed to trick users into sharing sensitive information like OTPs or bank details.

Scammers, the students explain, may pose as representatives of trusted companies, sending messages that claim a prize has been won or that an account is about to be locked.

The consequences can be serious.

"It is dangerous because your money can be stolen, your social media account can be hacked, and your identity can be misused," another student says in the video.

While the content is aimed at students, its relevance extends to grown-ups.

Cyber fraud often targets individuals who use smartphones frequently but may not fully understand the risks, making awareness across age groups equally important.

"Some basic knowledge can save someone from playing into the hands of a scamster. Some of the threats are quite common, and our objective is to help people approach the digital world with more scepticism rather than trust everything blindly," said Class XII student Drasta Roy, a member of the squad.

The initiative is designed to grow. "The 30 will train another five, and it will keep adding up," said principal Dey. "The kind of dangers that exist online makes it almost essential for us to educate our girls. Often, adults are not fully aware of how susceptible to dangers children can become with access to a device or even an online game."