

## Advancing Mental Healthcare in India

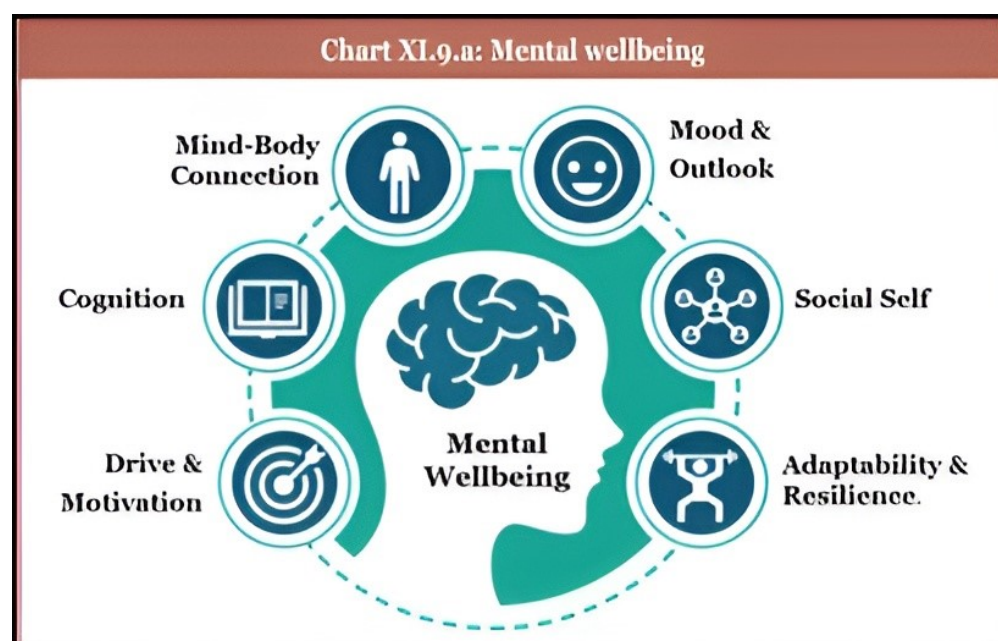
**Mains:** GS II - Issues Relating to Development and Management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

### Why in News?

Recently there has been a considerable improvement in the mental health of people due to various efforts taken by the government of India.

### What is mental health?

- **Mental health** - It refers to an individual's emotional, psychological, and social well-being.
- It influences how people think, feel, and behave in daily life. It also affects decision-making, stress management, and relationships.
- **World Health Organization (WHO) definition** - Mental health is a state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realize their abilities, learn well and work well, and contribute to their community.



### What are the Impacts of Poor Mental Health?

- **Impact on Productivity** - Poor mental health leads to lower workplace performance, increased absenteeism, and reduced efficiency.
- **Social and Emotional Well-being** - Mental well-being affects interpersonal

relationships, self-confidence, and social interactions.

- **Economic Impact** - According to WHO, mental disorders contribute significantly to the global burden of disease, and untreated conditions can lead to high economic costs.

### What are the mental health scenarios in India?

- **WHO Data Insight** - WHO estimates that the burden of mental health problems in India is 2443 disability-adjusted life years (DALYs) per 10000 population, the age-adjusted suicide rate per 100000 population is 21.1.
- **Prevalence** - The National Mental Health Survey (NMHS) 2015-16 by NIMHANS found that 10.6% of adults in India suffer from mental disorders.
- The lifetime prevalence of mental disorders in India is 13.7%.
- National studies reveal that 15% of India's adult population experiences mental health issues requiring intervention.
- Urban areas have a higher prevalence (13.5%) compared to rural (6.9%).
- **Economic loss** - The economic loss due to mental health conditions, between 2012-2030, is estimated at USD 1.03 trillion.
- **Treatment Gap** - 70% to 92% of people with mental disorders do not receive proper treatment due to lack of awareness, stigma, and shortage of professionals.
- **Lack of professionals** - According to the Indian Journal of Psychiatry India has 0.75 psychiatrists per 100,000 people, whereas WHO recommends at least 3 per 100,000.
- **Suggestion of Economic Survey 2024-25**
  - **Enhance Mental Health Education in Schools** - Early intervention strategies to address anxiety, stress, and behavioural issues in students.
  - **Improve Workplace Mental Health Policies** - Address job stress, long working hours, and burnout.
  - **Expand Digital Mental Health Services** - Strengthen Tele MANAS and integrate AI-based mental health solutions.

