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'Bad childhood experience is new epidemic'

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Chennai: "Mental health is a ticking time bomb and adverse childhood experience is the new epidemic," said Dr Shekhar Seshadri, psychiatrist and senior professor at the National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences (Nimhans) at the seventh international conference organised by the Indian Society of Victimology at Stella Maris College.

He was giving the valedictory address at a three-day conference on the theme 'Emerging forms of victimisation: Multi-disciplinary perspective'.

Dr Seshadri said Nimhans has initiated discussions with the Government of India to start a national initiative of pooling resources on child protection, mental health and psycho social services.

This initiative is called Praticriya (meaning response). "If this comes through, we will be working extensively in the context of children who are victims of offences, crimes and discrimination, besides undertaking training for the judiciary, juvenile justice board and child care institutions."

Stating that the conference focused less on interventions, Dr Seshadri wanted to take forward the domain of victimology to related domains of vulnerability and trauma and look at it from aspects of victimhood that may not necessarily have a criminal context. "This way, we can expand the scope of our work and reach out to many more people," he said.

Earlier in the day, Justice S Vimala, former judge of the Madras high court, spoke about children of prisoners and said many do not realise the extent of victimisation.

The court had constituted a committee to identify such children and rehabilitate them.