



2025:DHC:7900-DB



* IN THE HIGH COURT OF DELHI AT NEW DELHI

Reserved on: 22nd August 2025
Pronounced on: 10th September 2025

+ **W.P.(C) 5438/2022, CM APPL. 16236/2022 & CM APPL. 41411/2023**

AMAN SATYA KACHROO TRUSTPetitioner

Through: Ms. Indira Unninayar with Ms.
Apoorv Agarwal, Advocates
with Petitioner in person.

versus

UNIVERSITY GRANTS COMMISSION AND ORSRespondents

Through: Mr. Manoj Ranjan Sinha with
Mr. Vishal Agrawal, Advocates
for UGC.
Mr. Yadhunandan Bansal, Mr.
Mr. Abdul Qadir, Advocates for
R-3 & R-4.

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+ **W.P.(C) 9263/2024, CM APPL. 37970/2024, CM APPL. 37971/2024
& CM APPL. 37972/2024**

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CORAM:
HON'BLE THE CHIEF JUSTICE
HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE ANISH DAYAL

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JUDGEMENT

ANISH DAYAL, J

1. These petitions have been filed by the petitioner/*Trust* seeking various reliefs in respect of management of the *National Ragging Prevention Programme*, which was originally run by the petitioner/*Trust* since 2012 and was discontinued since April 2022 when Respondent no.1/*University Grants Commission* (“*UGC*”) issued a fresh tender which culminated in the award of contract to Respondent No.3/*Centre for Youth Society* (‘*C4Y*’). While, the first tender, issued in December 2021, was challenged in *W.P.(C) 5438/2022*, during the pendency of the writ before this Court, a fresh tender dated 18th June 2024 had been issued, which was challenged in the subsequent *W.P.(C) 9263/2024*.

2. In *W.P.(C) 5438/2022*, petitioner seeks cancellation of the contract awarded to Respondent No.3/*Centre for Youth Society* (‘*C4Y*’) for managing and monitoring the *Anti-Ragging Programme*; a direction permitting the petitioner to continue to manage and monitor the said programme under *Rule 194 of the Government Financial Rules, 2017*; a direction to the *Mishra Committee* (earlier known as the *Raghavan Committee*) to submit a review report of the programme with recommendations for improvements in terms of the directions of the Supreme Court in order dated 08th May 2009; a direction to the *Central Vigilance Commission* to initiate a vigilance enquiry against the members



of the tender evaluation committee of Respondent No.1/ *UGC* for allegedly favouring Respondent No.3/*C4Y*; and a direction to the *National Human Rights Commission* to initiate an inquiry under Section 12(a)(ii) of the Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993, for destroying the ragging prevention programme meant to protect millions of students.

3. In *W.P.(C) 9263/2024*, the petitions seeks a direction to Respondent No.1/*UGC* to cancel its notice, advertisement and tender dated 18th June 2024 relating to the *National Ragging Prevention Programme* (“*impugned tender*”); a direction to Respondent No.2/Ministry of Education (“*MOE*”) to redraft the impugned tender confining it only to the management of the Call Centre; a direction to Respondent No.2/*MOE* to seek comments from the *Raghavan/Mishra Committee* on the management of the programme by respondent no.1/*UGC* in light of the directions of the Supreme Court; and a direction to stay the operation of the notice, advertisement and the impugned tender pending adjudication of *W.P.(C) 5438/2022*.

Case of the petitioner

4. The genesis of the controversy goes back to March 2009, when the Petitioner, *Prof. Rajendra Kachroo*, prepared a detailed and technology driven plan titled “*National Ragging Prevention Programme*”, aimed at eradicating ragging in higher educational institutions. The plan comprised four key components: *firstly*, a 24x7 nationwide *anti-ragging helpline*; *secondly*, a database of student and parent details collected through online affidavits at the time of admission; *thirdly*, a database of Anti-Ragging Committees and officials of nearly 50,000 colleges across the country; and



fourthly, a compliance and monitoring mechanism (‘CRM’) through a call centre-based platform for enforcement of anti-ragging regulations.

