

## **Record of Discussion of Online Session of Capacity Building Programme for Promoting Positive Mental Health, Resilience, and Wellbeing, held on 24.02.2026 at 10:00 AM**

1. The 38<sup>th</sup> online session of the Capacity Building Programme for Promoting Positive Mental Health, Resilience and Wellbeing was conducted on 24<sup>th</sup> February 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 63 participants joined the session out of which 55 were faculty members. The initiative continues to support the development of institutional ecosystems that are sensitive to student wellbeing, aligned with objectives of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. Till date, more than 2700 faculty members from more than 160 HEIs have participated in the programme.

2. Mr. D. K. Sharma, Director, Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education, opened the session by welcoming the participants on behalf of the Department. He noted that since its launch in April 2024, the initiative has engaged over 2700 faculty members, primarily from centrally funded institutions, with the aim of creating enabling campus environments that can serve as leadership models in their regions.

3. Highlighting the growing national and global concern around mental health, he cited data from the World Health Organisation and ongoing national surveys, judicial interventions, and task force reviews in higher education institutions. Mr. Sharma emphasised that the programme aligns with the National Education Policy, which calls for supportive and engaging learning environments. Stressing the central role of faculty as knowledge creators, he underlined that continuous faculty feedback has shaped programme interventions, ensuring relevance and impact.

4. Mr. Sharma acknowledged the guidance of senior mental health experts and introduced the resource persons and institutional practitioners who would share experiences and evidence during the session. The following resource persons were part of this session:

- ❖ Dr. Jitendra Nagpal, Senior Psychiatrist and Programme Director, Expressions India
- ❖ Ms. Geeta Mehrotra, Expressions India
- ❖ Prof. G. Amba Prasad Rao, NIT Warangal
- ❖ Dr. Neha Hejaz, NIT Warangal
- ❖ Prof. Shailender Swaminathan, Sapien Labs, KREA University

5. Dr. Jitendra Nagpal led an intensive, reflective, and interactive discussion on the purpose of education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, urging faculty to move beyond a narrow focus on academic and job-oriented skills towards holistic human development. He framed wellbeing as inseparable from everyday campus life, arguing that mental health is not an "add-on" but central to learning, relationships, and nation-building. Drawing on Indian and global research, including the World Health Organisation definition of mental health, he emphasised that wellbeing goes beyond the absence of illness and includes coping with life's stresses, realising one's abilities, and contributing meaningfully to the community. He linked this vision of the National Education Policy and the Sustainable Development Goals, underscoring that social-emotional learning and resilience are integral to education systems.

6. A key thread of the discussion was India's demographic dividend, with Dr. Nagpal cautioning that a large youth population can become a liability if emotional strength, resilience, and life skills are neglected. Through dialogue with faculty, he explored why premier institutions often witness higher stress and suicide rates, highlighting factors such as intense competition, loneliness within large campuses, high expectations from families, and a widening gap between IQ and emotional intelligence. He noted rising mental health challenges among Gen Z, exacerbated by excessive technology use, reduced interpersonal

communication, and lifestyle-related health risks, alongside alarming national data on youth distress and suicides.

7. Dr. Nagpal concluded by shifting the focus from problem diagnosis to solutions, advocating for a campus-wide culture of empathy, open dialogue, and prevention. He stressed that wellbeing should not be confined to clinics or counselling centres but embedded across institutional life through conversations, faculty-student engagement, family involvement, and innovative practices such as wellbeing clubs, workshops, and celebratory programmes. Emphasising early, preventive interventions (awareness and life skills) over crisis-driven responses, he called on faculty and institutions to actively co-create compassionate, supportive ecosystems where both students and teachers can thrive.

8. Ms. Geeta Mehrotra's session focused on the role of life skills as a foundation for mental wellbeing in higher education. She explained life skills as adaptive and positive behaviours that help individuals cope effectively with life's challenges, highlighting skills such as self-awareness, empathy, communication, decision-making, and managing stress and emotions. Emphasising that these skills are developed through continuous practice rather than acquired automatically, she encouraged participants to reflect on their own application of life skills and recognise their relevance for both personal wellbeing and student support.

9. A central theme of the discussion was the responsibility of faculty as role models in nurturing these skills among students. Ms. Mehrotra stressed that educators must practice the very life skills they seek to cultivate, thereby creating safe, supportive, and non-judgemental learning environments. She shared practical strategies for integrating life skills into everyday teaching, such as brief reflective exercises, group discussions, and the use of films or stories, without adding curricular burden. Participant reflections reinforced the need for a holistic educational approach that prioritises emotional wellbeing alongside academic learning.

10. Prof. G. Amba Prasad Rao, along with colleague Dr. Neha Hejaz, shared the evolution of wellbeing initiatives at the National Institute of Technology, Warangal, centred around the establishment of a Centre for Mental Health and Wellness in February 2024. The initiative, strongly supported by institutional leadership, adopts a holistic and ecosystem-based approach aligned with NEP 2020, addressing academic stress, residential campus pressures, digital overuse, parental expectations, and job-related anxieties. Key interventions include a formal mentor-mentee system, department-level faculty advisors for mental wellbeing, early identification of student distress, and integration of wellbeing themes into student orientation programmes. A major emphasis was placed on faculty preparedness, with structured training, exposure visits, and counselling workshops to ensure faculty model the behaviours and life skills expected of students.

