

Odisha Unveils 'Shaktishree' Initiative to Bolster Women's Campus Safety



In a significant move to enhance the safety and security of women on campuses, Odisha Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi on Saturday, July 19, 2025, launched the "Shaktishree" initiative. This comprehensive program, designed to create a more secure academic environment, will be implemented across 16 state universities and 730 government-aided colleges throughout Odisha. The initiative aims to address concerns regarding the safety of female students and staff, following recent incidents that highlighted the need for robust protective measures.

The "Shaktishree" initiative is structured around eight key components, encompassing institutional reforms, technological support, and targeted training. A central feature is the establishment of "Shaktishree Empowerment Cells" in every higher education institution. These student-led bodies, managed by a female student designated as a "Shaktishree Saathi" and mentored by a female faculty member as a "Shaktishree Sanyojika," will foster peer-led vigilance and support. Additionally, five accomplished working women, nominated by the District Collector, will serve as "Shakti Apas" (mentors), visiting campuses quarterly to guide and counsel students.

A notable technological advancement under "Shaktishree" is a dedicated mobile application. This 24/7 app will enable students to confidentially report harassment or distress through text, audio, or video, with complaints directly reaching the Internal Complaints Committee (ICC) chairperson. The app also integrates with the national Tele-MANAS helpline for mental health support and features an SOS button for emergencies.

Furthermore, the initiative mandates a strict Code of Conduct for all teaching and non-teaching staff, requiring annual online training on gender sensitivity and professional ethics. A "Shaktishree Actions for Female Empowerment" (SAFE) campaign will be conducted twice a year, promoting awareness on women's rights and safety through self-defense camps and workshops. Institutions will also be required to submit an annual Campus Safety Report by December 31, detailing safety measures, incidents, and resolutions. To further bolster security, CCTV surveillance and control rooms will be installed for continuous monitoring, and online courses on the Prevention of Sexual Harassment (POSH) Act, 2013, and University Grants Commission (UGC) guidelines will be introduced for all students and staff.

Chief Minister Majhi emphasized that "Shaktishree" is more than just a program; it is a "transformative empowerment and self-defense initiative" aimed at building a culture of resilience and awareness. This broad approach underscores the government's commitment to ensuring that campuses are not just centers of learning but also safe havens for young women to pursue their education and aspirations without fear. The ongoing implementation and effectiveness of these measures will be closely watched as Odisha endeavors to set a new benchmark for campus safety.