

Docs believe decriminalising suicide attempt will help

'We can finally care for those who have attempted suicide'

The govt agreed with the recommendation but suggested that it should be made compulsory to report attempt to commit suicide to an authorised officer

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Doctors can finally give prompt and unfettered care to those who have attempted suicide, after India dropped attempted suicide from a list of crimes punishable by prison.

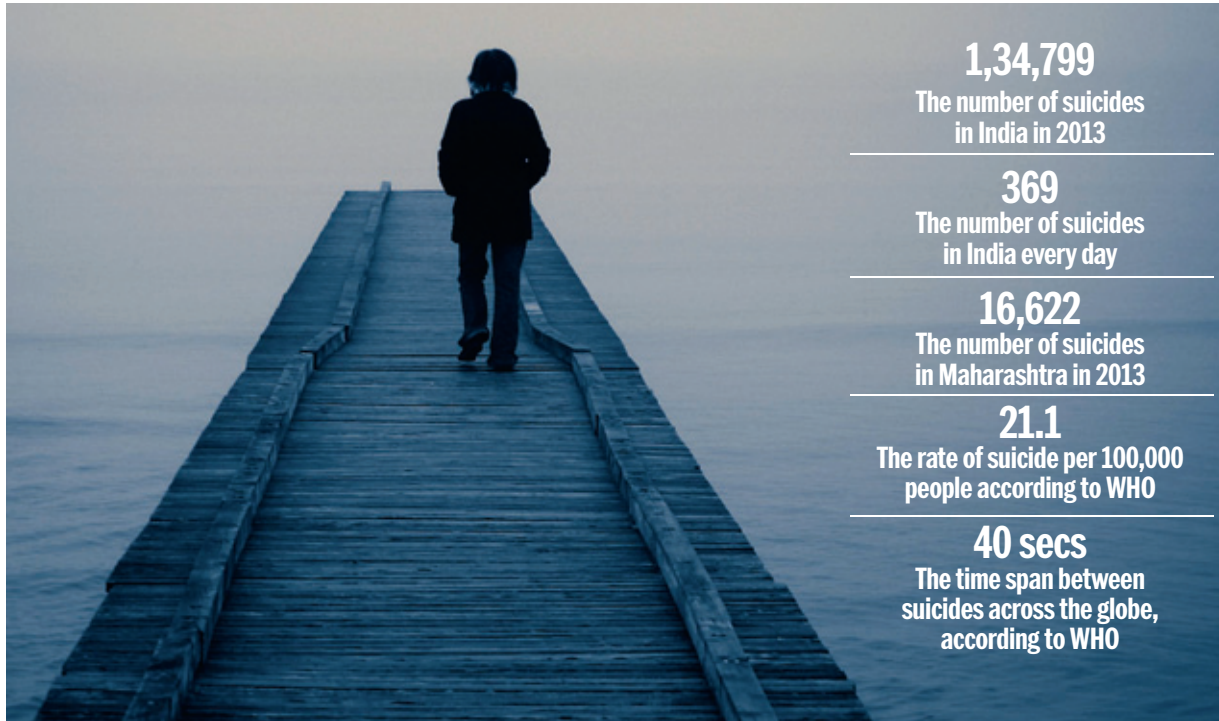
"Moreover, with this move, caregiving will also improve in hospitals. As of now, as soon as the patient has been brought to the hospital, he is caught in a legal tangle because of which care may get delayed.

Another area where it will have a positive impact is recording the incidence and the cause of suicides. Right now, most of the information is documented from a legal and criminal perspective because of which the records lack quality. Decriminalising suicide will be a solution to all these existing barriers," said Dr G Gururaj, Professor and Head of Department of Epidemiology, Nimhans.

The government informed parliament of its decision in a written reply from the home ministry on Wednesday, saying it was acting on a recommendation of the Law Commission.

The government panel for legal reform had deemed the suicide law "anachronistic" and "undesirable" in a 2008 report.

"The Law Commission of India, in its 210th Report, had recommended that Section 309 [attempt to commit suicide] of IPC needs to be effaced from the statute book," Minis-



1,34,799

The number of suicides in India in 2013

369

The number of suicides in India every day

16,622

The number of suicides in Maharashtra in 2013

21.1

The rate of suicide per 100,000 people according to WHO

40 secs

The time span between suicides across the globe, according to WHO



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ter of State for Home Affairs Haribhai Parthibhai Chaudhary said in a written reply to a question in the Rajya Sabha.

"As law and order is the state subject, views of states/UTs were requested on the recommendations of the Law Commission," the minister

said. As many as "18 states and four Union Territory Administrations have supported that Section 309 of IPC may be deleted", the minister said.

Among the states opposing the deletion, Bihar has said that the section should not be omitted as these days there are suicide bombers who fail in their attempt to blow themselves up and other terrorists who consume cyanide pills with the intention to wipe out evidence.

Bihar, instead, said that the section should be modified. There should be a separate legislation in case of people who are suffering from such types of disease which makes them attempt to take

their life. Madhya Pradesh said deleting Section 309 will also dilute Section 306 (abetment of suicide).

Sikkim said repeal of the section may create problems for the state where suicide is being attempted by a public person in pursuance of a professed public cause.

The Delhi government agreed with the recommendation of the Law Commission but suggested that it should be made compulsory to report attempt to commit suicide to authorised officer or authorised hospital and compulsory medical treatment in special medical institutes should be made available.

"The recommendation

was made quite a while ago by the medical fraternity as suicide is not considered a punishable offence in most high income countries," said Dr Gururaj.

"The recommendation was taken into account and it was decriminalised for a short time in 1997 but then brought back again. It is definitely a positive move as a person who has attempted suicide always goes through mental trauma and distress. Putting him/her through legal proceedings is a hassle which could further aggravate his mental illness," he added.

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