

## Minutes of the Meeting of the Task Force constituted by the Hon'ble Supreme Court held on 29.03.2025 to address the Mental Health concerns of students and prevent the commission of suicides In Higher Educational Institutions

1. An online meeting of the Task Force to address the Mental Health Concerns Of students and prevent the commission of suicides In Higher Educational Institutions was held under the chairmanship of Justice (Retd.) S. Ravindra Bhat, Supreme Court of India on 29.03.2025 at 2.00 PM. List of Participants is attached at Annexure.
2. The Chairperson in his opening remarks welcomed all participants and the Members of the Taskforce. In his opening remarks, he outlined the agenda of the meeting highlighting the need for collection of data from various stakeholders which includes teachers, academics, persons involved in social sector, policy makers, formulation of diverse set questionnaires for collection of data from various stakeholders, making available resources for the task force for effective discharge of its time bound functions, formation of working groups for division of works, dissemination and publicity of the questionnaires and activities to be taken up by the task force etc. Accordingly, the Chairperson urged all Members to introduce themselves and give their observations.
3. Dr. Alok Sarin in his observations stated that data collection from diverse set of stakeholders will be important as there is long series of such situations which happened in Higher Education Institutions like IITs and Medical Training Institutions. To come out with suggested measures, there is a need to study and analyse the responses of various stakeholders and previous reports on the matter.
4. **Dr. Seema Mehrotra**, in her observation stated that there is need to collect information about the existing framework, what are the services being provided for students' support and what are the barriers / challenges in reaching out to the available services. She also emphasised to collect sample data on these aspects.
5. **Prof. Mary E. John (Retired)** in her observation endorsed the views of former speakers and stated that we must look into the National Crime Records Bureau data and data on students committed suicides due to discrimination in the last 2 years. She also suggested that single questionnaire will not succeed and need to have different questionnaires each for Administration, Faculty, Students. However, she was concerned about obtaining data through questionnaires. She further suggested that separate Working Groups can be formed to do this exercise.
6. The Chairman expressed concern about whether we should focus solely on studying past reports or explore new approaches and conduct fresh experiments. He emphasized that we also need to examine what support systems are available for students at institution-level. For this, site visits to certain IITs and top medical colleges are very crucial, as some suicide cases may not receive public attention.
7. **Dr. Aqsa Shaikh**, Professor in her observation stated there is need to allay impression that this is just another committee / commission. For this, the Task Force need to work meticulously and that while seeking feedback / data we need to take care of soliciting data in different languages and different stakeholders. Also the Task Force need to visit different parts of country for inputs of HEIs. She also emphasised about the need for Secretariat for meeting and the meetings should be conducted frequently, once in a 2-week.

8. **Dr Arman Ali** in his observation stated that many cases of suicides have not been reported. He outlined that the Task Force needs to reach out those who remain unheard. He also talked about the issues related to persons with various kinds of disabilities. Dr Ali emphasised about the need for transparency in the functioning of the Task Force and also for drawing a calendar for the next 4 months in advance.

9. **Prof. Rajendar Kachroo** in his observation stated School education and the coaching institutions are important stakeholders and that bullying, academic discrimination and ragging are reasons for untoward incidents. He mentioned about the Raghvan Committee constituted in 2007 by the order of Hon'ble Supreme Court of India which made to run National Ragging Prevention Program and a toll free helpline. Also every institution must have an Anti-Ragging Committee and an Anti - Ragging Squad. He suggested to do research on reports of NIMHANS, CBSE, NCRB He suggested that the data from the National Ragging Helpline can be starting points. He stated about reaching out to people including parents of those committed suicides and some who wants to maintain anonymity. Since cases of suicides are found in schools also, he suggested to have an officer of Deptt. Of School Education and Literacy onboarded in this Task Force.

10. **Prof. Virginius Xaxa**, in his observation stated that we need to look at the pressure of work especially in IITs and Medical Fields. He stated that many institutions have mental health cell, psychologists, counsellors on board. However, there is need to strengthen the available resources.

