

Advancing Mental Healthcare in India

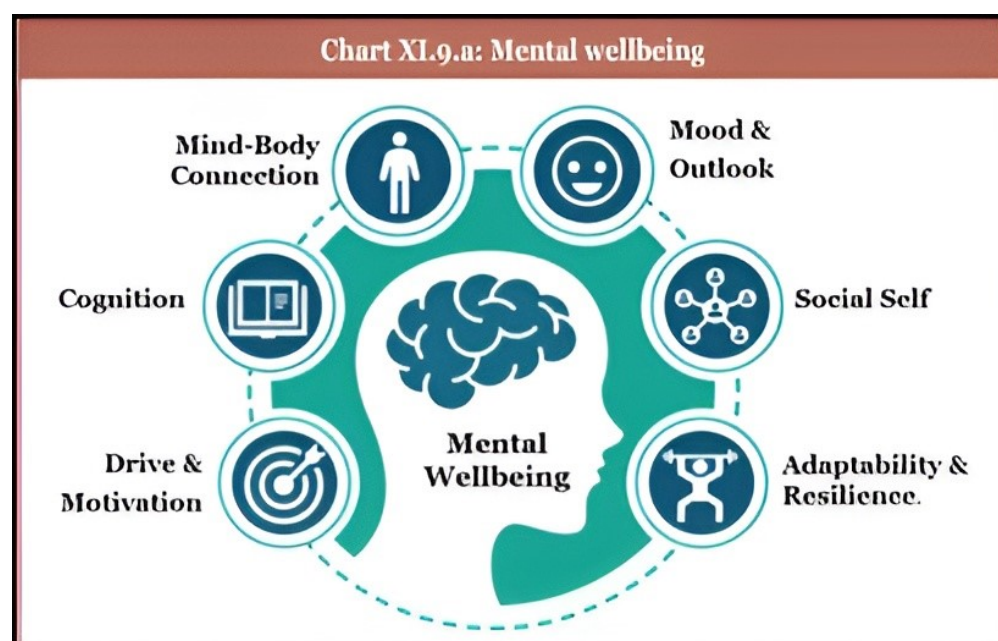
Mains: GS II - Issues Relating to Development and Management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

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?

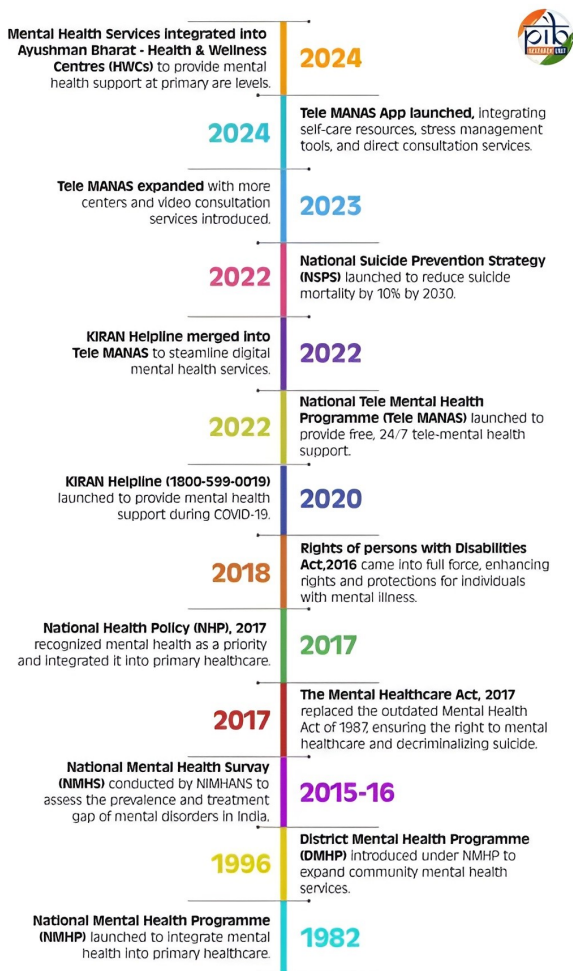
- **Centres for excellence** - As part of the National Mental Health Programme, in 2024, 25 Centres of Excellence were sanctioned set up to train more postgraduate students in mental health and provide advanced treatment.
- **PG departments** - 47 PG Departments in mental health have been established 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](#)

