Gaming- A Mental Health Condition

Why in news?

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The World Health Organization (WHO) has announced a plan to include “gaming disorder” as a mental health condition.

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Why WHO wants to treat gaming as a disorder?

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- The reclassification of gaming is a part of the WHO’s 11th revision of the International Classification of Diseases.
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- The “disorder” was included in a draft of the ICD-11 released recently.
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- While the classification is intended to act as a set of guidelines, ICD-11 influences many countries in determining healthcare policies, diagnoses and treatment options.
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What are the reasons behind this decision?

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- While addiction to gaming is widely recognised, recently reported incidents include a man being found dead in a cafe after three days of continuous gaming, and a couple neglecting their child due to gaming.
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- In the ICD-11 draft, gaming disorder is defined gaming a pattern of gaming behaviour characterized by impaired control over gaming, increasing priority given to gaming over other activities to the extent that gaming takes precedence over other interests and daily activities.
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- There is also concern that addiction to gaming could be a symptom of a

deeper issue such as depression.
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- There are potential examples around the world such as China, which has been known to conduct Internet de-addiction camps, and South Korea, which bans those under 16 from gaming after midnight.
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What are the concerns with this decision?

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- Various critics have opposed the idea of formalising gaming as a disorder, as stronger base of evidence is required to classify something as a formal disorder.
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- Among the worries experts flag is the detrimental effect this “premature classification” could have on treatment and policymaking.
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- The clinical utility of such a classification is also dubious, They pointed out that there is still no exact list of symptoms that can be attributed to gaming as a disorder.
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- Many clinics around the world offer specialised treatment for gaming addiction, the new classification could result in a trend where clinicians treat the symptom instead of the underlying issue.
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What is the way forward?

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- Both the WHO and critics of the idea agree on one thing that addiction to gaming, to the point where it becomes a hindrance to a normal routine, needs more research.
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- The WHO believes that formalising the disorder will help experts across the world to conduct more research, while critics believe that research should precede any attempt at formalisation.
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Source: Indian Express

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