5. This plan was placed before the Supreme Court, which, by order dated 08th May 2009, in ***University of Kerala v. Council, Principals’ Colleges, Kerala & Ors.*** [Civil Appeal 887/2009], directed its implementation. The Court specifically mandated that the monitoring function be entrusted to a non-governmental agency. For ease of reference, *paragraph 2* of the said order is extracted below:

“2. Learned amicus curiae has submitted that the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, I consultation with UGC, MCI, AICTE and other similar regulatory bodies is in the process of setting up a central crisis-hotline and anti-ragging database in the manner suggested by Dr. Rajendra Kachroo to the Raghavan Committee and the UGC. The task of monitoring the database be given to a nongovernmental agency, to be immediately nominated by the Union of India to build confidence in the public and also to provide information of non-compliance to the regulatory bodies and to the Raghavan Committee. The database shall be created out of affidavits affirmed by each student and his/her parents/guardians, which affidavits shall be stored electronically, and shall contain the details of each student. The database shall also function as a record of ragging complaints received, and the status of the action taken thereon.”

(emphasis added)

6. Pursuant to the aforesaid directions, UGC framed the “*UGC Regulations on Curbing the Menace of Ragging in Higher Educational Institutions, 2009*”, and all other regulatory authorities including All India Council for Technical Education (*AICTE*), Dental Council of India (*DCI*),



Medical Council of India (**MCI**), National Council for Teacher Education (**NCTE**), Bar Council of India (**BCI**) and (Indian Council of Agricultural Research (**ICAR**) amended their respective regulations so as to arrive at a uniform framework. The definition of ‘ragging’ was amended to include any form of mental or physical violence in a college campus between two students, regardless of seniority.

7. Believing that his task was complete, the petitioner stepped away, having secured uniform regulations and orders of the Supreme Court. The responsibility of implementation thereafter lay with the Union of India and its agencies.

8. From June 2009 and December 2011, Respondent No.2/MOE engaged four companies, namely *EdCIL (India) Ltd.*, *Caretel Ltd.*, *Planet-e-Com Ltd.*, and *DRS Ltd.*, for implementing the programme. These entities, however, failed to effectively operationalise it owing to lack of technical capacity and coordination. This failure drew criticism in Parliament and in the media, undermining the very objective of the Supreme Court’s directions.

9. The fragility of the system was starkly revealed in December 2010 when a student, Abhishek of SRM University, Ghaziabad, lost his life allegedly due to ragging, bringing into focus the deficiencies of the programme. His parents alleged that despite repeated complaints to the *anti-ragging helpline*, no action was taken. The matter was taken to the National Human Rights Commission (**NHRC**), which admitted the petition as *Case No. 5695/30/0/2010* dated 15th December 2010. Upon investigation, NHRC concluded that the *anti-ragging helpline* was not



functioning effectively as mandated by the Supreme Court and UGC regulations.

10. Consequent to the NHRC report, the overall management of the *Anti-Ragging Programme* was transferred from *EdCIL (India) Ltd.* to UGC. *DRS Ltd.* was replaced by the petitioner at an annual fee of Rs. 50 lakhs, effective from January 2012. Eventually, *Caretel Ltd.* and *Planet-e-Com Ltd.* were also disengaged, and their work was transferred to the petitioner, without any increase in the fee.

11. Since the companies earlier engaged by respondent no.2/Union of India (**UOI**) had failed to develop the required software, the petitioner developed the same at his own cost and provided it to the programme free of charge. He further bore the expenses for certain hardware and cloud services, including server and e-mail services, amounting to approximately Rs. 8 lakhs per year. The petitioner retained exclusive rights over the software, which had no alternative equivalent.

12. From 2012 onwards, the petitioner has been continuously engaged, initially through nomination pursuant to the orders of the Supreme Court, thereafter through a competitive selection process in 2013, and subsequently by way of single-source procurement under *Rule 194* of the *General Financial Rules, 2017*. UGC committees, in meetings held in April and May 2015, specifically recorded the satisfactory performance of the petitioner and recommended yearly extensions on that basis.

