Saathiya Peer Education for Teens Programme

Why in news?

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The Health and Family Welfare Ministry recently launched the SAATHIYA resource kit including **'Saathiya Salah' mobile app for adolescents** as part of the **Rashtriya Kishor Swasthya Karyakram (RKSK) programme.**

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What is Saathiya Resource kit?

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- In order to equip the Saathiyas in educating adolscents, the Health Ministry has launched the Saathiya resource kit.
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- The Saathiya resource kit comprises **Activity Book, Bhranti-Kranti Game, Question-Answer Book and Peer Educator Diary**.
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- In addition to the kit is the mobile app 'Saathiya Salah' (downloadable from Google play-store) which acts as a ready information source for the adolescents in case they are unable to interact with the peer educators.
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- With its resource material to aid 1.65 lakh peer educators called 'Saathiya', the Union health ministry has taken a step in the right direction.
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- Volunteers will use Saathiya material, prepared with the UN Population Fund, to blow the dust off several Indian taboos.
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What the material contains?

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- The material goes boldly and sensitively where few establishment

discourses have before.
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- For instance, it addresses same-sex attraction with gentleness and wisdom.
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- Despite Section 377 declaring homosexuality a crime, Saathiya says it's alright to feel attracted to someone of your own sex.
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- The key, the material remarks, is to treat such feelings with respect, prioritising mutual consent.
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- Elsewhere, Saathiya supports flexibility, saying it's ok for boys to cry, to like "female" past-times like cooking or design.
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- Not conforming to macho stereotypes doesn't mean a loss of masculinity, just as girls who like sports are no less female.
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- Saathiya highlights the absurdity of locking individuals into iron-clad roles, encouraging young persons to be their own selves.
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- The material talks frankly about safe sex, contraception, abortions — by treating these as facts of life, not moral embarrassments to be covered under veils of ignorance, Saathiya regards adolescents in a radical new fashion.
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- They are young adults, to be treated with dignity and wit, empowered with a full view of the complexities and simplicities, the rights and rites — and the possibilities — of life.
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What is the way ahead?

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- Saathiya's liberalism should be reflected in other spaces too.
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- Talk of "love jihad" or "anti-Romeo squads" doesn't reflect respect or consent, but the Indian establishment's tendency to behave as if the persons and passions of citizens should be policed, controlled, even assaulted, by officials or vigilantes.
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- Saathiya makes a breakthrough, challenging such thinking. Other parts of

the establishment should follow its lead.
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\n**Source: Indian Express**

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