

Andheri teen's leap to death: CM orders probe

Times of India - 2nd August 2017

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Cops Sceptical If It's Linked To Online Dare

V Narayan & Clara Lewis | TNN

Mumbai: A 14-year-old boy who jumped to death from an Andheri East building last week chatted with a few friends on WhatsApp for at least 15 minutes before taking the extreme step, investigators said. On Tuesday, chief minister Devendra Fadnavis announced an inquiry into the teenager's suicide, which some claim was the final step of a 50-task online challenge called The Blue Whale.

Pointing out that there have been several suicides in other countries linked to the online dare, the chief minister said in the assembly that they would try to get it banned.

A senior police officer, however, said the death of Manpreet Singh Sahans does not seem to be linked to the dare. Investigators who have seized the boy's mobile phone, have not found any link. "It is learnt that the boy has shared some photos with his friends before he jumped. His mobile phone has been sent to the Forensic Science Laboratory to extract the contents, which will throw some light into the incident. Also there are no etching marks on the body, which is usually found on those who take part in the online dare," an investigator said.

Police said the class IX student jumped from the sixth floor terrace of Building No 194 at Sher-e-Punjab Colony on July 29, even as a man residing in the opposite building, who saw him on the parapet, shouted to him to go back. Meghwadi police have recorded the witness's statement. Sahans parents and his two sisters returned from Nashik late on Monday after completing the final rituals.

The issue was raised in the assembly by NCP leader Ajit Pawar: "The incident is a warning. The government should initiate steps to stop such suicides. It's a global phenomenon and police must find out who was his master who pushed him to take

ACT BEFORE IT'S LATE

Blue Whale challenge

It's a 'suicide game' where a group administrator assigns daily tasks – mostly involving self-infliction – to members, which they have to complete over 50 days. On the 50th day, the gamers are asked to commit suicide

KEEP AN EYE ON KIDS

- ▶ No phones or other devices in bedrooms
- ▶ Maintain access to kids' social media accounts. There are NO secrets
- ▶ Talk about internet trends. Discuss cyberbullying
- ▶ See if a child's behavior changes suddenly
- ▶ Check if the kid has suffered any recent injury

such a drastic step," Pawar said.

Fadnavis said the government would institute an inquiry and "collaborate with the Centre for future remedies".

Cyber expert Ritesh Bhatia said, "We must wait for the cyber forensics report to come before we link the suicide to the online challenge." Similarly cyber psychologist Nirali Bhatia said it is so far a blind shot to link the suicide to the online dare. The online game is known to target children who are sensitive, emotionally disturbed or even depressed. "The objective and actions of the challenge is to make the participant indulge in self harm and disturbing tasks till the participant reaches the last winning stage of taking his/her own life. None of such traits or harm marks have been found on the boy's body," said Bhatia.

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