

# Teen took own life after Instagram poll

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**Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia**

A Malaysian teenager who posted an Instagram poll asking if she should live or die took her own life after a majority of respondents voted for the latter, sparking calls for an investigation.

The unidentified 16-year-old from Kuching in eastern Sarawak state died after posting the poll Monday on the Facebook-owned picture-sharing platform.

Police have classified the case as “sudden death”.

“Really Important, Help Me Choose D/L,” she wrote, according to a report on the news portal Astro Awani, with the letters “D” and “L” apparently referring to “die” or “live” respectively.

Sixty-nine percent of votes cast were in favour of her ending her life, with just 31 percent against, local media quoted police as saying.

Lawmaker Ramkarpal Singh called for a probe into the circumstances of her death.

“Would the girl still be alive today if the majority of netizens on her Instagram account discouraged her from taking

her own life?” he asked.

“I urge the authorities... to investigate the social media accounts of the victim and the circumstances that led to her death to prevent further abuse of social media in similar circumstances in the future.”

Mental health worries

Youth and Sports Minister Syed Saddiq tweeted that he was “genuinely worried” about the state of mental health of young people in Malaysia.

“It’s a national issue which must be taken seriously. A national discussion must take place,” he said.

Ching Yee Wong, head of communications for Instagram APAC, said in a statement: “Our thoughts and prayers are with this young woman’s family.”

“We have a deep responsibility to make sure people using Instagram feel safe and supported. As part of our own efforts, we urge everyone to use our reporting tools and to contact emergency services if they see any behaviour that puts people’s safety at risk.”

Instagram announced a clampdown on images of self-harm in February after a British teen who went online to read about suicide took her own life.

The death of 14-year-old Molly Russell sparked a debate in Britain about regulating children’s social media use.

Her parents did not

directly blame Instagram for the loss of their daughter but they cited the easy access to disturbing content as a contributing factor, and urged the network to respond.

Instagram has never allowed posts that promote or encourage suicide or self-harm.

But as part of the clampdown, it removed references to non-graphic content related to people hurting themselves from its searches and recommendation features.

It also banned hashtags relating to self-harm.

The measures are meant to make such images more difficult to find for depressed teens who might have suicidal tendencies.