### What are mental health infrastructures in India?

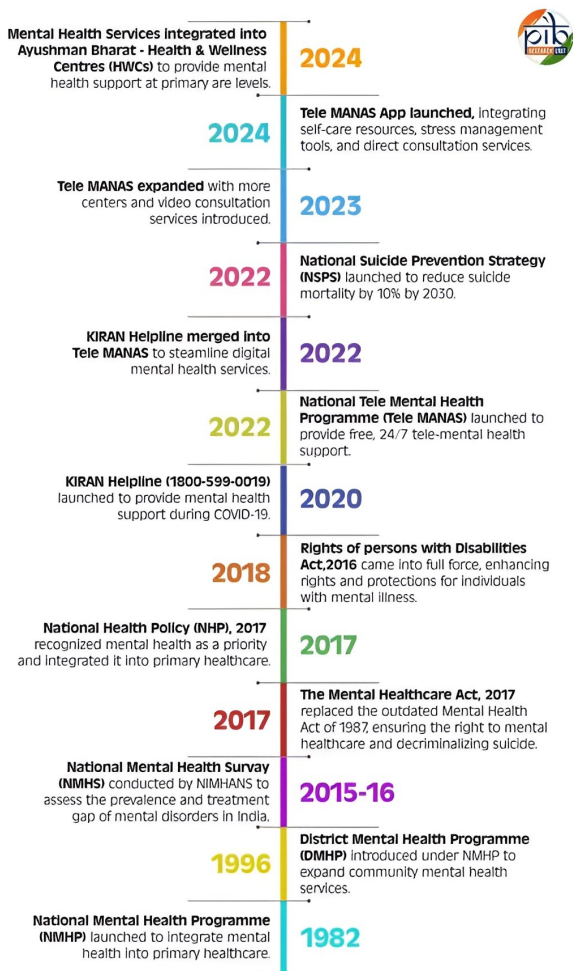
- **Centres for excellence** - As part of the National Mental Health Programme, in 2024, 25 Centres of Excellence were sanctioned set up to train more postgraduate students in mental health and provide advanced treatment.
- **PG departments** - 47 PG Departments in mental health have been established or upgraded in 19 government medical colleges.
- Mental health services are also being introduced in 22 newly established AIIMS.
- **Mental hospitals** - 47 Government-Run Mental Hospitals including 3 Central Mental Health Institutions such as
  - National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences, Bengaluru,
  - Lokopriya Gopinath Bordoloi Regional Institute of Mental Health, Tezpur, Assam
  - Central Institute of Psychiatry, Ranchi, were established.
- **Health & Wellness Centres (HWCs)** - Integration of Mental Health Services was done under the Ayushman Bharat.
- Under Ayushman Bharat, the government has upgraded more than 1.73 lakh Sub Health Centres (SHCs) and Primary Health Centres (PHCs) to Ayushman Arogya

Mandirs.

- Mental health services have been added in the package of services under Comprehensive Primary Health Care provided at these Ayushman Arogya Mandirs.
- These HWCs provide
  - Basic counselling and psychiatric medication at PHC levels.
  - Training for general physicians to handle mild-to-moderate mental health conditions.
  - Linkages to district hospitals for advanced psychiatric care.
- This initiative ensures that mental healthcare is available in both urban and rural areas, reducing dependence on specialized hospitals and making psychiatric care more community-centric.

### **What are the policies and schemes of government of India regarding mental health?**

- **National Mental Health Programme (NMHP)** - Launched in 1982, the primary goal was to ensure that mental healthcare becomes an integral part of the general healthcare system, rather than being confined to specialized hospitals.
- **Key components include**
- District Mental Health Programme (DMHP) was introduced under NMHP to expand community mental health services which covers 767 districts
- Provides counselling, outpatient services, suicide prevention programs, and awareness initiatives.
- 10-bedded inpatient mental health facilities at the district level.



- **NIMHANS Act, 2012** - Under this act, the National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (NIMHANS), Bengaluru, was declared an Institute of National Importance.
- This recognition allowed NIMHANS to expand its academic and research capabilities, making it the premier institution for psychiatry, neuropsychology, and mental health sciences in India.
- **The Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016** - It expanded the definition of disability to include mental illness and introduced stronger legal protections for individuals with psychosocial disabilities.
- This act replaced the Persons with Disabilities (PWD) Act, 1995.
- The Act aligns with India's commitment to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD).
- It aims to ensure equality, dignity, and non-discrimination for persons with disabilities, including those with mental health conditions.
- **National Mental Healthcare Act, 2017** - This act was enacted to ensure the right to mental healthcare services, protect the dignity and rights of individuals with mental illness.
- It also ensures to align India's mental health laws with international standards, particularly the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD).
- The Act replaced the Mental Health Act of 1987.
- It introduced several progressive changes to mental health care and services in India

like the Right to affordable and quality mental healthcare services and the decriminalization of suicide in India.

