

Despite efforts huge gap remains between the requirements and availability of facilities in the mental healthcare sector, says NHRC Chairperson, Mr. Justice H.L.Dattu

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The NHRC Chairperson, Mr. Justice H.L. Dattu today said that the efforts to improve the mental health care in the country have been made but a huge gap still remains between the requirements and availability of facilities in the sector. He was inaugurating a day-long NHRC National Level Review Meeting on Mental Health at India International centre, New Delhi today. Flagging it as a matter of serious concern for the Commission, he said that consistent with its policy to monitor the mental health sector, it felt necessary to evaluate the ground realities post implementation of Mental Healthcare Act, 2017. Justice Dattu said that there is a requirement of 13500 psychiatrists but only 3827 are available. Against the requirement of 20250 clinical psychologists only 898 are available. Similarly, there is an acute shortage of para– medical staff also.

The NHRC Chairperson also raised the issue of prisoners having mental health problems and said that the protection of the rights of such prisoners is an obligation of the State governments under Section 103 of the Mental Healthcare Act, 2017 as also emphasized by the Supreme Court in one of its recent judgments.

Mr. Sanjeeva Kumar, Special Secretary, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare emphasising the need for more active participation of all the stake holders highlighted the efforts made by the centre towards improvement in the mental healthcare. He said that only 19 States have implemented the Mental Healthcare Act so far. He said that 10.6 percent adult population in the country suffers from mental health issues, which is a huge number requiring holistic concept of safety nets, legal frameworks and medical care facilities. He lauded the NHRC for its efforts in bringing different stakeholders to discuss the subject and improve the situation through collaborative approach.

Earlier, Mr. Jaideep Govind, Secretary General, NHRC giving an overview of the Commission's several engagements with reference to the mental health said that it forms part of development goal 3 which emphasises well being of all. He said that some states have introduced good practices which need to be replicated by others.

Besides the NHRC Member, Mr. Justice P. C. Pant, Secretary General, Mr. Jaideep Govind and Joint Secretary, Mr. Dilip Kumar and other officers, the participants include the Union Health Secretary, Ms. Preeti Sudan other representatives of the concerned Union Ministries, State Governments, State Human Rights Commissions, Medical Council of India, Nursing Council of India, Directors of Mental Health Institutes, Mental Health Experts, NGOs and civil society organizations.
