

## **Record of Discussion of Online Session of Capacity Building Programme for Promoting Positive Mental Health, Resilience, and Wellbeing, held on 14.05.2026 at 10:00 AM**

1. An online session under the Capacity Building Programme for Promoting Positive Mental Health, Resilience and Wellbeing was conducted on 14<sup>th</sup> May 2026 as part of the Ministry of Education's sustained efforts to integrate mental health, resilience, and wellbeing into the higher education ecosystem. The session was organised for nominated members from centrally funded Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). A total of 76 participants joined the session out of which 67 were faculty members.

2. This was the 43<sup>rd</sup> online session in the ongoing fortnightly series since the launch of the programme in May 2024. The initiative continues to support the development of institutional ecosystems that are sensitive to student wellbeing in alignment with the objectives of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. Till date, more than 3000 faculty members from more than 160 HEIs have participated in the programme.

3. Mr. D. K. Sharma, Director, Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education and Prof. Kumar Suresh, NIEPA opened the session with brief remarks. Mr. Sharma welcomed all participants to the session and noted that this programme is a consistently significant part of the broader efforts under the Malaviya Mission Teacher Training Programme (MMTTP) to strengthen faculty capacity across thematic areas relevant to higher education. He stated that the initiative was launched nearly two years ago with the objective of fostering supportive and enabling institutional environments in alignment with the vision of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. Referring to the growing concerns around student mental health, Mr. Sharma highlighted that while overall suicide cases in the country had increased by approximately 27% over the last decade, student suicides had risen by nearly 65% during the same period, indicating a serious challenge within the education ecosystem.

4. Mr. Sharma emphasised that NEP 2020 underscores the importance of holistic student development, including emotional, psychological, and mental wellbeing, and calls upon institutions to provide adequate counselling and support systems. He observed that the issue of student mental health has gained national attention through discussions in the last few Economic Surveys of India, the National Education Policy, National Health Policy, and recent deliberations of the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India, including the constitution of a National Task Force on student suicides in higher education institutions. He stated that the programme seeks to create a collaborative platform for institutions to learn from one another, share best practices, and contribute towards destigmatising mental health concerns in higher education. He also welcomed the distinguished resource persons for the session including:

- ❖ Dr. Jitendra Nagpal, Senior Psychiatrist and Programme Director, Expressions India
- ❖ Ms. Geeta Mehrotra, Expressions India
- ❖ Dr. Abhishek K. Srivastava, IIT-BHU
- ❖ Prof. Shailender Swaminathan, Sapient Labs, KREA University

5. Prof. Kumar Suresh, National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA) observed that the continuing rise in student suicides despite the expansion of wellbeing initiatives across centrally funded institutions remains a matter of serious concern. Referring to his recent visits to several institutions of excellence as part of a Ministry programme evaluation exercise, he noted that many HEIs have established wellbeing centres and initiated support mechanisms over the past two years. However, he emphasised that the persistence of mental health challenges indicates that the issue is more complex and cannot be attributed solely to faculty members or institutional systems.

Factors such as family background, social pressures, and the gap between aspirations and achievements may also contribute to student distress.

6. Prof. Suresh stressed that faculty nevertheless have a critical role in creating a supportive and connected educational environment. Beyond academic responsibilities, teachers must actively engage with students to ensure that they do not feel isolated or disconnected from institutional life. He said it was important to foster a strong peer culture and peer support systems within campuses. He also stressed that teachers and institutions should facilitate ecosystems that promote belongingness, dialogue, and student engagement.

7. The session was then handed over to Dr. Nagpal who reflected on the urgent need for higher education institutions to move beyond a narrow focus on academic instruction and employability towards a more holistic approach to student growth and wellbeing. He emphasised that educational leadership today must internalise responsibility for nurturing resilience, emotional wellbeing, compassion, adaptability, and life skills among students and faculty alike. Referring to the objectives of NEP 2020 and India's longstanding holistic traditions, he highlighted that mental wellbeing should be viewed not merely as the absence of illness but as the ability to cope with stress, realise one's potential, work productively, and contribute meaningfully to society. He underlined the importance of participatory dialogue, peer support, and compassionate communication in building healthy campus ecosystems.

8. Dr. Nagpal also expressed concern over the growing incidence of student suicides and mental health challenges, citing recent NCRB data and the alarming rise in distress among young people. He noted that factors such as academic pressure, social isolation, excessive digital engagement, loneliness, disrupted sleep patterns, and weakening interpersonal connections were contributing to deteriorating mental wellbeing. Participating faculty discussed the impact of post-COVID educational practices, heightened competition, parental expectations, and declining social interaction among students. Dr. Nagpal also stressed the importance of early interventions, preventive mental health initiatives, mentorship systems, peer educator models, and institutional best practices. He informed participants that national school mental health policies and UGC guidelines on university mental health were under development and would support institutions in adopting comprehensive wellbeing frameworks.