13. Under the joint management of UGC and petitioner, the *Anti-Ragging Programme* achieved significant success. Ragging incidents, estimated at 40% of students in 2009, reduced to less than 5% by 2020,



with several regions and institutions becoming ragging-free. Confidential surveys conducted year-wise demonstrated this decline, which is extracted as under:

Year	Students in the Survey	Mild (%)	Severe (%)	Very Severe (%)	Ragging Happened (%)
2019	13,16,668	3.14	0.46	0.63	4.22
2018	15,03,589	3.43	0.5	0.67	4.59
2017	21,47,601	3.38	0.44	0.63	4.45
2016	19,37,887	3.59	0.48	0.67	4.74
2015	10,05,688	5.02	0.75	0.99	6.75
2014	4, 14,692	8.11	1	1.26	10.36

Impugned Tender

14. In June 2021, a public interest litigation being ***W.P.(C) 2131/2021*** was filed before this Court, alleging irregularities in petitioner's appointment. During the pendency of that petition, UGC stated that it would withdraw the nomination of the petitioner and issue a fresh tender.

15. In December 2021, UGC issued a fresh tender for selection of a non-governmental agency to manage and monitor the *Anti-Ragging Programme*. The tender process culminated in the award of the contract to *C4Y Society*. The petitioner was directed to hand over the programme to respondent no.3/*C4Y* by 01st April 2022. This was challenged by petitioner in ***W.P.(C) 5438/2022*** before this Court.

16. During the pendency of ***W.P.(C) 5438/2022***, UGC issued a fresh tender dated 18th June 2024 for "*Selection of an entity for operation of a contact centre to redress the complaints of Ragging & Racial Discrimination received from students of Higher Educational Institutions.*"



17. The grievance of the petitioner is that the June 2024 tender is substantially an extension of the December 2021 tender, and unless stayed, the challenge in ***W.P.(C) 5438/2022*** would be rendered infructuous.

18. The contention of the petitioner is that the eligibility criteria prescribed therein are arbitrary and discriminatory, specifically designed to exclude the petitioner. The impugned conditions include: (i) a turnover requirement of *Rs. 2 crores* in the last two years; (ii) limitation of eligibility to private limited/limited companies and PSUs (thereby excluding Trusts); and (iii) disqualification of entities involved in litigation against UGC.

19. It is further contended by the petitioner that the tender undermines the Supreme Court-approved scheme by eliminating the principle of “*independent monitoring*”. The impugned tender provides for a single entity to manage both the helpline and compliance functions, thereby collapsing the separation of roles that was integral to the original design and which served as a safeguard against conflicts of interest and non-compliance.

20. Petitioner submits that the *National Ragging Prevention Programme (NRPP)* covers approximately 20 million students across nearly 50,000 colleges in India, and that the impugned tender would compromise the protection of student rights, waste public funds, and dilute the safeguards mandated by the Supreme Court for effective prevention of ragging and racial discrimination in higher educational institutions.

Submissions by petitioner

21. At the outset, petitioner submits that the present proceedings arise from a grave and deepening crisis afflicting the Indian education system,



cutting across primary, secondary, and higher educational levels. The gravity of the situation is reflected not only in the alarming statistics concerning student suicides and psychological distress, but also in the systemic failures of institutional and regulatory mechanisms meant to safeguard student welfare.

I. Statistical Evidence of Student Distress and Suicides

22. Petitioner has placed on record comprehensive data derived from the National Crime Records Bureau (*NCRB*), the All-India Survey on Higher Education (*AISHE*), the National Medical Commission (*NMC*) 2024 survey, and reports of various central institutions, to demonstrate the following disturbing trends:

- (a) Over *13,000 student* suicides annually, surpassing farmer suicides (11,000) in number.
- (b) A *4% annual increase* in student suicides, which is double the national suicide growth rate (2%).
- (c) *98 suicides* across central higher educational institutions between 2019 to 2023, including *11 suicides in IITs in a single year*.
- (d) In medical colleges, *122 suicides and 1,166 dropouts* between 2018 to 2023; further, *31% of surveyed postgraduate* students reported suicidal ideation.
- (e) Between 2019 to 2023, *33,979 dropouts were reported from central institutions*, out of which over *16,000 belonged to SC/ST/OBC backgrounds*, pointing towards structural discrimination.
- (f) The NCERT *Manodarpan* survey of *3.79 lakh school children* revealed that *81% reported stress, 34% tearfulness, and 27% loneliness*.



