



## Eklavya Model Residential Schools

**For Prelims:** Eklavya Model Residential School (EMRS), Scheduled Tribes (STs).

**For Mains:** Initiatives for Promoting the Welfare of Students from Deprived Sections of the Indian Society, Challenges and Solution.

### Why in News?

The government is pushing to set up **740 Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS) for Scheduled Tribe (ST) students.**

### What are EMRS?

- EMRS is a scheme for making **model residential schools for STs across India.**
  - It **started in the year 1997-98.**
  - Its nodal ministry is **Ministry of Tribal Affairs.**
  - The aim of the scheme to **build schools at par with the Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas and Kendriya Vidyalayas** with focus on special state-of-the-art facilities for preserving local art and culture besides providing training in sports and skill development.
  - The EMR School follows the **CBSE curriculum.**
- **In 2018-19, revamping of the EMRS scheme** was approved by the Cabinet.
  - Since the new guidelines have been put into place, the Ministry of Tribal Affairs **sanctioned 332 of the targeted 452 schools till 2021-22.**
  - As of November 2022, **a total of 688 schools have been sanctioned,** of which 392 are functional.
  - Of the 688, **230 have completed construction and 234 are under construction,** with **32 schools still stuck due to land acquisition issues.**

### What were the Old Guidelines?

- Although the Union government had sanctioned a certain number of preliminary EMRS, **the States and Union Territories were responsible for seeking sanction of new schools** as and when they needed it.
- The funds for these schools were to come from the **grants under Article 275(1)** and the guidelines mandated that unless States finished constructing the schools sanctioned by the Centre, they would not be entitled to funds for new ones.
- Apart from the **infrastructural requirements of 20-acre plots for each EMRS,** the guidelines did not have any criteria of **where the EMRS could be set up, leaving it to the discretion of State governments.**

### What are the New Guidelines?

- The new guidelines in 2018-19 gave the **Union government more power to sanction schools and manage** them.

- A **National Education Society for Tribal Students (NESTS)** was set up and entrusted with the **management of the State Education Society for Tribal Students (SESTS)**, which would **run the EMRS on the ground**.
- The new guidelines set a target of setting up an EMRS in every tribal sub-district and introduced a **“population criteria”** for setting them up.
  - One **EMRS will be set-up per sub-district that has at least a 20,000-odd Scheduled Tribe (ST) population**, which must be **50% of the total population in that area**.
- The **minimum land requirement** for setting up an EMRS **was reduced from 20 acres to 15 acres**.

## What are the Challenges?

- **Requirement of 15-acre Area:**
  - As per the Standing Committee Report, requirement of 15-acre area is making the identification and acquisition of land **troublesome, especially in hilly areas, leftwing extremism-affected areas and the northeast**.
- **Population Criteria:**
  - The Standing Committee noted that the population criteria is **depriving a scattered tribal population of the benefit of EMRS**.
  - Sometimes, when the **population criteria are fulfilled, 15-acre plots are not available**.
- **Shortage of Teachers:**
  - Despite the setting up of the NESTS, there was a shortage of teachers.
  - Though the new guidelines allowed NESTS to suggest **measures for teacher recruitment, they never made them mandatory for the States** to follow.
    - This led to non-uniformity in the quality of teachers, not enough recruitment in reserved positions, and a large number of schools recruiting teachers contractually, in a bid to save on salary expenses.
  - As of July 2022, all functional EMRS had a **teaching strength of just under 4,000 against the 11,340 recommended by NESTS**.

## Way Forward

- **Guidelines regarding area of land and population criteria should be relaxed** so that the less dense tribal populations can also reap the benefit of EMRS scheme.
- **More control of school management should be given to NESTS** to overcome the shortage of teachers.
- Also, **mandatory guidelines about teacher recruitment** must be issued for the States.

[Source: TH](#)