9. The session was then steered by Ms. Geeta Mehrotra who focused on the importance of informal, activity-based approaches in promoting emotional wellbeing, communication, and psychological connection in educational spaces. Participants discussed the increasing stress, loneliness, and peer pressure experienced by students in highly competitive institutions such as IITs and NITs. Faculty members observed that while extracurricular activities are often available, deeper concerns such as a fear of failure, competition, and lack of emotional preparedness continue to affect student wellbeing. The discussion emphasised the need to prepare students emotionally for transitions into demanding academic environments and to help them understand that academic competition is not the sole indicator of success.

10. The session highlighted how many students, especially those from rural or non-English-medium backgrounds, possess strong abilities but hesitate to communicate or express themselves confidently. Faculty members shared experiences of helping such students through reassurance, encouragement, and practical engagement. Through storytelling, observation exercises, scribbling activities, and creative interpretation tasks, participating faculty explored how short and simple classroom activities can improve attentiveness, reduce stress, encourage self-expressing, and foster emotional connection between teachers and students.

11. Participants reflected that such activities do not require elaborate planning or infrastructure and can be integrated naturally within classroom teaching. Ms. Mehrotra concluded by saying that flexible teaching methods, emotional sensitivity, informal interaction, and opportunities for creative expression are essential for building supportive and psychologically safe learning environments that promote both student engagement and wellbeing.

12. Prof. Abhishek Kumar Srivastava of Indian Institute of Technology (BHU) presented the multi-component wellness model implemented at IIT BHU through the Student Counselling Services popularly known as “SAKHA” meaning a friend on campus. He explained that the model is a faculty counsellor and student-driven initiative established in 2019 to promote holistic student wellbeing through an integrated and value-based support system. The initiative presently comprises eleven faculty coordinators, over one hundred student volunteers, counsellors, and wellness wardens functioning through multiple interconnected verticals including wellness, academics, career guidance, skill development, operations, and international exchange.

13. Prof. Srivastava emphasised that wellness remains the central objective, while academic stress, career anxiety, social adjustment, and emotional challenges are addressed through collaborative institutional mechanism. The model combines professional counselling, peer mentoring, orientation programmes, remedial academic support, awareness campaigns, workshops, social engagement activities, and spiritual and philosophical initiatives. He highlighted the importances of student participation, continuous mentorship during the first two years, confidentiality in counselling, and adherence to relevant guidelines. Prof. Srivastava concluded by stating that the SAKHA model functions effectively despite limited resources due to its collective, value-driven, and continuously evolving structure. He also proposed extending the framework in future to include faculty and administrative wellbeing.

14. Prof. Srivastava invited Tushar Bansal, student convener of SAKHA at IIT BHU to share the student perspective in the institute’s wellness framework and highlighted the pressures students face relating to academics, research, placements, and skill development. Tushar explained that SAKHA functions as a multi-layered support system involving students, wardens, counsellors, faculty coordinators, and professional experts to ensure continuous care and early interventions. He emphasised the importance of peer support, noting that students are often more comfortable approaching friends, seniors, and mentors before seeking formal counselling. SAKHA therefore acts as a bridge between students and institutional support mechanism.

15. The session was finally handed over to Prof. Shailender Swaminathan who highlighted the growing mental health crisis among youth and emphasised the need for collaborative, data-driven approaches to address it. Referring to large-scale studies involving over 30,000 students in India, he noted a significant decline in youth wellbeing over time, with younger age groups now reporting the lowest mental wellbeing levels compared to earlier generations. He stressed that mental health concerns arise from multiple interconnected factors, including academic pressure, lack of belongingness, excessive smartphone use, declining family closeness, exposure to plastics and pesticides, and broader lifestyle changes.

16. He underlined the importance of longitudinal and real-time data analysis to identify which institutional interventions are most effective. His organisation focuses on developing scientific tools to measure “mind health” through composite indicators drawing from psychiatry, neuroscience, psychology, and related disciplines. These tools provide confidential individual-level assessments as

well as aggregate institutional reports to help identify key stressors across batches, genders, and socio-economic groups.

17. Prof. Swaminathan proposed that institutions and research organisations should work together to scientifically evaluate the impact of existing wellbeing initiatives and optimise limited resources by focusing on interventions that demonstrate measurable outcomes. He also emphasised that timely analysis and feedback can help institutions respond more effectively and encourage students experiencing distress to seek counselling support.

