



Strengthening Mental Health Infrastructure and Expanding Advanced Care Discussed at Post-Budget Webinar 2026

Establishment of NIMHANS-2 and Strengthening of Existing Mental Health Institutions to Enhance Advanced Clinical Care, Training Capacity, Research and Innovation in Neurosciences

Strengthening Mental Health Continuum of Care through Digital Health Integration and Follow-up Systems

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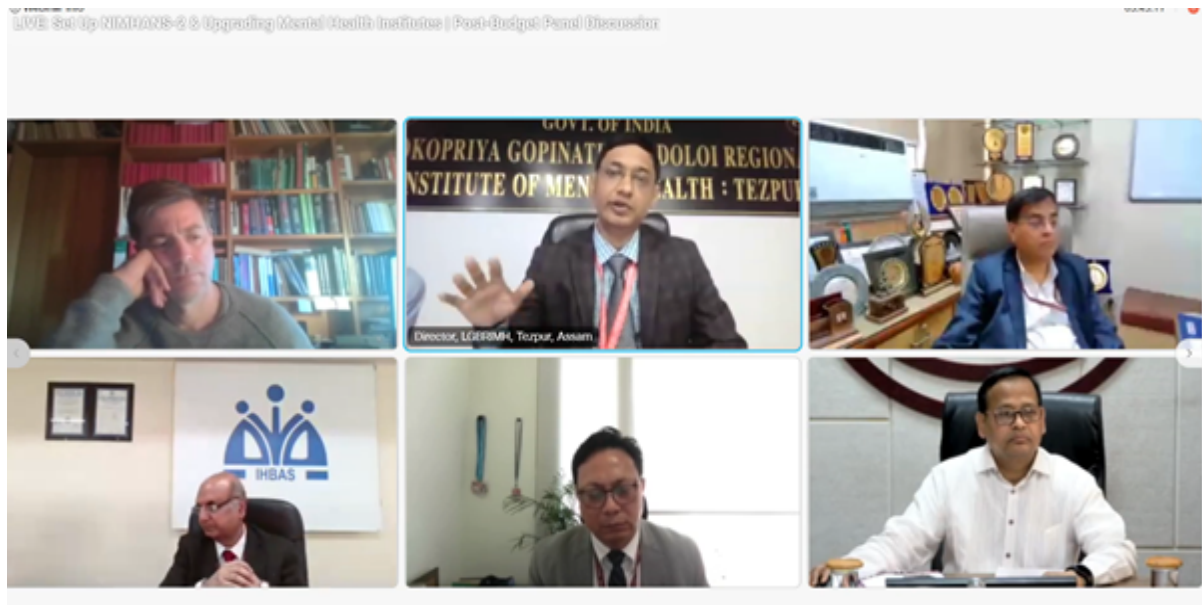
As part of the Post-Budget Webinar series on the theme “Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas – Fulfilling Aspirations of People”, a breakout session was convened to deliberate on the Union Budget announcement under Para 87, which focuses on strengthening mental health infrastructure through the establishment of NIMHANS-2 and the upgradation of key mental health institutions across the country. The session brought together distinguished experts from premier medical institutions, policymakers, public health specialists, researchers, and representatives from state governments to discuss strategies for expanding advanced neuro-psychiatric care and reinforcing India’s overall mental healthcare ecosystem.

The discussions highlighted the growing burden of mental and neurological disorders in India and the urgent need to strengthen institutional capacity to meet emerging healthcare demands. It was noted that one in seven Indians is affected by mental health disorders, while several states continue to face a treatment gap ranging from 70 to 90 percent. Participants also emphasized that Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) account for over 60 percent of deaths in the country, with neurological and mental health conditions being among the leading contributors to disability-adjusted life years (DALYs). In this context, strengthening tertiary mental health institutions and expanding specialized services were identified as critical priorities for the healthcare system.

The session also noted that North India currently lacks adequate tertiary neuro-psychiatric care facilities, particularly in areas such as advanced neuroimaging, neurocritical care, and specialized neurological services. Participants observed that the establishment of NIMHANS-2, along with the strengthening and modernization of existing mental health institutions, would significantly enhance advanced clinical care, training capacity, research capability, and innovation in neurosciences.

