

## MOMO CHALLENGE

# HRD wants education bodies to issue notice

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**NEW DELHI:** The Human Resource Development (HRD) ministry has issued a circular asking school education and higher education bureaus to issue an advisory or warning to schools and colleges about the deadly “Momo Challenge”.

In a letter dated September 6, Rajesh Solanki, under secretary in the ministry asked the bureau to refer to the letter received from the ministry of electronics and information technology regarding a new dangerous online game called “Momo Challenge”.

Following this, the University Grants Commission (UGC), Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) and All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) are likely to issue advisories against the game.

The letter points out that the game has gone viral on social media platforms such as Whatsapp and needs to be addressed immediately.

Earlier, the Blue Whale challenge created panic among parents of teenaged kids as it gave players a series of tasks which include watching horror movies, waking up at unusual hours and self-harming to the extent of committing suicide. To be sure, India’s response to the Blue Whale challenge proved dispro-

portionate with no firm link being established between the challenge and several deaths.

The “Momo Challenge” — named thus, according to urban legend, from the name of a WhatsApp account featuring a frightening looking doll with bulging eyes — is all about self-harming, according to media reports and the advisory. There has already been a death reported from Argentina that is being linked to the challenge.

“The game consists of a variety of self-harming dares which becomes increasingly risky as the game progresses and it finally ends with suicide challenge. It involves challenges that encourage teenagers/children/any other user to engage in series of violent act as challenges of the game,” according to Solanki’s letter. The letter has asked the bureaus to take up the matter with schools, colleges and other higher educational institutions.

The advisory by the IT ministry has given a number of tips on protecting children from the game. These include engagement with kids to identify any signs of distress. The advisory also asks parent to monitor children’s online and social media activity to ensure they are not indulging in the game. The advisory suggests installing cyber and mobile parenting software that can track children’s online activities.