23. Petitioner submits that these figures reveal a systemic and multi-level crisis. Student suicide, far from being an isolated personal tragedy, signals an alarming structural failure where hundreds of others in the same educational ecosystem suffer comparable distress.

24. While the UGC 2009 Anti-Ragging Regulations had succeeded in reducing ragging from nearly 40% in 2009 to below 5% in 2020, the trend has resurged since 2022. Ragging complaints escalated from **858 in 2022** to **962 in 2023** to **1,084 in 2024**, with ragging-related deaths more than doubling post-2022. The Supreme Court has also observed that beyond enforcement of existing guidelines, new measures are required to ensure psychological support to victims, thereby preventing extreme steps such as suicide.

II. UGC's Arbitrary Policy Shift: Nomination to Tender

25. Petitioner states that the resurgence of ragging and the collapse of the *National Ragging Prevention Programme (NRPP)* can be directly attributed to the UGC's arbitrary shift from a nomination-based model (*earlier mandated by this Court and proven effective*) to a tender-based model, which has demonstrably failed.

26. It is submitted that this shift is unconstitutional, arbitrary and violative of Article 14 of the Constitution of India, 1950. Reliance was placed on *Union of India v. International Trading Co.*, (2003) 5 SCC 437, wherein it was held:

15. While the discretion to change the policy in exercise of the executive power, when not trammelled by any



statute or rule is wide enough, what is imperative and implicit in terms of Article 14 is that a change in policy must be made fairly and should not give the impression that it was so done arbitrarily or by any ulterior criteria. The wide sweep of Article 14 and the requirement of every State action qualifying for its validity on this touchstone irrespective of the field of activity of the State is an accepted tenet. The basic requirement of Article 14 is fairness in action by the State, and non-arbitrariness in essence and substance is the heartbeat of fair play. Actions are amenable, in the panorama of judicial review only to the extent that the State must act validly for a discernible reason, not whimsically for any ulterior purpose. The meaning and true import and concept of arbitrariness is more easily visualized than precisely defined. A question whether the impugned action is arbitrary or not is to be ultimately answered on the facts and circumstances of a given case. A basic and obvious test to apply in such cases is to see whether there is any discernible principle emerging from the impugned action and if so, does it really satisfy the test of reasonableness.

(emphasis added)

27. Petitioner contends that UGC falsely represented that this Court had directed the shift to a tender mechanism, whereas no such ruling exists. It is said that the decision disregards the *General Financial Rules 2017*, which permits nomination for ongoing, successful projects. Similar tendering failures between 2009 to 2012 had already demonstrated the impracticability of such a mechanism. By so acting, UGC has not only violated public interest but also misled this Court, thereby compromising judicial authority itself.



28. The petitioner is aggrieved by the decision of UGC/respondent no.1 to select respondent no. 3/*C4Y Society* and respondent no.4/*SSS Society* to manage and monitor the *National Ragging Prevention Programme (NRPP)* *inter alia* on the grounds that the process of revaluation of the technical proposals were vitiated by *mala fide*, *C4Y Society* is a proxy/cover to facilitate back door entry of respondent no.4/*SSS Society*, *C4Y Society* does not have the required experience, expertise, technology, infrastructure and human resources to implement the Programme, nothing is known about respondent no.4/*SSS Society* (*it cannot be traced physically at its address, not on google and not registered with NITI Aayog*).

29. It was further submitted that respondent no. 3/*C4Y Society* had not fulfilled six most important qualifying requirements that concern the Programme, *inter alia*, (i) Helpline management, (ii) Data management, (iii) Call centre software, (iv) Over all experience, (v) Human resources and overall software to monitor and manage the Programme and yet it had not been disqualified. Each of these aspects, the petition details out the facts and circumstances to substantiate the petitioner's contention.

Submissions by Respondent no.1/UGC

30. It was submitted on behalf of the respondents that from January 2012 till 31st March 2022, petitioner was entrusted with the responsibility of managing the *Anti-Ragging Programme* as the monitoring committee. However, in compliance with the affidavit filed by the UGC before this Court, a fresh tender was floated in 2021 in accordance with *General*



Financial Rules 2017 and 2019, wherein respondent no. 3/C4Y was declared successful. The selection of respondent no. 3/C4Y was on account of its cost-effective bid, which is consistent with the rationale underlying tender processes, namely, to identify the most suitable vendor at the most competitive cost.