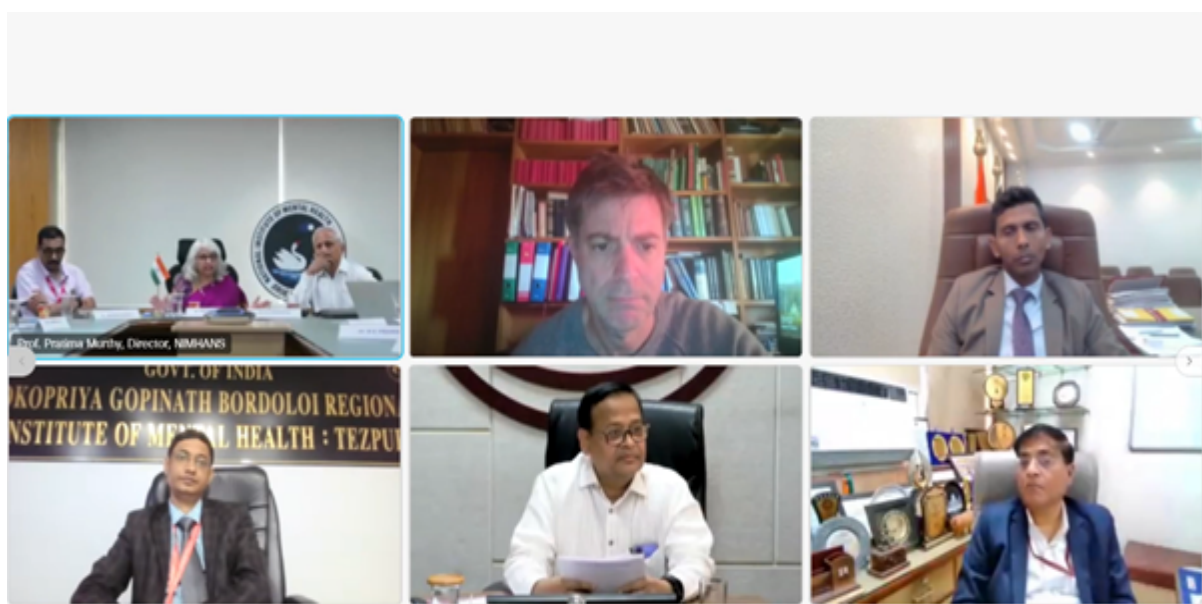
The panellists emphasized the need for a multipronged and integrated approach to strengthening mental healthcare delivery, with a balanced focus on critical care services, human resource development, research and innovation, community outreach, and expansion of institutional infrastructure. Special attention was

drawn to improving services in underserved and geographically remote regions, including the northeastern states, through better infrastructure, capacity building, and targeted deployment of trained mental health professionals.



The discussions further highlighted the importance of adopting a hub-and-spoke model supported by digital health platforms, which would allow tertiary institutions and centres of excellence to provide technical guidance, specialist consultations, and clinical support to district hospitals and community-level health facilities. Such a model would strengthen referral pathways and ensure that specialized mental health services are accessible to people even in remote and rural areas.

Panellists also emphasized the need to integrate services under Tele-MANAS with both existing and upcoming campuses of National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences, enabling a robust nationwide tele-mental health network that ensures timely counselling, psychological support, and specialist consultations. The discussions also underscored the importance of digital follow-up systems and seamless integration of healthcare facilities, aligned with the vision of the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission and the ABHA ID ecosystem, to enable continuity of care, improved monitoring of patients, and better clinical outcomes.



Participants also proposed the creation of a National Brain-Mind Cloud Network under the National Health Mission, which would connect premier institutions such as All India Institute of Medical Sciences, state medical colleges, and primary healthcare centres through a digitally integrated platform. The