18. The session ended with a summarisation and vote of thanks by Dr. Shivakumar Kandekar from NIEPA.

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**List of Attendees  
Faculty Members**

| <b>S. No</b> | <b>Name of Institution</b>  | <b>Faculty Nominated</b>   | <b>Attendees</b>  | <b>Absentees</b>  |
|--------------|---|--|---|---|
| 1            | Assam University  | No nominations received  |   |   |
| 2            | Banaras Hindu University  | 1. A. Ahmad<br>2. A. Sisodia<br>3. Amitava Rakshit<br>4. Anindita Chakraborty<br>5. Anu Singh<br>6. Archana Sharma<br>7. Jorben<br>8. Lalita Vatta<br>9. N K Singh<br>10. Piyush Kant Rai<br>11. Prabhat Kumar Saha<br>12. R A Meena<br>13. Ravi Shankar Khatri<br>14. S Majhi<br>15. S P Goswami<br>16. S. K. Dubey<br>17. Santosh Kumar<br>18. Shikha Misra<br>19. V K Tripathi<br>20. Yogendra Pandey | 1. Amitava Rakshit<br>2. Anindita Chakraborty<br>3. Anu Singh<br>4. Archana Sharma<br>5. Lalita Vatta<br>6. N K Singh<br>7. Prabhat Kumar Saha<br>8. Ravi Shankar Khatri<br>9. S Majhi<br>10. Shikha Misra<br>11. Md. Afjal Ahmad | 1. A. Ahmad<br>2. A. Sisodia<br>3. Jorben<br>4. Piyush Kant Rai<br>5. R A Meena<br>6. S P Goswami<br>7. S. K. Dubey<br>8. Santosh Kumar<br>9. V K Tripathi<br>10. Yogendra Pandey |
| 3            | North Eastern Regional Institute of Science & Technology (NERIST) | 1. Akhilesh Sharma<br>2. Geling Modi<br>3. Karuna Mahto<br>4. Mihir Paul<br>5. Mihir Ranjan Panda<br>6. Nitish Kumar<br>7. Pranjal Vishwakarma<br>8. Rajarshi Sen<br>9. Somila Hashunao<br>10. Tori Basar<br>11. Yogendra Mohan  | 1. Akhilesh Sharma<br>2. Geling Modi<br>3. Pranjal Vishwakarma<br>4. Rajarshi Sen<br>5. Somila Hashunao<br>6. Tori Basar<br>7. Yogendra Mohan<br>8. Yuma Narah  | 1. Karuna Mahto<br>2. Mihir Paul<br>3. Mihir Ranjan Panda<br>4. Nitish Kumar  |
| 4            | National Institute of Advanced Manufacturing                      | No nominations received  | 1. Rahul Mishra<br>2. Khushboo  | -   |

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|   | Technology (NIAMT), Ranchi  |   | 3. Shubhankar Basu  |   |
| 5 | Atal Bihari Vajpayee Indian Institute of Information Technology & Management (ABV-IIIT&M) Gwalior | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ankur Jaiswal</li> <li>2. Bhanu Chander</li> <li>3. Deepak Naik Jatoth</li> <li>4. Dheeraj Kodati</li> <li>5. Neelesh Yadav</li> <li>6. V Ramanjaneyulu Yannam</li> <li>7. Vijay Rao Kumbhare</li> <li>8. Pramod Kumar Singh</li> </ol>   | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ankur Jaiswal</li> <li>2. Bhanu Chander</li> <li>3. Deepak Naik Jatoth</li> <li>4. Dheeraj Kodati</li> <li>5. Neelesh Yadav</li> <li>6. V Ramanjaneyulu Yannam</li> <li>7. Vijay Rao Kumbhare</li> <li>8. Pramod Kumar Singh</li> </ol>   | -   |
| 6 | Indian Institute of Information Technology Design & Manufacturing, Kurnool                        | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Chandra Mohan. D</li> <li>2. Elangovan. K</li> <li>3. Harsha. V</li> <li>4. M. Kiran Reddy</li> <li>5. Pandiyarajan. T</li> <li>6. Pullarao. M</li> <li>7. Raju Nandi</li> <li>8. Ravikumar M</li> <li>9. Siva Prasad Valluri</li> <li>10. Sreenivasa Reddy. Y</li> </ol>                     | -   | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Chandra Mohan. D</li> <li>2. Elangovan. K</li> <li>3. Harsha. V</li> <li>4. M. Kiran Reddy</li> <li>5. Pandiyarajan. T</li> <li>6. Pullarao. M</li> <li>7. Raju Nandi</li> <li>8. Ravikumar M</li> <li>9. Siva Prasad Valluri</li> <li>10. Sreenivasa Reddy. Y</li> </ol> |
| 7 | National Institute of Technology, Agartala  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Debangana Das</li> <li>2. Kamal Das</li> <li>3. Litan Bhaumik</li> <li>4. Litan Dey</li> <li>5. Nitish Kumar Mahto</li> <li>6. Rajdeep Ghosh</li> <li>7. Rajdeep Paul</li> <li>8. Ravi Prakash</li> <li>9. Saurav Kumar</li> <li>10. Uttam Kumar Mohanty</li> <li>11. Vikash Singh</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Debangana Das</li> <li>2. Kamal Das</li> <li>3. Litan Bhaumik</li> <li>4. Litan Dey</li> <li>5. Nitish Kumar Mahto</li> <li>6. Rajdeep Ghosh</li> <li>7. Rajdeep Paul</li> <li>8. Ravi Prakash</li> <li>9. Saurav Kumar</li> <li>10. Uttam Kumar Mohanty</li> <li>11. Vikash Singh</li> </ol> | -   |
| 8 | Motilal Nehru National Institute of Technology, Allahabad   | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Abhijit Sadhu</li> <li>2. Aditya Anshul</li> <li>3. Anand Kumar Tripathi</li> <li>4. Banafsha Ahmed</li> <li>5. Jarapala Rayudu</li> <li>6. Jubil Joy</li> <li>7. K. Sowjanya</li> </ol>  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Abhijit Sadhu</li> <li>2. Aditya Anshul</li> <li>3. Banafsha Ahmed</li> <li>4. Jubil Joy</li> <li>5. K. Sowjanya</li> <li>6. Neelu</li> <li>7. Pilk Basumatary</li> <li>8. Piyush Kumar Gupta</li> </ol>  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Anand Kumar Tripathi</li> <li>2. Jarapala Rayudu</li> </ol>   |

