

# 30 govt schoolgirls break the code

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**Bengaluru:** At a nondescript government higher primary school in Hoodi, near Whitefield, some 30 girls walked around wearing smart black T-shirts over their blue uniforms. The message on the T-Shirt read, 'Girls who code'.

Manjusha V, a class 7 student, is one among them. The daughter of a watchman and a tailor, she can smartly explain the project she has completed using the Scratch programming language. Ask her whether she likes coding, she shyly smiles. Prod her on what she wants to become when she grows up, the answer is immediate: "A computer engineer."

Manjusha is among the first batch of students who graduated from Girls Who Code (GWC) club, run by the US-based non-profit, that is being promoted in 100 schools in India by United Technologies Corp. The students — from Government higher primary school, Hoodi and



**MAKING A MARK:** The programme is free for children in the 11-18 age group and designed to get them excited about computer science

Shishu Mandir, Kitaganur village — received certificates of completion for the first segment and will continue to learn other programming languages and coding skills.

The free programme for children of the 11-18 age group is designed to get them excited about computer science and delivered through self-guided tutorials on an online platform. The programming languages taught include Scratch, Python, Javascript and Swift. The curriculum is designed

so that the facilitators need no background in coding.

There is also a curriculum for schools without computers that will teach computational thinking using interesting problems. Delivered in schools across the socio-economic spectrum, orphanages and other centres for the disadvantaged, the programme hopes to build a network of sisterhood among the girls.

According to GWC, fewer than 1 in 5 computer science graduates are women and the

Students get super-excited at coding now. It's something new, not too hard and gives them a sense of achievement

**Amarnath N** | COMPUTER SCIENCE TEACHER, GOVERNMENT HIGHER PRIMARY SCHOOL, HOODI

Digital acceleration is changing the world at an unprecedented pace and the future of our industries will be shaped by innovation rooted in gender parity. Diversity is important as everyone has a point to make in a team. If even one child from this group finds passion in the subject, we will be delighted

— **United Technologies Corp's chief digital officer, Vince Campisi**

gender gap is getting worse. The dropout rate is more between 13 and 17 years. "The programme hopes to shift societal attitude towards coding. If boys are drawn to games through animation, girls are more community-focused. The programme in India is designed so as to include stories of women who have done well in computer science — like Geetha Kannan and Vaishali Kasture — so that girls get inspired," said Jackson Thomas, senior manager, international programmes.