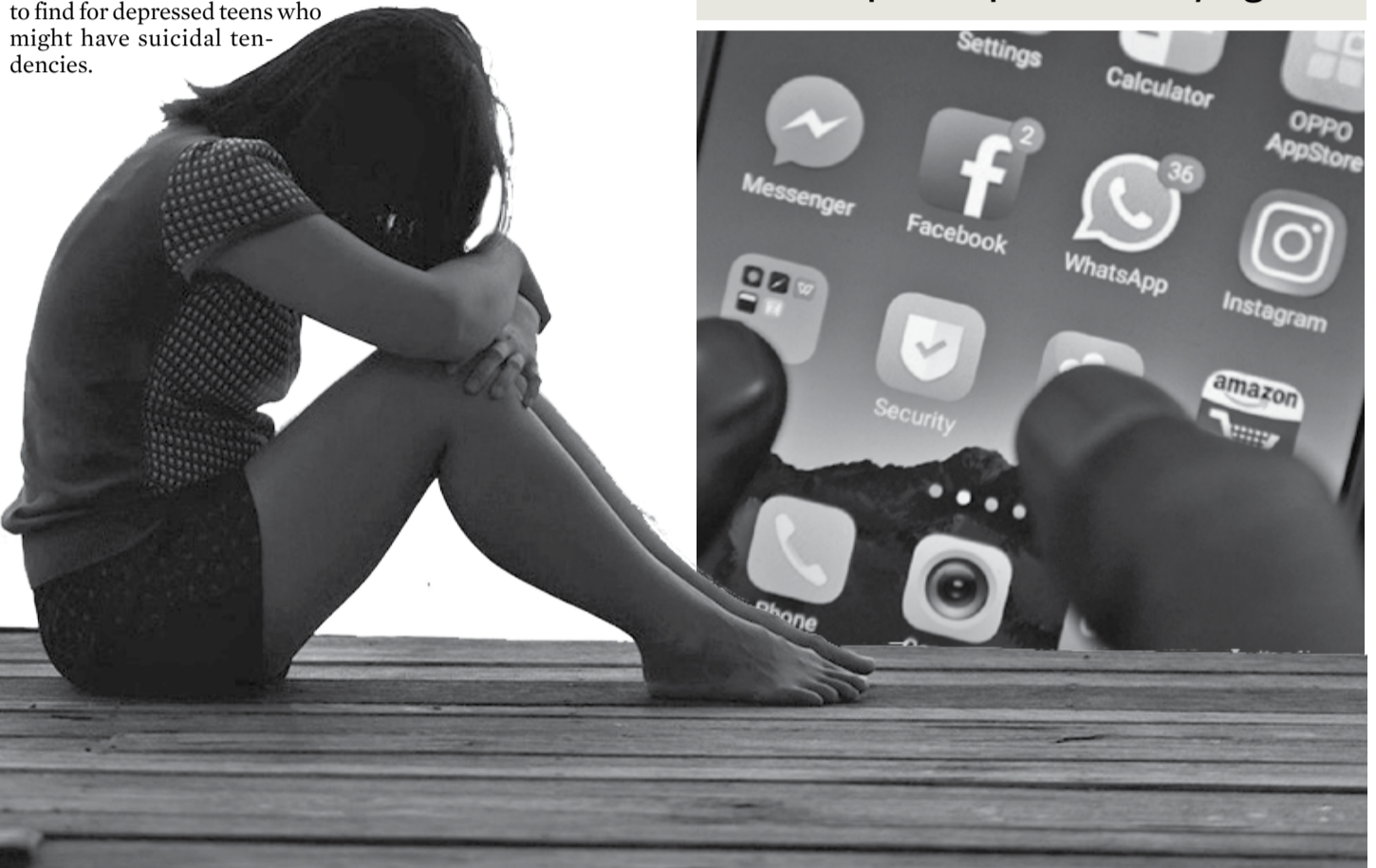


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LAWMAKER RAMKARPAL SINGH

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## LED light can damage eyes, health authority warns

● **Exposure to an intense and powerful [LED] light is ‘photo-toxic’ and can lead to irreversible loss of retinal cells and diminished sharpness of vision**

**Maisons-Alfort, France**

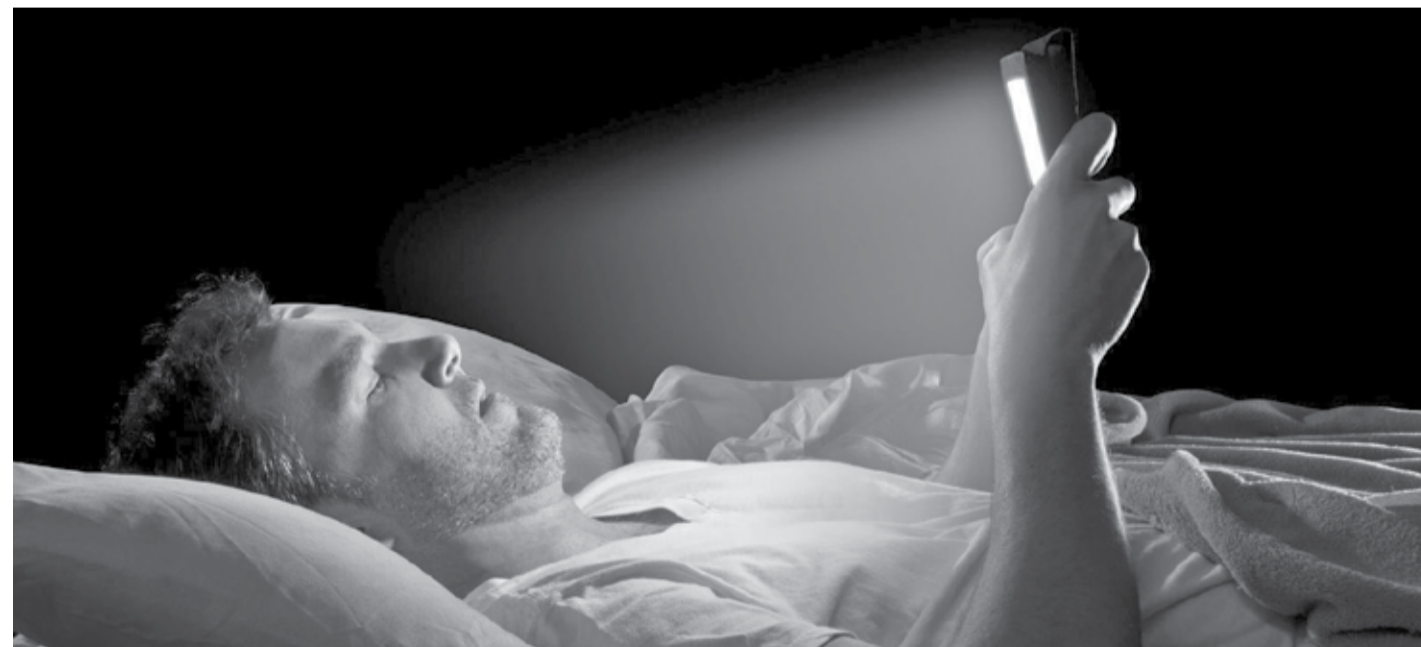
The “blue light” in LED lighting can damage the eye’s retina and disturb natural sleep rhythms, France’s government-run health watchdog said this week.

