

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION  
DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION**

**RAJYA SABHA  
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 4187  
ANSWERED ON 01.04.2026**

**Rising student stress and competitive exam pressure**

4187 **Shri Kartikeya Sharma:**

Will the Minister of *Education* be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Government has taken note of the growing concerns regarding mental stress and burnout among students preparing for competitive examinations;
- (b) whether the Ministry is working with schools, universities and examination bodies to introduce structured counselling and mental health support systems for students; and
- (c) whether Government proposes to frame any national guidelines to promote a healthier academic environment and reduce extreme academic pressure among youth?

**ANSWER**

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION  
(DR. SUKANTA MAJUMDAR)

(a) to (c): In order to address unnecessary stress on students during important examinations and to eradicate practice of rote learning and memorization, National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020) provides greater flexibility, student choice, assessments that primarily test core capacities and further viable models of Board Exams that reduce pressure and eliminate coaching culture. Students have been facing the issue of appearing for multiple entrance examinations conducted by different universities / Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) separately to secure a seat in any of these institutions. For higher education, entrance examinations like CUET, JEE, NEET etc. are conducted based on learning level in core subjects studied in Board level examinations. JEE exams are conducted twice a year and student has option to appear in these examinations and the best of two results is considered. CUET, JEE and NEET are available in 13 languages for ease of students' comprehensibility.

Education is a subject in the concurrent list of the Constitution, with majority of schools and colleges falling under the administrative control and supervision of the respective State Government/UT administration. Ministry of Education, on its part, is guided by National Education Policy 2020 which emphasises the need to create awareness about students' mental health and wellbeing and to ensure that the learning environments are engaging and supportive. It inter alia provides for availability of professional and career counselling, and counselling system for handling stress and emotional adjustment.

The Ministry is taking a multi-pronged approach to provide psychological support to students, teachers, and families for mental and emotional wellbeing. The Ministry of Education's initiative Manodarpan covers a wide range of activities to provide psychological support through a national toll-free helpline. Manodarpan also provides Directory of Counsellors working at both School and College/University level on (<https://manodarpan.education.gov.in>) as a resource for students. Live interactive sessions with practicing counsellors- 'Sahyog', and webinars 'Paricharcha' are organised regularly on PM e-Vidya channels to create awareness about the importance of mental health among all stakeholders. The

themes of these discussions focus upon various stressors among students including peer pressure, bullying, cyberbullying, digital and substance addiction. Besides the above, M/o Health & Family Welfare has launched a "National Tele Mental Health Programme" (NTMHP) on 10th October 2022, to improve access to quality mental health counselling and care services in the country. As on 09.03.2026, 36 States/ UTs have set up 53 Tele MANAS Cells and have started tele mental health services. More than 34.50 lakh calls have been handled on the helpline number.

National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) has developed several resources such as handbooks, guides, activity books and advocacy material to augment capacity of teachers and school administrators for early identification and intervention with a focus on risk factors. The handbook titled "Early Identification and Intervention for Mental Health Concerns in School Going Children and Adolescents, 2024" available in the public domain at <https://manodarpan.education.gov.in>, draws from research on various mental health issues to equip teachers and allied stakeholders with the skills required to identify early warning signs of mental distress in students so as to build sensitivity among all stakeholders for early intervention.

NCERT also organises various national summits, consultative meets and capacity building programmes for training teachers as guidance functionary and to equip counsellors and practitioners for implementing the 'Whole School Approach' to facilitate mental and emotional well-being of students.

Further, with a view to augment the availability of trained counsellors all over India, more than 250 in-service school teachers, teacher educators, school administrators as well as untrained guidance personnel are trained annually through a Diploma Course in Guidance and Counselling (DCGC) offered by the Department of Education Psychology and Foundations of Education (DEPFE), NCERT.

Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), an autonomous body under the MoE has mandated the appointment of Counsellor & Wellness Teacher in every Secondary and Senior Secondary school affiliated with it in its Affiliation bye laws.

UGC has issued Guidelines for Promotion of Physical Fitness, Sports, Student's Health, Welfare, Psychological and Emotional Well-being at Higher Education Institutions in April 2023, which provide for promoting physical fitness and sports activities for students; creating safeguards against academic pressure, peer pressure, behavioral issues, stress, career concerns, depression and other issues on the mental health of students; to teach positive thinking & emotions in the student community; and to promote a positive and supportive network for students.

The Ministry of Education in July, 2023 has circulated a framework guideline on emotional and mental well-being of students in HEIs with request to take proactive measures to incorporate the same in the institutional functioning and instil a feeling of confidence in the student community. The guidelines emphasised counselling services, early distress identification, suicide prevention SOPs, student support networks, strengthened grievance redressal mechanisms, and periodic institutional review to ensure sustained effectiveness.

An Integrated approach for Promoting Positive Mental Health, Resilience, and Wellbeing has been conceptualized under the Malaviya Mission Teacher Training Programme. The goal is to empower faculty to address student mental health concerns for early intervention. Under this integrated approach, so far, more than 2,800 faculty from over 160 Centrally Funded Institutions have participated in 40 online capacity building sessions since May 2024. Annual National Wellbeing Conclaves are also

organized for Centrally Funded Institutions, which bring together institutional leaders, faculty, students, and mental health professionals to share best practices and strengthen campus wellbeing ecosystems.

At the institutional level, several HEIs are operationalising the framework through proactive, multi-layered models. For instance, IIT Kharagpur has implemented a comprehensive SETU (Support, Empathy, Transformation & Upliftment) framework, moving from reactive care to preventive, round-the-clock support. Adhering to the Ministry's guidelines, IIT Madras, IIT Delhi, IIT Guwahati, IIT Gandhinagar and IIT Roorkee have conducted workshops on Mental Wellness & Stress Management.

All IITs, IIMs, NITs and IIITs have put in place dedicated mental health or counselling centres within their campuses, staffed with full-time or visiting professional counsellors, clinical psychologists, and in some cases, psychiatrists. A large number of institutes often host mental health training sessions to raise awareness, reduce stigma, and educate students about mental health issues. These sessions cover topics such as stress management, coping strategies, and recognizing the signs of mental health issues. Some Institutes offers on/off-campus counseling services, where students can meet with mental health professionals. Many of these institutions have also operationalised mental-health screening mechanisms such as structured questionnaires and peer-assessment programmes, during student induction and at regular intervals.

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