31. It is urged that the petitioner is essentially aggrieved by the fact that respondent no. 3/C4Y, through a highly competitive financial bid, offered an amount nearly Rs. 20,00,000/- lower than that quoted by the petitioner.

32. Petitioner cannot claim any monopoly to run the *Anti-Ragging Programme* under the garb of the order dated 08th May 2009. The decision to call for fresh tenders is a matter of policy, and cannot be questioned by the petitioner, who, having voluntarily participated in the process, is estopped from challenging the outcome. The tender notice of December 2021 was issued by respondent no.1/UGC strictly in compliance with the affidavit filed in ***W.P.(C) 2131/2021***, which itself was disposed of as infructuous on 26th April 2022, once UGC had satisfied the grievance raised therein.

33. It is contended that it is a settled principle of law that mere participation in a tender process does not vest any right in favour of the participants, and the evaluation by the tender committee is binding unless arbitrariness or *mala fides* are established. Reliance was placed on ***Jagdish Mandal v. State of Orissa*** (2007) 14 SCC 517, wherein the Supreme Court has categorically held that tender evaluation and award of contracts are



commercial functions, and judicial review ought not to be exercised merely to protect private interest. Relevant paragraph is extracted as under:

“22. Judicial review of administrative action is intended to prevent arbitrariness, irrationality, unreasonableness, bias and mala fides. Its purpose is to check whether choice or decision is made “lawfully” and not to check whether choice or decision is “sound”. When the power of judicial review is invoked in matters relating to tenders or award of contracts, certain special features should be borne in mind. A contract is a commercial transaction. Evaluating tenders and awarding contracts are essentially commercial functions. Principles of equity and natural justice stay at a distance. If the decision relating to award of contract is bona fide and is in public interest, courts will not, in exercise of power of judicial review, interfere even if a procedural aberration or error in assessment or prejudice to a tenderer, is made out. The power of judicial review will not be permitted to be invoked to protect private interest at the cost of public interest, or to decide contractual disputes. The tenderer or contractor with a grievance can always seek damages in a civil court. Attempts by unsuccessful tenderers with imaginary grievances, wounded pride and business rivalry, to make mountains out of molehills of some technical/procedural violation or some prejudice to self, and persuade courts to interfere by exercising power of judicial review, should be resisted. Such interferences, either interim or final, may hold up public works for years, or delay relief and succour to thousands and millions and may increase the project cost manifold.....”

(emphasis added)



34. Respondents state that petitioner willingly participated in the bidding process and later the petitioner cannot bring baseless grounds for questioning the very procedure of the tender process.

35. Furthermore, it is trite law that the authority floating the tender is the best judge of its requirements and of the interpretation of its tender documents. The Supreme Court in ***Silppi Construction Contractors v. Union of India*** 2019 SCC OnLine SC 1133 has held that Courts must adopt minimal interference in tender matters and accept the interpretation of the tendering authority unless perversity or *mala fides* are demonstrated. Relevant paragraph is extracted as under:

“20. The essence of the law laid down in the judgments referred to above is the exercise of restraint and caution; the need for overwhelming public interest to justify judicial intervention in matters of contract involving the State instrumentalities; the courts should give way to the opinion of the experts unless the decision is totally arbitrary or unreasonable; the court does not sit like a court of appeal over the appropriate authority; the court must realise that the authority floating the tender is the best judge of its requirements and, therefore, the court's interference should be minimal. The authority which floats the contract or tender, and has authored the tender documents is the best judge as to how the documents have to be interpreted. If two interpretations are possible then the interpretation of the author must be accepted. The courts will only interfere to prevent arbitrariness, irrationality, bias, mala fides or perversity. With this approach in mind we shall deal with the present case.”

