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## Cybercrime cases in India are under-reported, say experts

People seldom come forward to report cybercrimes because of loopholes in the legal system, says one expert

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Shaswati Das

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The centre has been scrambling to fortify India's cyber operations amid growing warnings of malware attacks on personal and organizational devices. Photo: iStockphoto

**New Delhi:** With the centre scrambling to fortify India's cyber operations amid growing warnings of malware attacks on personal and organizational devices, intelligence and cyber law experts have stated that much like crimes against women, India suffers from dismal under-reporting of cybercrime cases.

While the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) stated that India recorded 9,622, 11,592 and 12,317 cases of cybercrime in 2014, 2015 and 2016 respectively, experts stated that this data accounted for merely 1% of the cybercrimes that actually took place in the country.

"These figures do not represent the ground reality. There is massive under-reporting of cybercrime cases in India and at present these numbers represent just 1% of actual incidents," said Pavan Duggal, a cyber law expert.

He said that people seldom come forward to report cybercrimes because of loopholes in the legal system.

"In 2008, all cybercrime offences—except child pornography, cyberterrorism and breach of protected systems—were made bailable offences. So the offender leaves no digital footprint once he's caught and released. Second, the hostility of the police towards registering cybercrime cases is similar to registering crimes against women," Duggal added.

Cyber intelligence units said these problems need to be tackled.

"We have inputs to suggest that several organizations as well as people's data on public forums are at risk of being leaked by malware attacks. We have sent out warnings but the police need to be sensitized to report any such case that they hear of because it also helps us expedite the process of tracking the source of the attack," said an intelligence official, who did not wish to be named.

With the centre setting up the NIC-CERT (National Informatics Centre-Computer Emergency Response Team) to combat cybercrime in India and the home ministry proposing to set up the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C), the government is hoping to beef up India's cyber security network.

While the home ministry has said that India is currently working towards bilateral cooperation with around 15 countries for exchange of information on cybercrimes, it has already taken several measures—legal, policy and institutional—to check cybercrime.

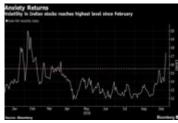
"The government constituted an expert group to study the gaps and challenges in handling cybercrimes and prepare a road map for effectively tackling cybercrimes. Based on the group's recommendations, the Cyber Crime against Women and Children (CCPWC) scheme has been approved by the government," said a senior home ministry official, requesting anonymity.

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