11. The Centre at NIT Warangal has institutionalised partnerships, notably through an MoU with Heartfulness, enabling regular meditation and reflective practices for students and staff, alongside collaborations with organisations. Wellbeing activities are embedded into the academic calendar through observances like World Mental Health Day, national conclaves, and short-term faculty development programmes. Participants appreciated the model's scalability, highlighting the importance of impact assessment, continuous engagement, and recognition of wellbeing champions among students, faculty, and non-teaching staff. The discussion underscored the value of treating mental health not as a standalone service, but as a shared institutional responsibility, with NIT Warangal positioned as a potential mentor institution for neighbouring HEIs.

12. Prof. Shailender Swaminathan appreciated the sustained engagement under the Capacity Building Programme and reflected on the growing maturity of institutional wellbeing initiatives across HEIs. Drawing on global and India-specific data generated by Sapien Labs, he highlighted a significant and recent

decline in 'mind health' among adolescents and young adults, noting that this trend was not evident in earlier generations. Comparative longitudinal data showed that while youth earlier reported relatively higher wellbeing, today's 18-24 age group exhibits the lowest mind health scores, a pattern observed globally and more acutely in India. He emphasised the importance of viewing mental health as a continuum from distress to thriving, rather than a purely clinical condition.

13. He identified multiple contributing factors to declining youth mind health, including reduced family connectedness, early exposure to smartphones, ultra-processed diets, environmental toxins, neglect and abuse, and weakening engagement with spirituality. While acknowledging that educational institutions are not the root cause, he stressed that they are critical frontline actors with a responsibility to understand how students are faring. Prof. Swaminathan argued for adopting a quantitative, real-time, and evidence-based approach to assess student mind health and to evaluate which institutional interventions produce meaningful and sustained impact.

14. Concluding his remarks, he underlined the need to move beyond qualitative feedback towards actionable data insights that can guide institutional decision-making. He explained that real-time assessments can help institutions identify priority areas, measure the effectiveness of specific initiatives (such as meditation or wellbeing programmes), and tailor interventions accordingly. He also stressed the importance of sharing confidential mind health scores with students themselves, enabling self-awareness and engagement. Prof. Swaminathan expressed readiness to collaborate with HEIs to complement ongoing efforts and support the development of data-informed, scalable, and outcome-oriented wellbeing strategies.

15. The session concluded with a vote of thanks by Dr. Shivkumar 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	Central University of Jharkhand	1. Bhagawati Devi 2. Bishnu Mohan Jha 3. Hrishikesh Mahato 4. Jagdish Saurabh 5. Kalsang Wangmo 6. Kanojia Sindhuben Babulal 7. M. Ramakrishna Reddy 8. Mukesh Kumar Jaisawal 9. Pragyan Pushpanjali 10. Rabindranath Sarma 11. Rajanikant Pandey 12. Ratnesh Kumar Mishra 13. Shakir Tasnim 14. Sushant Kumar 15. Sushil Kumar Shukla 16. T. Neishoning Koireng 17. Venkata Naresh Burla 18. Vineet Kumar Agotiya	1. Bhagawati Devi 2. Bishnu Mohan Jha 3. Hrishikesh Mahato 4. Kalsang Wangmo 5. M. Ramakrishna Reddy 6. Mukesh Kumar Jaisawal 7. Pragyan Pushpanjali 8. Rabindranath Sarma 9. Rajanikant Pandey 10. Ratnesh Kumar Mishra 11. Sushant Kumar 12. Sushil Kumar Shukla 13. T. Neishoning Koireng 14. Venkata Naresh Burla 15. Vineet Kumar Agotiya	1. Jagdish Saurabh 2. Kanojia Sindhuben Babulal 3. Shakir Tasnim
2	Central University of Rajasthan	1. D Bhaagwan 2. Gajanan Zore 3. Jayesh Manohar Sonawane 4. Nithya Prem 5. Pragati Jain 6. Prakash Choudhary 7. Priyanka Bhaskar 8. Rajeev M M 9. Sanjib Kumar Patra	1. Jayesh Manohar Sonawane 2. Pragati Jain 3. Prakash Choudhary 4. Priyanka Bhaskar 5. Shaizy Ahmed	1. D Bhaagwan 2. Gajanan Zore 3. Nithya Prem 4. Rajeev M M 5. Sanjib Kumar Patra 6. Tulsee Giri