(emphasis added)



36. Present tender document under ***Schedule 7*** clearly provides for a transparent marking scheme, wherein technical evaluation carried a weightage of 30% and the price bid carried a weightage of 70%. For ease of reference the said schedule is extracted as under:

***“Schedule 7
Marking Scheme for Tender Evaluation
Tender Evaluation Procedures, Criteria and Marking Scheme
1. Marking Scheme for Tender Evaluation*”**

The UGC will use a Marking Scheme to assess the tenders. The weighted technical score will carry a weight of 30% as against a weighting of 70% for weighted price score. The overall passing mark for technical assessment is 50 before applying the 30% weighting for the weighted technical score. A Tenderer failing to obtain the passing mark of 5 for criterion 3 or 4, or the passing mark of 4 for any of criteria 5 to 7, or the overall passing mark, its tender will not be considered further. Upon completion of the technical assessment, the price information will be evaluated. A tender with the highest combined score combining the weighted price score and the weighted technical score will normally be recommended for acceptance.”

37. After technical evaluation, both petitioner and respondent no. 3/C4Y were found eligible, with petitioner securing 96 marks and respondent no. 3 securing 95 marks. Upon opening of financial bids on 31st January 2022, respondent no. 3/C4Y emerged as the successful bidder with the highest combined weighted score, its financial bid being Rs. 42,00,000/- per annum, was found considerably lower than that of the Petitioner at Rs. 62,92,440/- per annum.

38. Petitioner was fully aware of the evaluation formula and marking scheme, which formed part of the tender document itself. Having willingly



participated in the bidding process and having raised no objection at the relevant time, the petitioner cannot now turn around and seek cancellation of the contract merely on account of being unsuccessful.

39. The settled law, as reiterated in *Montecarlo Ltd. v. NTPC Ltd.* (2016) 15 SCC 272 and *State of Punjab v. Mehar Din* (2022) 5 SCC 648, mandates judicial restraint in tender matters unless substantial public interest or *mala fides* are established. In the present case, no such allegation is either proved or substantiated.

40. The entire tender process was conducted online, in a transparent and objective manner, through the *e-Uniwizarde Portal*. The complaint filed by the petitioner on 01st February 2022 was duly examined by the UGC's *Anti-Ragging Cell*, which categorically concluded that the selection process was transparent and without any manual interference.

41. Upon re-evaluation as well, the Technical Evaluation Committee affirmed that respondent no. 3/C4Y possessed the requisite technical competence and that the allegations raised by the Petitioner were wholly unsubstantiated. The successful tenderer has already assumed its duties and has been submitting periodic progress reports without any hindrance in performance.

42. With respect to the contention of consortium participation, it is submitted that *Clause 19* of the Tender Document itself expressly permits consortiums subject to a prior declaration of roles and responsibilities, which respondent no. 3/C4Y has duly complied with. Hence, the allegation of a “*backdoor entry*” of Respondent No. 4 is wholly misconceived. For ease of reference the said clause is extracted as under:



“19. The Tenderer shall be an Indian NGO/NGA. Consortium is allowed. In case of a consortium the roles and responsibilities of the partners should be clearly declared in advance in application of the technical bid. Prime NGO/NGA will be decided by UGC by analyzing the technical bid & role & responsibility to be performed by the consortium.”

43. Respondent further states that awarding the tender to the petitioner, despite another competent entity being willing to execute the same work at a much lower cost, would not only be unreasonable but also contrary to public interest and that the present Petition is, therefore, nothing but an attempt by the petitioner to create roadblocks in the smooth functioning of the *Anti-Ragging Programme*, which otherwise operates in the larger public interest.

Analysis

44. The Court has heard the submissions of the petitioner and respondent no.1/UGC that are already synopsised above. The focus of petitioner’s counsel *Ms. Indira Unninayar* and of *Prof. Rajendra Kachroo*, the petitioner himself, who made substantial submissions before the Court, was essentially to underscore the deep concern of the student suicides arising out of ragging incidents, harassment, bullying, discrimination and alienation. *Prof. Rajendra Kachroo* is an academician and founder of the petitioner/*Trust*, an NGO, named “*Aman Satya Kachroo Trust*”.

45. *Prof. Rajendra Kachroo* did not have to press this aspect beyond a point considering that the Court itself has taken judicial notice of frequent news report of student suicides. In fact, even while the matter was pending



before the Court, three more student suicides including at *IIT Kharagpur* were reported in the news. The reports also mentioned that the support system was not functioning effectively, and possibly, the distressed student did not have any accessible lifeline to turn to.

