

# Student Mental Health in Focus as National Efforts Intensify on Suicide Prevention and Well-being

## Ministry of Education Convenes 2nd National Task Force Meeting Chaired by Hon. Justice (Retd.) S. Ravindra Bhat

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The 2nd meeting of the National Task Force on the Mental Health Concerns of Students and the Prevention of Suicides in Higher Educational Institutions was held under the chairmanship of Justice S. Ravindra Bhat, former judge of the Supreme Court of India, in New Delhi today.

Members of the Task Force; Dr. Vineet Joshi, Secretary, Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education; Shri Amit Yadav, Secretary, Department of Social Justice & Empowerment; Shri Anil Malik, Secretary, Ministry of Women and Child Development; senior officials of the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Law and Justice and Ministry of Health & Family Welfare attended the meeting.

During the meeting, actions taken so far were reported and discussed in detail. Agenda points included developing a portal/website for data collection; reports and regulations/guidelines; dissemination of questionnaires; gathering support from different sectors; onboarding of officers from DoSEL and MoHFW; coordination with institutions and NIEPA, among others.

The Supreme Court of India, in a judgment dated 24.03.2025, issued significant directions concerning the prevention of student suicides in higher education institutions. The judgment underscored the urgent need for comprehensive measures to address mental health concerns among students. The Supreme Court constituted a National Task Force under the chairmanship of Justice S. Ravindra Bhat, former judge of the Supreme Court of India, along with other experts from various domains as members, to discuss and deliberate on issues related to mental health concerns among students, the prevention of suicides in educational institutions, and to recommend preventive measures. The key areas of focus include:

- i. Identifying predominant causes leading to student suicides, such as academic pressure, discrimination, financial burdens, and the stigma surrounding mental health.
- ii. Analyzing the effectiveness of existing student welfare and mental health regulations/policies.
- iii. Proposing reforms to strengthen institutional frameworks and create a supportive academic environment.

The composition of the National Task Force is as follows:

- Justice S. Ravindra Bhat, Former Judge, Supreme Court of India, as the Chairperson;
- Dr. Alok Sarin, Consultant Psychiatrist, Sitaram Bhartia Institute of Science & Research, New Delhi, as the Member;
- Prof. Mary E. John (retired), Former Director, Centre, for Women's Development Studies, New Delhi; as the Member;
- Mr. Arman Ali, Executive Director, National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled People; as the Member;

- Prof. Rajendar Kachroo, Founder, Aman Satya Kachroo Trust; as the Member;
- Dr. Aqsa Shaikh, Professor of the Department of Community Medicine in Hamdard Institute of Medical Sciences and Research, New Delhi; as the Member;
- Dr. Seema Mehrotra, Professor of Clinical Psychology, NIMHANS; as the Member;
- Prof. Virginius Xaxa, Visiting Professor at the Institute for Human Development (IHD), New Delhi; as the Member;
- Dr. Nidhi S. Sabharwal, Associate Professor, Centre for Policy Research in Higher Education, National University of Educational Planning and Administration, New Delhi; as the Member;
- Ms. Aparna Bhat, Senior Advocate (as amicus curiae).

The following are the ex-officio members of the Task Force:

- Secretary, Department of Higher Education, M/o Education, Govt. of India, as the Member Secretary
- Secretary, Department of Social Justice & Empowerment, Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, Government of India;
- Secretary, Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India;
- Secretary, Department of Legal Affairs, Ministry of Law and Justice, Government of India; and
- Joint Secretary, Department of Higher Education, M/o Education - Convenor.

The Task Force has decided to form three working groups each looking after different tasks. Progress of working groups so far was discussed. This includes compiling and reviewing previous reports, examining existing laws and regulations, and developing a methodology for designing questionnaires.

The first meeting of the Task Force was virtually held on 29.03.2025, in which the Chairperson outlined the agenda of the meeting highlighting the need for collection of data from various stakeholders which included 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.

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