



Healthcare Institutions Face Cyber Threats

Why in News

The **International Criminal Police Organisation (Interpol)** has warned member countries that **cybercriminals are attempting to target major hospitals** and other institutions on the front lines of the fight against **COVID-19 with ransomware**.

- The organisation also talked about recent changes in the pattern of crime.

Key Points

- In an **alert sent to 194 nations, including India**, Interpol said that the hospitals and institutions had become targets of ransomware attacks.
- Interpol's **Cybercrime Threat Response Team** had detected an **increase in the number of attempted ransomware attacks** against key organisations and infrastructure engaged in the virus response.
- Cybercriminals are using ransomware to hold hospitals and medical services digitally hostage, preventing them from **accessing vital files and systems until a ransom is paid**.
 - The attacks were designed to lock these institutions out of their critical systems in an attempt to **extort payments**.
 - Locking hospitals out of their critical systems
 - Will delay the swift medical response required during these unprecedented times.
 - it could also directly lead to deaths.
- The ransomware appears to be spreading primarily via e-mails, often falsely claiming to **contain information or advice regarding the coronavirus from a government agency**, which encourages the recipient to click on an infected link or attachment.
- **Prevention and Mitigation efforts are crucial** to stopping the attacks.
 - Interpol continues to stand by its member countries and provide any assistance necessary to ensure vital healthcare systems remain untouched and the criminals targeting them held accountable.
 - Interpol also issued a **Purple Notice** to seek or provide information on modus operandi, objects, devices and concealment methods used by criminals.
- **Steps Taken by the Government**
 - Alerts received by the Government of India on the threat of ransomware/malware attacks have been communicated to the concerned departments.
 - Institutions and individuals have been appealed **not to open any mail or link on coronavirus data** or home remedies unless it is from a trusted source like a government agency.
 - They were also cautioned about a possibility of **e-mail spoofing**, where a suspect operating from a remote location would send a mail that would appear as if it came from a known person.

International Criminal Police Organization

- Interpol is an intergovernmental organization that helps **coordinate the police force of 194 member countries**.
- Each of the member countries hosts an interpol **National Central Bureau (NCB)**. This connects their national law enforcement with other countries and with the General Secretariat.
 - The **Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI)** is designated as the National Central Bureau of India.
 - The **General Secretariat** provides a range of expertise and services to the member countries.
- It is headquartered in **Lyon, France**
- **Interpol Notices** are **international requests** for cooperation or alerts allowing police in member countries to share critical crime-related information.



Changed Pattern of Crimes

- Interpol warned that with a majority of **people working from home** due to the pandemic, there was a change in the pattern of crimes.
- Following is the change
 - **Fraudulent trade** in personal protective equipment and anti-viral medicines,
 - individuals/businesses on reduced income becoming potential **targets of loan sharks (Persons who loan money at extremely high interest rates and often use threats of violence to collect debts)**.
 - The lockdown period has made **business establishments/factories vulnerable to thefts**.
 - Since more people were at home, the number of burglaries had dropped. But thieves are increasingly targeting factories or business premises that were locked.

- **Domestic violence cases have risen** since the start of coronavirus-related quarantines, with reports showing women and children at greater risk of abuse.
- Recent weeks have seen increased **online activity by paedophiles** (persons who are sexually attracted to children) **seeking child sexual abuse material**.
 - This is being intensified by a shortage of moderators who identify and remove offensive material from networks.

Source: TH

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