

ITEM NO.1502

COURT NO.13

SECTION II-C

S U P R E M E C O U R T O F I N D I A
RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

Criminal Appeal No.1425/2025 @ SLP(Crl.)No.13324/2024

AMIT KUMAR & ORS.

Appellant(s)

VERSUS

UNION OF INDIA & ORS.

Respondent(s)

[HEARD BY : HON. J.B. PARDIWALA AND HON. R. MAHADEVAN, JJ.]
IA No. 208458/2024 - EXEMPTION FROM FILING O.T.

Date : 24-03-2025 This appeal was called on for pronouncement
of judgment today.

For Appellant(s) :

Mr. Mehmood Pracha, Adv.
Mr. R. H. A. Sikander, AOR
Mr. Jatin Bhatt, Adv.
Mr. Sanawar, Adv.
Mr. Kshitij Singh, Adv.
Ms. Nujhat Naseem, Adv.
Mr. Sikander, Adv.

For Respondent(s) : Mr. Brijender Chahar, A.S.G.
Ms. Mrinal Gopal Elker, AOR
Ms. Chhavi Khandelwal, Adv.
Ms. Shruti Verma, Adv.

Mr. Mukesh Kumar Maroria, AOR
Mr. Abhijit Pandove, Adv.
Mr. Amit Sharma Ii, Adv.
Mrs. Bani Dikshit, Adv.
Mr. Varun Chugh, Adv.
Mr. Gaurang Bhushan, Adv.

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CHANDRESHA
Date: 2025.03.24
19:46:04 IST
Reason:

Crl.A.No.1425/2025

Ms. Mrinal Gopal Elker, Adv.
Ms. Chhavi Khandelwal, Adv.
Mr. Aditya Chaudhary, Adv.

1. The Bench comprising Hon'ble Mr. Justice J.B. Pardiwala and Hon'ble Mr. Justice R.M. Mahadevan pronounced the judgment.
2. Leave granted.
3. The relevant portion of the signed reportable judgment is as under:-

"69. The recurring instances of student suicides in Higher Educational Institutions, including private educational institutions, serve as a grim reminder of the inadequacy and ineffectiveness of the existing legal and institutional framework in addressing mental health concerns of students on campuses and to prevent the students from taking the extreme step of committing suicides. These tragedies underscore the urgent need for a more robust, comprehensive, and responsive mechanism to address the various factors which compel certain students to resort to taking their own lives. In light of the concerns expressed above, a National Task Force to address the mental health concerns of students and prevent the commission of suicides in Higher Educational Institutions is being constituted and shall comprise of the following members:

- i. Justice S. Ravindra Bhat, Former Judge, Supreme Court of India, as the Chairperson;
- ii. Dr. Alok Sarin, Consultant Psychiatrist, Sitaram Bhartia Institute of Science & Research, New Delhi;
- iii. Prof. Mary E. John (retired), Former Director, Centre for Women's Development Studies, New Delhi;
- iv. Mr. Arman Ali, Executive Director, National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled People;
- v. Prof. Rajendar Kachroo, Founder, Aman Satya Kachroo Trust;
- vi. Dr. Aqsa Shaikh, Professor of the Department of Community Medicine in Hamdard Institute of Medical Sciences and Research, New Delhi;
- vii. Dr. Seema Mehrotra, Professor of Clinical Psychology, NIMHANS;
- viii. Prof. Virginus Xaxa, Visiting Professor at the Institute for Human Development (IHD), New Delhi;
- ix. Dr. Nidhi S. Sabharwal, Associate Professor, Centre for Policy Research in Higher Education, National University of Educational Planning and Administration, New Delhi;

x. Ms. Aparna Bhat, Senior Advocate (as *amicus curiae*).__

70. The following shall be the ex-officio members of this Task Force:

i. Secretary, Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education, Government of India;

ii. Secretary, Department of Social Justice & Empowerment, Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, Government of India;

iii. Secretary, Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India;

iv. Secretary, Department of Legal Affairs, Ministry of Law and Justice, Government of India.

71. We direct the Chief Secretaries of all the States/Union Territories to nominate a high ranking officer, not below the rank of Joint Secretary in the Department of Higher Education of the respective State/Union Territory, to act as the nodal officer on behalf of the respective State/Union Territory. We further direct all the concerned departments/authorities of the respective State/Union Territory to cooperate with the nodal officer concerned and furnish necessary information, data and assistance as may be sought by such nodal officer.

72. The Joint Secretary, Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education, Government of India shall act as the convener of the Task Force.

73. The Task Force includes representatives from diverse fields to ensure an interdisciplinary approach to tackling the issue of commission of suicides in Higher Educational Institutions.