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|    |  | 8. Neelu<br>9. Pilik<br>Basumatary<br>10. Piyush Kumar<br>Gupta<br>11. Prabal Pratap<br>Singh   | 9. Prabal Pratap<br>Singh   |  |
| 9  | Indian Institute of<br>Engineering Science<br>and Technology,<br>Shibpur | 1. Amit Biswas<br>2. Ankita<br>Pramanik<br>3. Dipankar<br>Mondal<br>4. Kush Kumar<br>Dewangan<br>5. Mouli<br>Majumdar<br>6. Mousumi<br>Mukherjee<br>7. Sudip Ghosh<br>8. Sunny Murmu<br>9. T. Nilavarasan<br>10. Urbashi Sarkar                       | 1. Amit Biswas<br>2. Ankita Pramanik<br>3. Dipankar<br>Mondal<br>4. Kush Kumar<br>Dewangan<br>5. Mouli Majumdar<br>6. Mousumi<br>Mukherjee<br>7. Sudip Ghosh<br>8. Sunny Murmu<br>9. T. Nilavarasan<br>10. Urbashi Sarkar | -  |
| 10 | Indian Institute of<br>Technology, Bombay                                | 1. Aditi Chaubal<br>2. Ambarish<br>Kunwar<br>3. Deepti Kaisi<br>4. Gurminder<br>Singh<br>5. Himashu<br>Bahirat<br>6. Nagendra Rao<br>Velaga<br>7. Rekha<br>Santhanam<br>8. S Krishna<br>9. Sadhana Dash<br>10. Swathy<br>Manohar<br>11. V Ramadesigan | 1. Aditi Chaubal<br>2. V Ramadesigan  | 1. Ambarish Kunwar<br>2. Deepti Kaisi<br>3. Gurminder Singh<br>4. Himashu Bahirat<br>5. Nagendra Rao<br>Velaga<br>6. Rekha Santhanam<br>7. S Krishna<br>8. Sadhana Dash<br>9. Swathy Manohar |
| 11 | IISER Pune   | 1. Anindya<br>Goswami<br>2. Parnika Kokate<br>3. Rahul Dehiya   | 1. Anindya<br>Goswami<br>2. Parnika Kokate<br>3. Rahul Dehiya   | -  |
| 12 | IIM Bangalore  | No nominations received   |   |  |
| 13 | Unidentified   | -   | 1. Tamal Ghosh<br>2. Rajendra Sahu  | -  |

| Affiliation Details   | Name of the Attendees   |
|---|---|
| Ministry Officials, Resource<br>Persons, Officials from NIEPA | 1. Mr. D. K. Sharma, Director, Department of Higher Education,<br>Ministry of Education |

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|  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>2. Dr. Jitendra Nagpal, Senior Psychiatrist &amp; Program Director, Expressions India</li><li>3. Ms Geeta Mehrotra, Faculty, University and School Life Skills, Mental Health and Wellbeing, Expressions India</li><li>4. Prof. Kumar Suresh, NIEPA</li><li>5. Prof. Shivakumar Kandekar, NIEPA</li><li>6. Prof. Abhishek Kumar Srivastava, IIT-BHU</li><li>7. Mr. Tushar Bansal, Student, IIT BHU</li><li>8. Prof. Shailender Swaminathan, Sapien Labs, KREA University</li><li>9. Ms. Richa Shrivastava, Consultant, D/o Higher Education</li></ol> |
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