		10. Shaizy Ahmed 11. Tulsee Giri		
3	English & Foreign Languages University	1. Anumula Sreedevi 2. K. Lavanya 3. Kalplata 4. Md. Shahbuddin 5. Monishita Hajra Pande 6. Muthyala Udaya 7. S. Vishnupriya 8. Smita Joseph 9. T. Srivani 10. V. Raju Nayak 11. Venkatesh Vadithya	1. Anumula Sreedevi 2. K. Lavanya 3. Kalplata 4. Md. Shahbuddin 5. Monishita Hajra Pande 6. Muthyala Udaya 7. S. Vishnupriya 8. Smita Joseph 9. T. Srivani 10. V. Raju Nayak 11. Venkatesh Vadithya	-
4	Jawaharlal Nehru University	1. Alok Kumar Singh Jha 2. Ankur Yadav 3. Atrayee Saha 4. Neha Paras 5. Pankaj Thakur 6. Preeti Dahiya 7. Ramovatar Meena 8. Sakshi Sharma 9. Shubh Gupta 10. Sneha Bhagat 11. Sukalpa Chakrabarti 12. Vijender Singh	1. Ankur Yadav 2. Neha Paras 3. Sakshi Sharma 4. Shubh Gupta 5. Sneha Bhagat 6. Sukalpa Chakrabarti 7. Vijender Singh	1. Alok Kumar Singh Jha 2. Atrayee Saha 3. Pankaj Thakur 4. Preeti Dahiya 5. Ramovatar Meena
5	North Eastern Hill University	1. Babli Choudhury 2. Bhanita Das 3. Chandrakanta 4. Dean Students Welfare 5. Marco B Mitri 6. Mohd. Murtaza 7. Rajkumar Giridhari Singh 8. Rumi Rajbongshi 9. S. Purkayastha 10. Satya Prakash Pati 11. Sufal Das	1. Bhanita Das 2. Chandrakanta 3. Dean Students Welfare 4. Mohd. Murtaza 5. Rajkumar Giridhari Singh 6. Rumi Rajbongshi 7. S. Purkayastha 8. Satya Prakash Pati 9. Sufal Das	1. Babli Choudhury 2. Marco B Mitri
6	Indira Gandhi National Tribal University	1. Aarsh Ojas Parasar Pandey 2. Abhay Pratap Singh 3. Achun Rongmei 4. Deepti Jatatiya 5. Devnarayan 6. Lalit Kumar Mishra 7. Malti Lodhi	1. Achun Rongmei 2. Devnarayan 3. Malti Lodhi 4. HoD Psychology 5. Sneha Singh Munda	1. Aarsh Ojas Parasar Pandey 2. Abhay Pratap Singh 3. Deepti Jatatiya 4. Lalit Kumar Mishra 5. Pragyesh Kumar Mishra 6. Sabita Sahoo

		8. Pragyesh Kumar Mishra 9. Sabita Sahoo 10. Shivank Mani Tripathi 11. Sneha Singh Munda 12. HoD Psychology		7. Shivank Mani Tripathi
7	IIIT Tiruchirappalli	1. Assistant Registrar 2. G. Seetharaman 3. M. Ambika 4. M. Harsih Adhithya 5. N. Renugadevi 6. R. Dhanalakshmi 7. R. Krishnamurthy 8. Ravi Banoth 9. T. Sugirtha	1. M. Ambika	1. Assistant Registrar 2. G. Seetharaman 3. M. Harsih Adhithya 4. N. Renugadevi 5. R. Dhanalakshmi 6. R. Krishnamurthy 7. Ravi Banoth 8. T. Sugirtha
8	IIIT Pune, Maharashtra	1. Anagha Uday Khiste 2. Chandrakant Narayan Guled 3. Dipen Bepari 4. KM Divya Chaturvedi 5. Mahesh Joshi 6. Mohammad Akhlaqur Rahman 7. Priyank Jain 8. Shrikant Salve 9. Shubham Shukla 10. Sonam Maurya 11. Sumit Kumar Gupta	-	1. Anagha Uday Khiste 2. Chandrakant Narayan Guled 3. Dipen Bepari 4. KM Divya Chaturvedi 5. Mahesh Joshi 6. Mohammad Akhlaqur Rahman 7. Priyank Jain 8. Shrikant Salve 9. Shubham Shukla 10. Sonam Maurya 11. Sumit Kumar Gupta
9	Sardar Vallabhbhai National Institute of Technology, Surat	1. Abhishek Acharya 2. Aeidapu Mahesh 3. Alka A. Mungray 4. G. C. Jadeja 5. Jitesh T. Chavda 6. Manish K. Rathod 7. Sumit Khare 8. Suresh Kumar 9. Vineet Kumar Rathore 10. Vivek Garg 11. Yogesh D Patil	1. G. C. Jadeja 2. Vivek Garg	1. Abhishek Acharya 2. Aeidapu Mahesh 3. Alka A. Mungray 4. Jitesh T. Chavda 5. Manish K. Rathod 6. Sumit Khare 7. Suresh Kumar

				8. Vineet Kumar Rathore 9. Yogesh D Patil
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Affiliation Details	Name of the Attendees
Ministry Officials, Resource Persons, Officials from NIEPA	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Mr. D. K. Sharma, Director, Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education</li> <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. G. Amba Prasad Rao, NIT Warangal</li> <li>5. Dr. Neha Hejaz</li> <li>6. Prof. Shailender Swaminathan, Sapien Labs, KREA University</li> <li>7. Dr. Shivakumar Kandekar, NIEPA</li> <li>8. Ms. Richa Shrivastava, Consultant, Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education</li> </ol>