74. The remit of this Task Force is to prepare a comprehensive report that includes:

i. Identification of the predominant causes which lead to commission of suicides by students: An examination of the various causes which lead to student suicides in Higher Educational Institutions, including but not limited to ragging, caste-based discrimination, gender-based discrimination, sexual harassment, academic pressure, financial burden, mental health related stigma, discrimination based on ethnicity, tribal identity, disability, sexual orientation, political views, religious belief or any other grounds.

ii. Analysis of Existing Regulations: A thorough assessment of the effectiveness of current laws, policies, and institutional frameworks applicable to

Higher Educational Institutions concerning ragging, caste-based and gender-based discrimination, sexual harassment, mental health support, support for students facing academic challenges, financial support to students in need of funds, etc. This analysis will evaluate whether these frameworks adequately address the challenges faced by students.

iii. Recommendations for Strengthening Protections:

Proposing necessary reforms to the existing legal and institutional frameworks to ensure stronger enforcement, accountability, and preventive measures. The Task Force shall also put forth recommendations to address existing gaps, create a more inclusive and supportive academic environment, and ensure equal opportunities for members of marginalized communities.

75. In the process of preparing its report, the Task Force shall have the authority to conduct surprise inspections of any Higher Educational Institution. Additionally, the Task Force shall be at liberty to make further recommendations beyond the specified mandate, wherever necessary, to ensure a holistic and effective approach towards addressing mental-health concerns of students and eliminating the incidence of suicides in Higher Educational Institutions. The Task Force is

requested to take into account the views and concerns of all stakeholders, including those of student unions, whether elected or nominated and other student representative bodies, wherever they exist. The Task Force is also requested to seek representation from and consult the governments of all the States and Union Territories. The Task Force may also consider obtaining the views of the different stakeholders by way of circulating a questionnaire and seeking written responses thereupon.

76. It is clarified that the term "Higher Educational Institution" is used broadly to cover all higher educational institutions, including government and private universities, deemed to be universities, government and private colleges, etc.

77. The Secretary, Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education; the Secretary, Department of Social Justice & Empowerment, Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment; the Secretary, Ministry of Women and Child Development; and the Secretary, Department of Legal Affairs, Ministry of Law and Justice, Government of India, shall collaborate with the Task Force and extend full cooperation by providing all necessary information, documents, and resources required by the Task Force to effectively carry out its mandate.

78. The Secretary, Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education, Government of India shall serve as the Member-Secretary of the Task Force. The Ministry of Education, Government of India shall be responsible for providing all necessary logistical support to facilitate the functioning of the Task Force. This shall include making arrangements for travel, accommodation, and secretarial assistance, as well as covering all related expenses of the Task Force members. The Ministry shall provide a sufficiently large office space to the Task Force for holding its meetings and also to enable the officials to carry on its day-to-day activities. Additionally, the Ministry shall provide an appropriate honorarium to the members in recognition of their contributions.

79. We also direct that the Central Government, the Governments of all the States/Union Territories and agencies thereof, and Universities shall extend their full and active cooperation to the Task Force and provide the requisite data, information and assistance, as may be necessary. In the case of delay, reluctance or neglect on part of the aforesaid bodies, the Task Force will be at liberty to approach this Court through the *amicus curiae* seeking remedial actions.

80. The Chairperson of the Task Force shall be at liberty to engage the services of any person for the purpose of providing

secretarial assistance in coordinating with the members of the Task Force, preparation of the interim and final report and for the smooth and effective discharge of any other responsibilities as may arise during the course of carrying out the mandate of the Task Force. This shall include the engagement of the services of Data Analysts and Research Assistants as may be necessary for the effective discharge of the mandate of the Task Force.

81. The Chairperson of the Task Force shall also be at liberty to constitute, after due consultation with the members of the Task Force, committees and sub-committees as may be required for the purpose of carrying out specific functions.

82. We direct the Union of India to deposit an amount of Rupees Twenty Lacs (Rs 20,00,000/-) with the Registry within two weeks from the date of this order as an outlay for the initial operations of the Task Force. The *amicus curiae* shall be at liberty to move an appropriate application seeking orders for disbursement of any additional funds, whenever necessary. We clarify that this amount is in addition to the financial and administrative responsibility of the Ministry of Education as described aforesaid.

83. The Task Force is requested to present an interim report

within four months from the date of this order. The final report shall be submitted preferably within eight months from the date of this order.

84. We treat this matter as part heard. The registry shall notify this matter after four months alongwith the interim report of the Task Force before this very Bench (J.B. Pardiwala and R. Mahadevan, JJ.) after obtaining appropriate orders from Honourable the Chief Justice of India."

3. The matter is part heard in terms of the signed reportable judgment.

(CHANDRESH)
ASTT. REGISTRAR-cum-PS

(POOJA SHARMA)
COURT MASTER (NSH)

(Signed reportable judgment is placed on the file)