

Minutes of the 4th Meeting of the National Task Force constituted by the Hon'ble Supreme Court, held on 24.05.2025 at 04:00 PM to address the mental health concerns of students and prevent suicides in Higher Education Institutions.

1. The 4th Meeting of the National Task Force (NTF) on Mental Health was held on **May 24, 2025**, at 4:00 PM in an online mode, with the Chairperson welcoming the participants.
2. A pilot visit was conducted at Ramjas College and Jamia Millia Islamia in Delhi, and at the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) and Bangalore Medical College (BMC) in Bangalore. While there were challenges (due to coinciding with examinations) valuable insights were obtained as the draft student questionnaire could be tested and answers were found to be viable, and interactions with small groups of faculty and students, and visiting facilities on student welfare could be undertaken. This will be the basis for conducting further field visits.
3. The **Chairperson** shared that a Supreme Court order dated **13th May 2025** addresses recent student suicides at IIT Kharagpur and in Kota. In both cases, the Court has requested the institutions concerned to furnish formal reports. Taking into account submissions made by the task force, funds have been made available by the Ministry for the necessary interventions. The Court has granted an **eight-week extension from 24 July 2025 for the submission of the interim report**, setting the deadline at the end of September.
4. Status updates were obtained regarding the website as well as discussions on time lines for future field visits. Issues of security and confidentiality regarding data were discussed with NIC.
5. The importance of having an ethics clearance was discussed, as this had not been a practice with previous investigations and would set a good bench mark.
6. The Chairperson inquired about the status updates on the data requested earlier by NTF. In response, **Ms. Rina Sonowal Kouli**, Joint Secretary, Department of Higher Education, provided an update, mentioning that follow-ups are underway with key bodies including MHA, NCRB, the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, DoSEL, National Mission Commission, Indian Nursing Council, Dental Council of India, UGC, NAAC, and AICTE. Steps taken by IITs to prevent student suicides have already been shared, and efforts are ongoing to collect similar data from other centrally funded institutions. The Chairperson raised a distinction between the existence of institutional infrastructure and its actual utilisation by students, and asked whether data on usage patterns had been sought. She clarified that the request for specific data has been made to the concerned departments.
7. The need for both analytical and clerical support, was emphasized given the nature of the studies being proposed. A meeting would be held to work out the details of research and administrative assistance required.
8. The Chairperson requested to be informed of any release of funds and noted that for long-term engagements exceeding six months, candidates could be screened and the matter taken up with the Ministry. He further added that if additional funds or infrastructure is needed, the Ministry could be approached to provide a dedicated space—potentially a camp office—for a period of six to nine months, or up to a year. In response, Ms. Sonowal shared that option for accommodation space are currently being explored, and that a temporary working space is available until a more permanent alternative is secured.

9. In addition to field visits to institutions it was proposed to hold stakeholder meetings with specific individuals with expertise in relevant fields related to the investigations to be conducted and this was accepted in principle.

10. The matter of complaints received from students with disabilities in higher education institutions was raised. Information was sought from the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities on the scholarship schemes being implemented and the types of support being provided to students in case of any issues.

11. Some initial thoughts were discussed regarding the interim report, though details would be worked out closer to the time of its preparation.

12. Discussion on Website:

- IRB approval must be secured before the questionnaire rollout.
- Suggestion to keep the NTF website focused and avoid listing schemes directly.
- Website efficiency is critical to the initiative's success.
- Internal pilot to test accessibility features was proposed.
- The website should be as per GIGW Guidelines for maintaining governments website and should cater to the needs of persons with disabilities.
- Demonstration of the website to be scheduled

13. After the detailed discussion, the following decisions were made:

- The Supreme Court order dated 13.05.2025 requires submission of an interim report by the end of September 2025.
- The committee agreed to seek ethics clearance from an Institutional Review Board (IRB). NIMHANS was proposed and accepted as a suitable IRB, with no anticipated conflict of interest.
- To explore feasibility of integration with the AISHE portal to streamline Institution level participation.
- The Ministry of Education will be approached to directly collect data from central universities.
- Research and clerical support will be required for thematic analysis and legal review.
- The Ministry may be approached for additional funds and infrastructure (e.g., a temporary camp office).
- Future stakeholder meetings will be organized to review existing policies and identify gaps.
- The questionnaire rollout is now expected in early July 2025.
- Accessibility of the website for visually impaired users will be ensured.

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.	Mr. Arman Ali , Executive Director, National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled People, Member
4.	Prof. Rajendar Kachroo , Founder, Aman Satya Kachroo Trust, Member
5.	Dr. Seema Mehrotra , Professor of Clinical Psychology, NIMHANS, Member
6.	Dr. Nidhi S. Sabharwal , Associate Professor, Centre for Policy Research in Higher Education, NIEPA, New Delhi, Member
7.	Prof. Mary E. John (Retired) , Former Director, Centre for Women's Development Studies, New Delhi, Member
8.	Dr. Aqsa Shaikh , Professor, Department of Community Medicine, Hamdard Institute of Medical Sciences and Research, New Delhi, Member
9.	Dr. Vineet Joshi , Secretary, Dept of Higher Education & Member Secretary, NTF
10.	Ms. Preeti Pant , Joint Secretary, Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India
11.	Dr. K.M. Arya, Dy. Legal Advisor , Department of Legal Affairs, Ministry of Law and Justice, Government of India
12.	Shri Hemant Kumar, Dy. Legal Advisor , Department of Legal Affairs, Ministry of Law and Justice, Government of India
13.	Prof. Vinod Kumar Shanwal , NCERT
14.	Shri Manoj Kumar, Deputy Secretary , Department of Health & Family Welfare
15.	Ms. Rina Sonowal Kouli, Joint Secretary , Department of Higher Education, Convener of the Task Force
16.	Shri Devendra Kumar Sharma, Director , Department of Higher Education
17.	Shri. Mohd. Anwar, Sr. Director , NIC, Department of Higher Education
18.	Shri Kunal Kashyav, Dy. Director , NIC, Department of Higher Education
19.	Ms. Aanchal Katiyar, PIB