Kiran: Mental Health Rehabilitation Helpline

Why in News

The **Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment** has launched **a 24/7 toll-free helpline 'Kiran'** to provide **support to people facing anxiety,** stress, depression, suicidal thoughts and other mental health concerns.

- Earlier, the **Ministry of Education** had launched the **'Manodarpan'** initiative to provide psycho-social support and **counselling to students** for their mental health and well-being.

Key Points

- **About the Helpline:**

  - It will **cater to** - People in Distress, pandemic induced psychological issues and Mental Health Emergency.
  - It will **offer mental health rehabilitation services** with the objective of early screening, first-aid, psychological support, distress management, promoting positive behaviours, etc.
  - It will be **available in 13 languages** and has **660 clinical/rehabilitation psychologists** and 668 psychiatrists as volunteers.
  - It is being **coordinated** by the **National Institute for the Empowerment of Persons with Multiple Disabilities (NIEPMD),** Chennai (Tamil Nadu) and **National Institute of Mental Health Rehabilitation (NIMHR),** Sehore (Madhya Pradesh).

    - NIEMPD and NIMHR are under the **Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.**
  - Helpline operators had been sensitised **not to ask the caller for name or any identification details.**
- **Need:**

  - **Uncertainties due to Covid-19 pandemic:** From the personal risk to be infected to what economic prospects might look like.
  - **Mental Illness:**

    - There was a **shortage of qualified mental health professionals** while **10.6% of adults** and **7.3% of adolescents faced mental illness,** according to a **NIMHANS survey in 2015-2016.** Greater prevalence is amongst persons living in Urban Metros.
    - **Treatment Gap ranges from 70% to 92%.**

      - The treatment gap is the number of people with an illness, disease, or disorder who need treatment but do not get it (expressed as a percentage). It can be used as an outcome measure in health care.
    - **Suicide was the leading cause of death in India in 2016** for those aged 15–39 years; 71.2% of the suicide deaths among women and 57.7% among men were in this age group.
    - As per the **World Health Organisation (WHO)**, **mental health workforces in**

India (per 1,00,000 population) include **psychiatrists (0.3), nurses (0.12), psychologists (0.07) and social workers (0.07).**

- As per **WHO global health report 2019,** out of every four persons, one person will have some mental problem at a given point of time in their lives. **Mental illness is among the leading causes of disability and ill-health** in the world.

- **Steps Taken by the Government:**

  - **National Mental Health Program (NMHP):**

    - To address the huge burden of mental disorders and shortage of qualified professionals in the field of mental health, the government has been implementing the National Mental Health Program (NMHP) since **1982.**
    - The Program was **re-strategized in 2003** to include two schemes, viz. Modernization of State Mental Hospitals and Up-gradation of Psychiatric Wings of Medical Colleges/General Hospitals.

  - **Mental HealthCare Act 2017:**

    - It guarantees every affected person access to mental healthcare and treatment from services run or funded by the government.
    - It has **significantly reduced the scope for the use of Section 309 IPC** and made the attempt to commit suicide punishable only as an exception.

      - Section 115(1) of the MHCA states: "Notwithstanding anything contained in section 309 of the Indian Penal Code any person who attempts to commit suicide shall be presumed, unless proved otherwise, to have severe stress and shall not be tried and punished under the said Code."

Way Forward

- Mental health needs to be a priority, from immediate crisis intervention and helplines to focusing on preventive mental health and reducing stigma around help seeking. It's time the government advocates for mental health outcomes, strives for early identification and treatment, and uses the digital transformation **(National Digital Health Mission)** to provide mental health care to all.
- The need of the hour is to provoke masses to learn about mental health through campaigns like **Swachh Mansikta Abhiyan.**
- Further, spending on mental health care needs to be increased. **India has spent only 0.05% of its health budget annually on mental health over the last few years,** much lower than even the average spending of low-income countries, which comes to about 0.5% of their healthcare budgets.

Source: PIB

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