46. It so happened that about this time, while proceedings were pending before this Court, issues of mental health and student suicides at higher educational institutions was being deliberated and dealt with by the Supreme Court in *Amit Kumar & Ors. v. Union of India* 2025 SCC Online SC 631. The deliberations before the Apex Court have been recorded in their successive orders, and the directions eventually issued have a bearing on the disposal of these petitions. This is further elaborated as under:

I. The Supreme Court's observations and Constitution of the National Task Force

47. The Supreme Court in its observation in *Amit Kumar & Ors. v. Union of India* (*supra*), underscored the systemic failures of educational institutions to address discrimination, harassment, and mental health concerns, which has led to repeated instances of student suicides. It emphasised the collective responsibility of institutions and society to foster a culture of sensitivity, accountability, and timely intervention. The Supreme Court therefore directed the constitution of the *National Task Force*. Relevant paragraphs are extracted as under:

“67. The nation has already suffered the tragic loss of numerous students - young individuals with immense potential who could have gone on to become successful professionals. However, due to the absence of adequate



institutional support, they were driven to take the extreme step of ending their own lives. These distressing incidents not only highlight systemic failures but also expose a severe lack of institutional empathy and accountability on the part of educational institutions. When academic environments fail to address discrimination, harassment, and mental health concerns effectively, they contribute to a culture of neglect that can have devastating consequences.

68. As a society, and as stakeholders in shaping the future of our youth, we must take collective responsibility to ensure that no more lives are lost due to apathy or indifference. It is imperative for institutions to have a culture of sensitivity and proactive intervention so that every student feels safe, supported, and empowered to pursue their aspirations without fear or discrimination.

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. Virginius 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.”

(emphasis added)

48. The petitioner has also been nominated as a member of the *National Task Force* presumably in recognition of his ability to contribute empirical data and experiential insights to assist the Supreme Court in this exercise.

49. Furthermore, in *Amit Kumar & Ors. v. Union of India* (*supra*), the Supreme Court, guided by the constitutional values of dignity, equality and the right to life under Article 21 of the Constitution of India envisaged the *National Task Force* not merely as an administrative body, but as an instrument of systemic reform and inclusivity in academic spaces. Its remit extends to identifying the socio-economic, cultural, institutional and psychological factors contributing to student suicides; evaluating the adequacy of current laws, policies and institutional practices; and recommending comprehensive reforms to ensure accountability and create safe, non-discriminatory learning environments.

50. Relevant directions of the Supreme Court outlining the scope, functions and responsibilities of the *National Task Force*, including its power to conduct inspections, consult stakeholders, engage experts,



constitute sub-committees, and submit interim and final reports within a time-bound framework, are extracted as under:

“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.”

(emphasis added)

51. At this juncture, having regard to the directions issued by the Supreme Court, this Court does not find it necessary to delve into the larger issues raised by the petitioner concerning the efficacy of existing regulations or recommendation for strengthening protections, as these aspects are already under active consideration in ***Amit Kumar & Ors. v. Union of India*** (*supra*). Such issues require a robust institutional process to examine systemic failures in regulatory and administrative mechanisms intended to safeguard student welfare.

52. In terms of the aforesaid directions, the *National Task Force*, of which the petitioner himself is a member, has been mandated by the Supreme Court to submit an interim report within ‘*four months*’, and a final report within ‘*eight months*’ from the date of the judgement, i.e. 24th March 2025. Subsequently in order dated 06th May 2025, the Supreme Court while considering the matter on Office Report, noted with concern that further incidents of student suicides had been reported, including one at *IIT*



Kharagpur and another in Kota. The Court reiterated that “This is one of those unfortunate suicides by a student for which we have constituted the task force to work on the various issues relating to students suicide.”

II. Tender Dispute, Role of UGC and Court’s Limited Interference

53. As regards the specific issue of the impugned tender/work order, this Court deems it appropriate to not delve into the said issue, particularly since the current tender is due to be expire on 31st December 2025 and has been in subsistence since 2022. It is reasonably assumed by this Court that the tender process will be reviewed by the agencies responsible for its monitoring, and that the conditions of engagement shall be examined, assessed, and appropriately addressed taking assistance and guidance from the recommendations of the *National Task Force*.