- **National Health Policy, 2017** - This policy aimed to address mental health issues through a multi-pronged approach, integrating mental healthcare into primary healthcare, strengthening human resources, and improving treatment accessibility.
- NHP 2017 aimed to bridge the treatment gap by making psychological services available at Primary Health Centres (PHCs) and Health and Wellness Centres (HWCs) under Ayushman Bharat.
- **iGOT-Diksha Collaboration for Mental Health Training** -It is a digital learning initiative in to train healthcare professionals, frontline workers, and community health volunteers in mental healthcare.
- This program focuses on
  - Building capacity for mental health care at the grassroots level.
  - Equipping doctors and nurses with skills to diagnose and treat mental disorders.
  - Promoting mental health awareness in rural areas.
- Through iGOT-Diksha, India has expanded its mental health workforce, ensuring better early intervention strategies and community support mechanisms.
- **National Tele Mental Health Programme (Tele MANAS), 2022** - It provides free, 24/7 mental health support to individuals through *a national toll-free helpline (14416 / 1800-89-14416)*.
- It is *available in 20 Indian languages*.
- As of February 7, 2025, the Tele MANAS helpline has handled over 1.81 million (18,27,951) calls since its launch in 2022, providing essential mental health support across India.
- The program is supported by 23 Mentoring Institutes nationwide, along with 5 Regional Coordinating Centers, ensuring efficient service delivery and expert guidance in mental healthcare.
- **Tele MANAS services**
  - Immediate tele-counselling by trained professionals.
  - Referral support to psychiatrists for severe cases.
  - Mental health awareness campaigns via digital platforms.
  - Mobile-based mental health interventions, ensuring accessibility in rural and remote areas.
  - Tele MANAS Mobile App & Video Consultation
  - The Tele MANAS App was launched in October 2024.
  - Offers self-care strategies, stress management tools, and direct access to mental health professionals.
  - Video consultation services introduced in Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and J&K.

***The World Health Organization (WHO) praised Tele MANAS as an effective and scalable mental health solution, making mental healthcare more inclusive and affordable.***



**Tele MANAS Scheme**

**01** Tele MANAS provides **free, 24/7 mental health support** across India

**02** **Toll-free helpline:**  
14416 / 1800-89-14416

**03** Available in **20 Indian languages** for wider accessibility

**04** Over **1.82 million (18,27,951) calls handled** since its launch in 2022

**05** **23 Mentoring Institutes** guiding mental health professionals nationwide

**06** **5 Regional Coordinating Centers** ensuring seamless service delivery

**07** Providing **immediate counseling & referral services** for mental well-being

**08** A major step towards **accessible & stigma-free mental healthcare** in India

- **KIRAN Helpline Merged into Tele MANAS** - The KIRAN *Helpline (1800-599-0019)*, initially launched in 2020, was merged into Tele MANAS in 2022 to enhance the efficiency of mental health support services.
- This transition streamlined mental health helpline operations, making it more accessible and better integrated with India's healthcare system.
- During COVID-19, the government took crucial steps to support mental health.
- A 24/7 helpline provided nationwide psychosocial assistance, while health workers received online training through the iGOT-Diksha platform.
- Public awareness campaigns spread stress management strategies via media, and official guidelines and advisories were issued to promote mental well-being.
- These interventions played a vital role in addressing the psychological challenges of the pandemic.
- **National Suicide Prevention Strategy (NSPS)** - It was launched by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) in 2022, with the goal of reducing suicide mortality by 10% by 2030.
- Recognizing suicide as a public health concern, the strategy focuses on early intervention, crisis management, and mental health promotion.
- **Key components of NSPS** - This include
  - Mental health screenings for students in schools and colleges.
  - Establishing crisis helplines and psychological support centers.
  - Community awareness programs to break the stigma around mental illness and suicide.

- Stronger implementation of workplace mental health programs.
- By focusing on high-risk populations, such as students, farmers, and young adults, the strategy ensures targeted intervention to prevent self-harm and improve overall well-being.

### **What lies ahead?**

- Moving forward, India must strengthen awareness campaigns, expand workforce training and invest in digital mental health solutions.
- A mentally healthier India is vital for individual well-being, economic growth, and national development, requiring a whole-of-society approach to make mental healthcare accessible, inclusive, and stigma-free.

### **Reference**

[Ministry of Health and Family Welfare| Mental Health](#)

