

Minutes of the 2nd Meeting of the National Task Force, held on 12.04.2025 at 04.30 PM at Dr. Ambedkar International Centre, Janpath, New Delhi

2nd Meeting of the National Task Force (NTF), held on 12.04.2025 at 04.30 PM at Dr. Ambedkar International Centre, Janpath, New Delhi under the Chairmanship of Hon'ble Justice (Retd.) S. Ravindra Bhat, former Judge, Supreme Court of India to discuss and deliberate the issues related to mental health concerns among students, prevention of commission of the suicides in educational institutions and recommend preventive measures. A list of attendees is at **Annexure**.

2. The Chairperson in his opening remarks welcomed all participants and the Members of the Taskforce. At the outset, he outlined the agenda of the meeting highlighting the need for collection of data from various stakeholders which includes teachers, academics, person involved in social sector, policy makers, formulation of diverse set of questionnaires for collection of data, making available resources / existing regulations for the task force to study and analyse the current situation, formation of working groups for division of works, dissemination of the questionnaires, etc.

3. After introduction of all the Members, the Chairperson sought observations from the members. He also emphasized that confidentiality of the individual or the persons surveyed need to be maintained while eliciting their suggestions/feedback.

4. Sh. Vineet Joshi, Secretary, Department of Higher Education and Member Secretary of NTF, informed the Task Force about various action taken by the Department in light of the decision taken in the 1st meeting of Task Force on 29.03.2025 and also keeping in light the judgement of Hon'ble Supreme Court. He informed that communications have been sent to Chief Secretaries/ACS/Pr. Secretary/Secretary of Higher / Technical Education, Chairman, UGC, Chairman, AICTE, Chairman, Bar Council of India, Chairman, National Medical Commission, Vice-Chairman, NITI Aayog, Secretaries of Union Ministries/Departments, VCs/Heads of Centrally Funded Higher Education Institutions. Letters have also been sent to Secretaries, D/o School Education & Literacy and D/o Health & Family Welfare to depute one JS level officers for providing support to NTF. He also informed that an amount of Rs. 20 Lakh has also been arranged for submission to Registry, SCI. He also briefed that action regarding creation of website of the NTF is underway.

5. Dr. Alok Sarin, in his observation referred about the preparation of questionnaires for data collection from diverse set of stakeholders.

6. Prof. Mary E. John in her observation stated the data regarding suicide of the students throughout the country need to be collated. She quoted some statistics from data of National Crime Records Bureau regarding commission of suicides by

students. She also suggested to collect data from other agencies which maintains similar data.

7. Dr. Seema Mehrotra, in her observation stated that one-to-one interaction should be done with the students. She emphasized that the counselling service at institution-level be better structured. Campus/faculty should be more supportive with respect to students. The students should get mental health counseling on regular basis to prevent the suicidal thoughts.

8. Prof. Rajendra Kachroo, in his observation pointed out that the concept of ragging taking place throughout the academic session and he also emphasized that the ragging is not only affecting the first-year students but also the students studying in their final years as well. The ragging is not only limited to mental harassment but it also includes sexual harassment. He also mentioned that the existing regulations/guidelines has not been strategically implemented due to low awareness among stakeholders. He was of the view that there should be compliance mechanism, independent monitoring and complaint redressal mechanism in the guidelines/regulations for better implementation.

9. Prof. Virginius Xaxa, in his observation, stated that the mental health is to be studied from a larger picture. He also suggested to start the helpline number for the student throughout the country, like the existing helpline service of women. He was of the view that only preparation of guidelines will not work, they need to be enforced also.

10. Dr. Arman Ali in his observation stated that specially-abled students are more prone to get bullied so some serious steps needs be taken in this regard. He highlighted that despite several measures being taken, there are still many cases that may not have been reported. There is still need to create physical infrastructure and also need to ensure readiness of the educational institutions to handle such situations.

11. Dr. Nidhi S. Sabharwal, referred previous studies undertaken by NIEPA which may also be taken into consideration while finalizing the report.

12. Ms. Aparna Bhat, Senior Advocate (as amicus curiae) in her observation talked about concern related to student, parent, coaching centre, etc. She has also emphasized on creating the social media handle/portal and website so that queries should be handled in an easy way. She has also suggested that we should get the queries through e-mail while the website is under process. She has also given suggestion on data collection throughout the country. She has also suggested regarding the addition of same-sex in the POSH Act.

13. Sh. Vineet Joshi, Secretary, Department of Higher Education, in his observation stated that the relevant data should be collected from all the institutions like UGC, CBSE, NCERT and other regulatory bodies, through the internal meetings.

14. Sh. Anandrao V. Patil, Additional Secretary, Department of School Education & Literacy, stated that the Department of School Education & Literacy has prepared a draft guidelines 'UMMEED' aims to prevent suicides by students. The draft guidelines are in public domain for comments/feedback. Department is soon to release these guidelines.