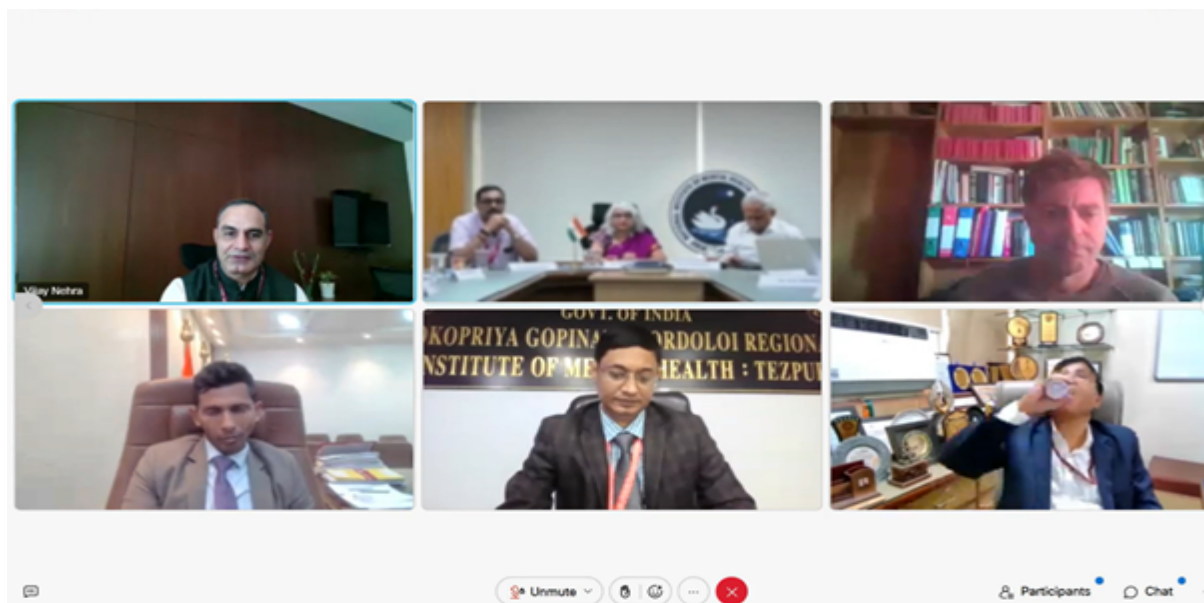
proposed network could facilitate unified mental health records, AI-based screening tools, data-driven clinical decision support systems, and tele-neuro-psychiatric hubs at regional centres, thereby enabling early detection, timely intervention, and coordinated care delivery across the healthcare system.

The panel discussion also outlined several expected outcomes aimed at strengthening institutional frameworks, workforce capacity, and research collaboration in the mental health sector. These include the development of a statutory framework for establishing NIMHANS-2 as an autonomous Institute of National Importance with a clearly defined governance structure, along with a national roadmap for expanding mental health manpower, including phased increases in DM/MCh, PhD, and fellowship training seats across major institutions.

The deliberations also highlighted the need to establish structured district-to-tertiary referral pathways linking the District Mental Health Programme (DMHP) with apex institutions, supported by a digital convergence strategy to ensure seamless patient referral, improved coordination between institutions, and continuity of care.

Further, proposals were discussed for the upgradation of Lokopriya Gopinath Bordoloi Regional Institute of Mental Health and Central Institute of Psychiatry as Apex Regional Institutes for Mental Health, strengthening advanced clinical services, academic training, and research capabilities in different regions of the country.

Participants also deliberated on the development of a coordinated national research grid, including national registries for stroke, suicide, neurotrauma, and severe mental illness, which would strengthen evidence-based policymaking, enable large-scale epidemiological studies, and foster collaboration among research institutions.



The discussions further outlined a long-term roadmap to position India's three-institution mental health model as a regional centre of excellence for training, research, and capacity building for South and South-East Asia, aligned with global mental health priorities and targets of the World Health Organization.

The session was moderated by Vijay Nehra, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, who guided the deliberations among the panelists and facilitated discussions on strengthening India's mental health ecosystem. The discussion included 18 distinguished panellists representing premier medical institutions, public health bodies, and government agencies. The session witnessed wide participation from stakeholders, experts, and officials across the country, with a large number of participants joining through the webinar platform as well as through YouTube live streaming.

The distinguished panel included Dr. Pratima Murthy, Director, National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences; B. N. Gangadhar, Former Chairperson, National Medical Commission; R. K. Dhamija, Director, Institute of Human Behaviour and Allied Sciences; Rajesh Sagar, Professor of Psychiatry, All India Institute of Medical Sciences; Balram Bhargava, Former Director General, Indian Council of Medical Research; Andrea Bruni, Regional Advisor for Mental Health, World Health Organization South-East Asia Regional Office; L. Swasticharan, Additional Director General & Director (EMR), Directorate General of Health Services; P. Ashok Babu, Commissioner & Secretary (Health), Government of Assam; Naveen Kumar C, Professor of Psychiatry, NIMHANS; J. Hazarika, Director, Lokopriya Gopinath Bordoloi Regional Institute of Mental Health, Tezpur; and Vijai Kumar Chaudhary, Director, Central Institute of Psychiatry, Ranchi.

The insights and recommendations emerging from the session are expected to contribute to the development of a robust implementation roadmap for strengthening mental health infrastructure, expanding advanced neuro-psychiatric care, and improving access to quality mental healthcare services across the country, in line with the Government's vision of inclusive, accessible, and technology-enabled healthcare for all.

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