

**Minutes of the National Task Force – Meeting with Nodal Officers of
States and Union Territories (6 August 2025, 2.00 pm)**

1. An online meeting of the National Task Force with the nodal officers appointed by the respective states and union territories was held on the 6th of August 2025.
2. The Convener of the National Task Force (NTF), Ms. Rina Sonowal Kauli (Joint Secretary, Department of Higher Education), began the meeting by welcoming the state nodal officers. She informed the nodal officers about the composition of the NTF and welcomed Dr. Vineet Joshi, Secretary (DoHE), who is serving as the Member Secretary of the NTF. She briefly explained how the NTF was set up through a Supreme Court judgment, the surveys to be launched for various stakeholders, and the field visits that have been conducted and are planned by the NTF to gather information about the mental health of students and issues surrounding suicides and suicide prevention in higher education institutions.
3. The Chair of the NTF, Justice S. Ravindra Bhat, referred to the Supreme Court judgment dated 24th March 2025 and described the mandate of the Task Force to cover HEIs across the entire country and submit a report on the factors associated with student mental health and measures that may be taken to strengthen mechanisms for suicide prevention. He shared that the NTF had thus far held around 20–25 internal meetings and divided the members into subgroups focused on different aspects of the study undertaken, such as literature review, designing surveys, and so on. The diverse disciplinary training of the members has enabled a multi-pronged approach to collecting the required information. He gave an overview of this approach—online surveys and an open space to share views on the NTF website, which is to be launched soon—along with institutional visits, a few of which have already been conducted. He highlighted the fact that HEIs of all kinds will be covered, including central universities, state universities, private universities, affiliated colleges, and so on. The interim report of the NTF is due on 30th September, while the full report has to be submitted within eight months from the constitution of the NTF, i.e., by December 2025. This was followed by the NTF members and the nodal officers introducing themselves.
4. Dr. Aqsa Shaikh presented a glimpse of the available NCRB data pertaining to student suicides, highlighting the increasing number of suicides among students and the percentage share of student suicides. She pointed out that, as per the 2022 NCRB data, student suicides surpassed those of farmers. She further highlighted that these figures are only indicative because they are based on FIRs and therefore do not include all incidences of student suicides. Moreover, suicide figures are just the tip of the iceberg, and we need to take into account the much higher prevalence of suicide attempts, suicidal ideation, and distress among students.
5. Prof. Mary E. John discussed the research methodology, involving multiple modes of gathering information about the problems faced by students that lead to isolation, anxiety, and depression, and can also lead to suicides. The Task Force has planned field visits to various HEIs, comprising a small sample of various types of institutes across regions, as it is not feasible to visit a large number within the time frame of the NTF. She briefly explained the pilot visits in Delhi and Bangalore and how these provided important insights for planning more such visits.
6. Dr. Nidhi S. Sabharwal explained the purpose and nature of the online surveys of the NTF. She detailed the five surveys that have been designed for HEIs, students, faculty, parents, and mental health service providers, in addition to the surveys to be filled out by heads of higher education institutes.
7. Prof. Rajendra Kachroo emphasised the importance of engaging with people in each state who have already been working on these issues and have thought about them in depth.

These individuals and organisations should be identified and encouraged to offer their insights to the Task Force. He informed the group about the open space on the website that will provide a forum for expressing views and opinions on the issues under consideration and will also allow people to share their suggestions. Thus, he appealed to the nodal officers to direct people to the website.

8. Dr. Alok Sarin outlined the plan to gather the required information through stakeholder consultations with a wide variety of groups, such as medical professionals, legal experts, mental health experts, policy experts, and those who have experience working on these issues in other committees, and so on. He asked the nodal officers to share their ideas in designing such consultations and help the NTF in choosing the stakeholders they should meet.
9. Adv. Aparna Bhat explained her role as the Amicus Curiae, in addition to being a member of the Task Force. She reports to the Supreme Court to provide updates about the progress of the NTF. She is also tasked at various times with filing a status report on student suicide cases of which the Court takes cognizance. She emphasised that the help of the nodal officers would be useful in such cases for gathering information as well as filing court reports. The Supreme Court has taken note of the role of nodal officers seriously, regarding their administrative cooperation as well as their facilitation of the work of the NTF.
10. Expectations from the state nodal officers: Dr. Seema Mehrotra noted the three main areas where the support of the state nodal officers and the state machinery is needed for the work of the Task Force.
11. First, coordinated efforts and support from the state nodal officers are needed to facilitate field visits by the Task Force from time to time to different regions and institutes of higher education, as well as to organise open forums in these towns and cities where students from a variety of institutions and stakeholders could have an opportunity to interact with the Task Force team.
12. Second, the state nodal officers are requested to send circulars to all institutes of higher education in their state (government, government-aided, and private colleges; state and central universities) to ensure maximum participation in the online surveys by students and faculty members in higher education institutes, as well as to ensure that HEIs complete and submit the institute surveys by the end of August 2025.
13. Third, the state nodal officers are requested to share any information regarding state-level reports on student mental health and any initiatives related to suicide prevention and mental health promotion specifically being undertaken for higher education institutes. A template will be provided for sharing these details.
14. Justice Bhat emphasised that the NTF is mandated to consult with state governments to gather inputs and requested them to share their strategies and insights. The representative of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment drew attention to the struggles faced by marginalised students in higher education and promised support and cooperation to the NTF in spreading awareness, publicising the website, and encouraging people to take the surveys.
15. Some of the nodal officers, particularly from Kerala, Bihar, Rajasthan, and Madhya Pradesh, briefly highlighted the relevant programmes already existing in their states. The chair requested them to share the same with the NTF.
16. The nodal officers were informed about the launch of the website and the surveys scheduled as part of the press meet on 8 August 2025, which would be livestreamed for them to watch online. Adv. Aparna Bhat requested the nodal officers to disseminate the press release in their state, along with a vernacular translation of the document.