New findings confirm earlier concerns that “exposure to an intense and powerful [LED] light is ‘photo-toxic’ and can lead to irreversible loss of retinal cells and diminished sharpness of vision,” the French Agency for Food, Environmental and Occupational Health & Safety (ANSES) warned in a statement.

The agency recommended in a 400-page report that the maximum limit for acute exposure be revised, even if such levels are rarely met in home or work environments.

The report distinguished between acute exposure of high-intensity LED light, and “chronic exposure” to lower intensity sources.

While less dangerous, even



Representative picture. (Courtesy of Harvard University)

chronic exposure can “accelerate the ageing of retinal tissue, contributing to a decline in visual acuity and certain degenerative diseases such as age-related macular degeneration,” the agency concluded.

Long-lasting, energy efficient and inexpensive, light-emitting diode (LED) technology has gobbled up half of the general lighting market in a decade, and will top 60 percent by the end of next year, according to industry projections.

LED uses only a fifth of the electricity needed for an incandescent bulb of comparable

brightness.

The world’s leading LED light-bulb makers are GE Lighting, Osram and Philips.

The basic technology for producing a white light combines a short wavelength LED such as blue or ultraviolet with a yellow phosphor coating. The whiter or “colder” the light, the greater the proportion of blue in the spectrum.

### Circadian rhythm

LEDs are used for home and street lighting, as well as in offices and industry.

That are also increasingly

found in auto headlights, torches (flashlights) and some toys.

LED cellphone, tablet and laptop screens do not pose a risk of eye damage because their luminosity is very low compared to other types of lighting, Francine Behar-Cohen, an ophthalmologist and head of the expert group that conducted the review, told journalists.

But these back-lit devices -- especially when they are used at night or in a dark setting -- can “disturb biological rhythms, and thus sleep patterns,” the agency cautioned.

Because the crystalline lens in

their eyes are not fully formed, children and adolescents are particularly susceptible to such disruptions, the ANSES reports noted.

Interfering with the body’s circadian rhythm is also known to aggravate metabolic disorders such as diabetes, as well as cardiovascular disease and some forms of cancer, noted Dina Attia, a researcher and project manager at ANSES.

In addition, a stroboscopic affect in some LED lights -- provoked by tiny fluctuations in electric current -- can induce “headaches, visual fatigue and

a higher risk of accidents,” the report said.

For domestic lighting, ANSES recommended buying “warm white” LED lighting, limiting exposure to LED sources with a high concentration of blue light, and avoiding LED screens before bedtime.

ANSES also said that manufacturers should “limit the luminous intensity of vehicle headlights,” some of which are too bright.

Finally, the agency cast doubt on the efficacy of some “anti-blue light” filters and sunglasses.



Once the retina cells are destroyed by prolonged and continuous exposure to LED rays, they cannot be replaced and will not regrow, ThinkSpain.com reported.