11. **Sh. Anil Malik, Secretary, Ministry of Women and Child Development** in his observation stated that National Mental Health Care Act is administered by Ministry of Health & Family Welfare and therefore, there is need to co-opt Joint Secretary level officer in the Task Force. He also stated that MWCD with Child Care Institutions and NIMHANS runs a program called 'Samvad' and have done studies in collaboration with NIMHANS.

12. **Dr. Anju Rathi Rana, Secretary**, Department of Legal Affairs in observation expressed her support and cooperation to the Task Force.

13. **Sh. Amit Yadav, Secretary**, Department of Social Justice & Empowerment in his observation talked about the need for survey in the form of questionnaire. He suggested to form sub-groups to look after questionnaires; for direct interaction with stakeholders, for study the existing resources/regulations. He also stated that co-opting of Deptt. of School Education & Literacy is important. He further emphasised about the need of children from marginalised and vulnerable groups.

14. **Sh. Vineet Joshi, Secretary**, Department of Higher Education in his observation stated that we need to have separate questionnaires for different stakeholders namely, consumers who are Students and Parents; Faculty and Experts; Higher Education Institutions; Policy makers; and Persons in the world of work. He emphasised the need for co-opting of the officers from DoSEL and MoHFW. He suggested for setting up of four working groups for smooth functioning and division of labour, i.e. for desk work, delivery and analysis of questionnaires, for study visits to Institutions/Fields and for preparation of the report. At the end, he extended full support and requested to come up with implementable report with defined timelines.

15. **Ms. Aparna Bhat**, Senior Advocate in her observation talked about concerns related to parents, students, faculty, coaching centre. She talked about the need for engaging with the police officials also to get their feedback. She raised concerned to manage the administrative and financial matters of the Task Force.

**16. Dr. Nidhi S. Sabharwal**, Associate Professor in her observation stated about the previous work done by NIEPA in the field and expressed her support to the Task Force.

17. After discussion, the following were decided:

**A. Task force work distribution**

It will have **Four Working/Breakaway Groups**;

- a) A **Research Group** that will focus on desk work and compile and analyse past reports, research, and regulations on mental health, suicides, and education.
- b) A **Data Collection and analysis Group** that will handle collecting data (offline and online) through questionnaires and its analysis.
- c) A **Field Visits Group** that will conduct site visits and offline interactions with stakeholders.
- d) A **Reporting and Communication Group** that will focus on summarizing data, compiling reports, and communicating findings.

**B. Questionnaire Development and primary data collection**

- a) Create and distribute the questionnaire in multiple languages to ensure accessibility and inclusivity and publicize it via the portal, social media and other avenues.
- b) The questionnaire will cover data collection from the four major stakeholders including **(1)** students, parents and survivors, **(2)** Faculty/ Teachers from educational institutions, coaching centres, **(3)** Health professionals, and **(4)** Police.
- c) **Members are requested to submit one to two pages outlining the format for the questionnaires addressing each identified stakeholders**

**C. Secondary Data: Literature and Data Review**

- a) Review and analysis of past reports, including, NCRB data, Data from national ragging helpline by UGC, Data from medical councils on suicides and drop off (as they are much higher than others), AICTE etc.
- b) Data on suicides, bullying, and ragging will be looked at in detail, especially from marginalized and vulnerable groups.
- c) **The convener to compile and circulate all previous reports and regulations in force in digital format to the task force.**
- d) **A cloud-based drive can be used to pool such resources.**

**D. Action Plan for Data Collection**

- a) Primary data collection will be conducted through a dedicated portal or website (to be developed), which will enable the public to submit suggestions and provide feedback. Additionally, data gathered from field visit reports will be collected and analysed to support the process.
- b) Data collection should be empirical and in a format for easy data extraction, and reach all relevant stakeholders. Anonymity of responses shall be ensured where required.
- c) Publicity for the questionnaire will be a priority to encourage widespread participation. The press may be notified and usage of social media channels can be explored.