17. Mr. Arman Ali offered the vote of thanks, reiterating the valuable role of the states and the importance of the cooperation and support of the nodal officers for the National Task Force to achieve its goals.

List of Attendees

S. No	Member
1.	Justice (Retd.) 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.	Prof. Virginus Xaxa , Visiting Professor, Institute for Human Development (IHD), New Delhi, Member
9.	Dr. Aqsa Shaikh , Professor, Department of Community Medicine, Hamdard Institute of Medical Sciences and Research, New Delhi, Member
10.	Ms. Aparna Bhat , Senior Advocate (as amicus curiae) , Member
11.	Shri Amit Yadav , Secretary , Social Justice & Empowerment
12.	Dr Anju Rathi Rana , Secretary , Department of Legal Affairs, Ministry of Law and Justice
13.	Shri Biswaranjan Sasmal , Additional Secretary, M/o Social Justice & Empowerment
14.	Ms. Preeti Pant , Joint Secretary, Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India
15.	Ms. Rina Sonowal Kouli , Joint Secretary, Department of Higher Education, Convener of the Task Force
16.	Prof. Vinod Kumar Shanwal , Manodarpan Cell, NCERT
17.	Shri Sunil Sharma , Director , D/o School Education & Literacy
18.	Shri Devendra Kumar Sharma , Director , D/o Higher Education

List of Attendees (Nodal Officers)

S. No	State/UT	Name & Designation
1.	Punjab	Shri Sanyam Aggarwal, Director, Higher Education Dr. J.P Singh D.D College Education Directorate of Higher Education
2.	Ladakh	Ms. Bhanu Prabha, Administrative Secretary Higher Education
3.	Rajasthan	Dr. Om Prakash Bairwa, Commissioner College Education, Higher Education
4.	Madhya Pradesh	Shri Prabal Sepaha, Higher Education Government of Madhya Pradesh
5.	Delhi	Ms. Anjali Sehwat, Director, Social Welfare Shri Ram Phool, Deputy Director, Higher Education
6.	Himachal Pradesh	Dr. Amarjeet Kumar Sharma Director, Higher Education, Shimla
7.	Dadra Nagar Haveli D.D. UT	Sh. Shivam Teotia, Director-Cum-Joint Secretary, Higher and Technical Education
8.	Chandigarh	Sh. Amandeep Singh Bhatti, Additional Secretary, Higher Education
9.	Goa	Shri Bhushan Savaikar, Director, Education
10.	Andaman & Nicobar Islands	Shri K. Ajit Kumar, Deputy Secretary, Higher Education
11.	Arunachal Pradesh	Dr. Milorai Modi, Director, Higher & Technical Education
12.	Karnataka	Prof. Shobha G., Director, D/o Collegiate Education
13.	Jammu & Kashmir	Dr. Sheikh Ajaz Bashir, Director Colleges Higher Education
14.	Kerala	Dr. Sharmila Joseph, Principal Secretary, Higher Education
15.	Manipur	Dr. David Elangbam, Joint Secretary, Higher & Technical Education
16.	Sikkim	Mr. Gyalshten Sherpa, Joint Director Higher and Technical Education
17.	Andhra Pradesh	Dr. Narayana Bharath Gupta, Director, Education Department Dr. Krishna, Joint Director, Education Department
18.	Puducherry	Shri Aman Sharma Director, Higher & Technical Education
19.	West Bengal	Sri Jaydip Mukhopadhyaya, Senior Special Secretary, Higher Education
20.	Meghalaya	Shri David D. Sangma, Secretary, Education Department
21.	Lakshadweep	Shri. C. Attakoya Lecturer, DIET, Directorate of Education Kavaratti
22.	Tamil Nadu	Tmt. K. Karpagam, Joint Secretary, Higher Education Department

23.	Haryana	Sh. S. Narayanan IFS, Secretary, Haryana Government Higher Education
24.	Bihar	Shri Nasim Ahmed, Deputy Director, Higher Education Mrs. Prerna Assistant Director Department of Higher Education.
25.	Chhattisgarh	Dr. Raj Lakshami Selat, OSD, Higher Education
26.	Mizoram	Shri K.Lalmangaihzualla, Joint Secretary, Higher & Technical Education