54. Towards the tail end of proceedings before this Court, *Prof. Rajendra Kachroo*, highlighted the antagonistic stand of the respondent no.1/*UGC* in respect of services rendered by the Trust and stated that the Trust had not even been paid the amount due, which had severely constrained the Trust. Despite the *services* offered by *Prof. Rajendra Kachroo* having single-handedly crystalized and accelerated the *Anti-Ragging Movement*, the resistance of respondent no.1/*UGC* was surprising. It was contended that the larger public interest and the crying need for a robust and effective functional *Anti-Ragging Programme* seemed to be lost on respondent no.1/*UGC*, who was merely interested in justifying its tender process without evaluating its efficacy.

55. However, pursuant to Court’s order dated 8th August 2025, counsel for the respondent no.1/*UGC* handed over to the Court a sanction



order dated 20th August 2025 under the signature of the Under Secretary, UGC, confirming the sanction of payment of Rs.12,73,110/- to *M/s Aman Satya Kachroo Trust* and directions that the sum be paid through e-payment mode to the said Trust.

56. In light of his submissions that the Trust had been managing the *Anti-Ragging Programme* prior to it being awarded to respondent no.3/C4Y, and that the matter is now being looked into and the issues are being considered by the *National Task Force* appointed by orders of the Supreme Court in *Amit Kumar & Ors. v. Union of India* (*supra*), *Prof. Kachroo* made an offer on behalf of the Trust that the petitioner/*Trust* was willing to undertake monitoring the database of the *Anti-Ragging Programme* without charging any fees.

57. He sought to reiterate that the respondent no.1/*UGC* in the past had misquoted and misused the consent which was obtained from this High Court in a Public Interest Litigation in *W.P.(C) 2131/2021* vide order dated 26th April 2022, and based on such false and incomplete information, they had used the direction passed by this Court to float the tender and award it to respondent no.3/C4Y.

58. Considering that the order dated 26th April 2022 in *W.P.(C) 2131/2021* was never challenged, this Court is not inclined to interfere with the continuing affairs pursuant to the said tender. More so, since counsel for UGC has made a categorical submission that the said work order provided to respondent no.3/C4Y, under the impugned tender, shall expire on 31st December 2025.



59. Without going into the merits of the submissions made on behalf of the petitioner/*Trust* and the respondent no.1/*UGC* in Court and without entering into the controversy, this Court is not inclined to curtail the ongoing work by respondent no.3/*C4Y* at the tail end of the contract.

60. As stated above, the issues raised by the petitioner/*Trust* in relation to the ‘*ham handed*’ and ‘*lackadaisical approach*’, role of respondent no.1/*UGC* and that of respondent no.3/*C4Y* in conducting a dysfunctional *Anti-Ragging Programme*, as evident from the data showing increased incidents in the past few years of student suicide, the Court is sanguine that these aspects will be highlighted, underscored and asserted by *Prof. Rajendra Kachroo* as part of the *National Task Force* set up by the Supreme Court.

61. The Court is also hopeful and optimistic that these aspects, which form part of a larger set of issues and are plaguing the *Anti-Ragging Programme*, will be considered by the *National Task Force*. Based on the recommendations of the *National Task Force* the concerns of the petitioner in relation to the *Anti-Ragging Programme* which is being conducted by respondent no.1/*UGC* will also hopefully be addressed and, if necessary, rectified in order to align it with the interest of all the stake holders.

62. The Court has already observed that it is deeply concerned with the issue of student suicides which are becoming more frequent, and that urgent steps need to be taken, as also underscored by the Supreme Court in *Amit Kumar & Ors. v. Union of India* (*supra*) and being monitored by the Supreme Court. To put in place robust, efficient, and effective processes and programmes to address the issue, at the very least, a proper functional



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and effective *Anti-Ragging Helpline* is certainly an immediate and utmost necessity. This can brook no delay lest we lose more young lives to this scourge.

63. Accordingly, both these petitions stand disposed of. Pending applications are rendered infructuous.

64. Judgement be uploaded on the website of this Court.

(ANISH DAYAL)
JUDGE

(DEVENDRA KUMAR UPADHYAYA)
CHIEF JUSTICE

SEPTEMBER 10, 2025/ak/tk