**E. Stakeholder Collaboration**

- a) Students, Parents, Faculty and administration/administrators of Higher education institutions, coaching centres, relevant Ministries, Mental health professionals, and State Education Departments, Police etc. will be key collaborators, and their inputs will be collected.
- b) Parliamentarians will also be sensitized on the issues and suggestions can be collected.
- c) **Joint Secretary, MoFHW and DoSEL handling the subject in the concerned Ministry / Deptt. to be co-opted**

#### **F. Site Visits and Stakeholder Engagement**

- a) Visits to diverse institutions nationwide covering different regions, especially those with high suicide rates or successful mental health practices, will be scheduled to gather insights.
- b) Rather than visit one particular institution at a time, it can be held in general spaces where different stake holders in that area/city can meet and deliberate.

#### **G. Coordination and Timelines**

- a) The task force will meet fortnightly (preferably on Saturdays) to review progress.
- b) The final report should be actionable and implementable, with a focus on practical solutions.

#### **Deliverables for MoE**

- **Portal/Website for Data Collection**

- a) MoE will assist in developing and managing the portal for data and suggestions collection.

- **Reports and Regulations/Guidelines**

**JS (HE) as convener to compile all previous reports, regulations, surveys etc from Ministries/ Departments and circulate in digital format to the Task Force.**

- **Dissemination of Questionnaire**

- a) MoE to distribute the questionnaire across all States/UTs, Schools, and Higher Education Institutions, ensuring firm deadlines for completion and widespread publicity.
- b) Circular to be issued by MoE within 1 week to States, Regulatory Bodies, educational institutions for their support

- **Coordination with Institutions and NIEPA**

- a) MoE to coordinate with all educational institutions and its regulatory bodies, including CFIs, KVs, JNVs, CBSE, NCERT, UGC, AICTE, AIU etc., for data collection and field visits.
- b) NIEPA to coordinate the fortnightly meetings of the task force.

- **Others**

- a) **JS (HE) as convener may issue a press release about the Task Force's resolution to gather public opinions, and make it available in all regional languages.**
- b) MoE to provide necessary data and facilitate field visits for data collection.

## Annexure

S.No	Member
1.	<b>Justice S. Ravindra Bhat</b> , Former Judge, Supreme Court of India, <b>Chairperson</b>
2.	<b>Dr. Alok Sarin</b> , Consultant Psychiatrist, Sitaram Bhartia Institute of Science & Research, New Delhi, Member
3.	<b>Prof. Mary E. John (Retired)</b> , Former Director, Centre for Women's Development Studies, New Delhi, Member
4.	<b>Mr. Arman Ali</b> , Executive Director, National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled People, Member
5.	<b>Prof. Rajendar Kachroo</b> , Founder, Aman Satya Kachroo Trust, Member
6.	<b>Dr. Aqsa Shaikh</b> , Professor, Department of Community Medicine, Hamdard Institute of Medical Sciences and Research, New Delhi, Member
7.	<b>Dr. Seema Mehrotra</b> , Professor of Clinical Psychology, NIMHANS, Member
8.	<b>Prof. Virginus Xaxa</b> , Visiting Professor, Institute for Human Development (IHD), New Delhi, Member
9.	<b>Dr. Nidhi S. Sabharwal</b> , Associate Professor, Centre for Policy Research in Higher Education, National University of Educational Planning and Administration, New Delhi, Member
10.	<b>Ms. Aparna Bhat</b> , Senior Advocate (as amicus curiae), Member
11.	<b>Sh. Vineet Joshi</b> , <b>Secretary</b> , Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education, Government of India, Ex-officio Member and Member Secretary
12.	<b>Sh. Amit Yadav</b> , <b>Secretary</b> , Department of Social Justice & Empowerment, Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, Government of India, Ex-officio Member
13.	<b>Sh. Anil Malik</b> , <b>Secretary</b> , Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India, Ex-officio Member
14.	<b>Dr. Anju Rathi Rana</b> , <b>Secretary</b> , Department of Legal Affairs, Ministry of Law and Justice, Government of India, Ex-officio Member
15.	<b>Ms. Rina Sonowal Kouli</b> , <b>Joint Secretary, Department of Higher Education</b> , Convener of the Task Force