VARINDIA

Quick Heal Foundation launches Cyber Shikshit Gaon initiative to make Arjuni India's first cyber-safe village

The flagship initiative under 'Cyber Shiksha, Cyber Suraksha' programme will work towards making the entire village cyber safe through awareness, household outreach and hands-on digital security interventions

Quick Heal Foundation, the CSR arm of Quick Heal Technologies Limited, a global provider of cybersecurity solutions, has launched its Cyber Shikshit Gaon initiative in Arjuni Village, Kolhapur, with the aim of making it India's first cyber-safe village. As part of Quick Heal Foundation's flagship Cyber Shiksha, Cyber Suraksha programme, the initiative takes a community-wide approach to cybersecurity, bringing together structured awareness sessions, household outreach and hands-on digital security interventions to equip residents with the knowledge and confidence to prevent, identify and report cyber threats.

As digital access expands, awareness of online risks has not kept pace. People may unknowingly expose personal information through third-party applications, unknown platforms, excessive app permissions and unverified links. Such exposure can put not only an individual at risk, but also family members, friends and business contacts connected through their device. Built on three

core pillars - Prevention, Protection and Reporting - the Cyber Shikshit Gaon initiative goes beyond conventional awareness to deliver hands-on digital protection and establish a sustainable village-level response ecosystem.

Anupama Katkar, Chairperson, Quick Heal Foundation and Chief of Operational Excellence, Quick Heal Technologies Limited, said, “Digital access can open doors to opportunity, but those doors can only truly empower communities when people have the knowledge and confidence to stay safe online. Through Cyber Shikshit Gaon, we want to take cybersecurity beyond awareness and make it a part of everyday life, helping people protect their personal information, recognise fraud, secure their devices, and know where to turn when they need help. Arjuni is more than a village where we are taking this initiative; it is a reminder that every citizen, regardless of where they live, deserves the confidence to participate safely in the digital world. If we can help even one family feel safer online, we are taking one more meaningful step towards a truly cyber-resilient India.”

Arjuni has an estimated population of 1,406. A baseline survey covered 273 households and identified 675 mobile users, including 539 smartphone users. Among the households surveyed, 193 reported daily internet use, while 155 reported regular or occasional UPI use, highlighting the need to strengthen cyber literacy alongside digital adoption. Further assessments in the village identified devices with security gaps and sensitive data exposure without users’ knowledge. Awareness of the critical first three hours - the ‘golden window’ for reporting financial cyber fraud - was also limited, reducing the possibility of timely intervention and recovery. The Cyber Shikshit Gaon is aimed at addressing these gaps.

At the heart of the programme are members of the Cyber Warrior Club at Devchand College, Arjuni, working under the guidance of Quick Heal Foundation. These young volunteers are conducting household outreach and structured awareness sessions, while helping residents apply essential security measures to their devices and accounts. Their involvement demonstrates how empowered youth can drive behavioural change and community protection.

Through a Mobile & Digital Security Check-up Camp, 519 mobile devices were assessed across nine security parameters. Around 445 devices had five or more security gaps, with Cyber Warriors helping residents strengthen app permissions, privacy settings, account security, device protection and safe digital practices.

Community sessions covered OTP, PIN and password safety, UPI and QR-code fraud, fake KYC and customer-care scams, social-media and WhatsApp security, child and senior-citizen safety, and cybercrime reporting. Residents were encouraged to pause, verify and report suspicious activity, and contact 1930 immediately in case of financial cybercrime.

A Village Cyber Safety Committee under the Arjuni Gram Panchayat has been established to guide residents, support complaint registration and coordinate local response. A WhatsApp Cyber Safety Network, along with 10 banners and 6 strategic wall paintings, will keep cyber-safety awareness visible across the village.

The Cyber Shikshit Gaon programme aims to build a digitally aware, cyber-safe and cyber-resilient village, equipping residents to protect their devices and information, transact safely online, recognise scams and respond quickly to cyber fraud. Through the initiative, Quick Heal Foundation continues to leverage cybersecurity knowledge for social good and safer digital communities.