15. Prof. Vinod Kumar Shanwal, NCERT, informed that Manodarpan Cell has been providing Psychosocial Support for Mental Health & Well Being to Students, Teachers and Parents. Through the Cell, various facilities are provided like Toll-free Tele-Helpline (8448440632), organizing Live Interactive Session 'Sahyog' with Counsellors from Monday to Friday (From 5.00 PM. To 5.30 PM) for students of Class VI-XII and organizing Live Interactive Session 'Paricharcha' with experts every Friday (2.30 PM to 4.00 PM). Additionally, he apprised that a Teachers' Mental Well-being Survey 2024 was conducted to gain understanding on mental health of teachers and factors impacting their wellbeing. Total 71,635 teachers responded to survey questions. Also, a survey on Mental Health & Wellbeing of School Students 2022 was conducted on 3,79,842 students of Class VI-XII. He also informed about development of resource materials like Modular Handbook for Teachers & Allied Stakeholders 2024, Guide for Promoting Mental Health & Well-being in School 2024, Activity Resource Book for Teachers and Advocacy Materials on Mental Health. He also assured to provide required data and necessary assistance including support to NTF w.r.t Manodarpan Cell, studies, surveys etc.

16. Ms. Rina Sonowal Kouli, Joint Secretary, Department of Higher Education, Convener of the Task Force, in her observation, emphasized on mental health of students and referred NITI Aayog's study that there is shortage of 30-40 thousand counsellors. She also gave suggestion to increase the number of counselors in the campus for the welfare of the students. She also informed the Task Force that M.Phil that was discontinued as per NEP 2020, has been allowed to be continued for M.Phil in Clinical Psychology upto 2 years.

17. Dr. K.M. Arya, Dy. Legal Advisor, Department of Legal Affairs also suggested that the number of psychiatrists should be increased in all the educational institutions throughout the country. He also suggested to integrate the different helpline numbers for providing support to students.

18. Shri Vijay Nehra, Joint Secretary, Department of Health & Family Welfare informed that National Mental Health Act is implemented by the department. Also, a TELEMENAS Helpline is run to provide support for mental health issues.

Through this, users connect for free and get confidential mental health support through trained mental health professionals across India, 24x7 for immediate counseling.

19. Shri Mohd Anwar, Sr. director, NIC, D/o HE informed that a dedicated website for the National Task Force is under preparation and assured that the website will be ready within a period of 2 weeks.

20. The Task Force has decided to form three working groups each looking after for different tasks. Progress of working groups was discussed. This includes compiling and reviewing previous reports, examining existing laws and regulations, and developing a methodology for designing questionnaires. The members of the sub-groups informed that a significant amount of preliminary research has already been done. It has been emphasized the need to focus on the tangible outcomes of the sub-groups with defined timelines along with short-term, mid-term and long-term goals.

21. It was also discussed in detail that grievance redressal with regards to ragging, sexual harassment, various forms of discrimination need to be strengthened.

22. After detailed discussion, the following were decided:-

- (i) Standardized Statement for public and press be prepared and released.
- (ii) Need to prepare Questionnaires for circulation. Questionnaires should be easy to fill for every stakeholder.
- (iii) Field visits may be scheduled by the Members after 2 more meetings.
- (iv) Need to create a common email while the website is under process.
- (v) Sub-Groups can co-opt some researchers and data analysts for assistance. This may be done with the prior concurrence of the Chairperson.
- (vi) Next meeting of the National Task Force will be held on 26.04.2025.

21. The meeting was concluded with a vote of thanks to the Chair.

Annexure

S. No	Member
1.	Justice S. Ravindra Bhat , Former Judge, Supreme Court of India, Chairperson
2.	Dr. Alok Sarin , Consultant Psychiatrist, Sitaram Bhartia Institute of Science & Research, New Delhi, Member
3.	Prof. Mary E. John (Retired) , Former Director, Centre for Women's Development Studies, New Delhi, Member
4.	Mr. Arman Ali , Executive Director, National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled People, Member
5.	Prof. Rajendar Kachroo , Founder, Aman Satya Kachroo Trust, Member
6.	Dr. Seema Mehrotra , Professor of Clinical Psychology, NIMHANS, Member
7.	Prof. Virginius Xaxa , Visiting Professor, Institute for Human Development (IHD), New Delhi, Member
8.	Dr. Nidhi S. Sabharwal , Associate Professor, Centre for Policy Research in Higher Education, National University of Educational Planning and Administration, New Delhi, Member
9.	Ms. Aparna Bhat , Senior Advocate (as amicus curiae), Member
10.	Sh. Vineet Joshi , Secretary , Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education, Government of India, Ex-officio Member and Member Secretary
11.	Sh. Amit Yadav , Secretary , Department of Social Justice & Empowerment, Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, Government of India, Ex-officio Member
12.	Sh. Anil Malik , Secretary , Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India, Ex-officio Member
13.	Dr. K.M. Arya , Dy. Legal Advisor , Department of Legal Affairs, Ministry of Law and Justice, Government of India
14.	Sh. Anandrao V. Patil , Additional Secretary , Department of School Education & Literacy
15.	Prof. Vinod Kumar Shanwal , NCERT
16.	Shri Vijay Nehra , Joint Secretary , Department of Health & Family Welfare
17.	Ms. Rina Sonowal Kouli , Joint Secretary , Department of Higher Education, Convener of the Task Force
18.	Shri Syed E. Rizwi , Joint Secretary , Department of Higher Education
19.	Shri. Mohd. Anwar , Sr. Director , NIC, Department of Higher Education
20.	Ms. Sonam , Assistant Secretary , D/o Higher Education