

National Education Society for Tribal Students (NESTS)

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In news– The Union Minister of Tribal Affairs has stated that administrative overhaul of the NESTS, which is expected to solve the massive teacher shortage faced by Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS) for tribal students, will be approved “very soon”.

What is NESTS?

- It is a body that manages EMRSs and it is an autonomous organization established under Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA).
- NESTS commenced its journey in 2018 aimed at providing high quality education to the tribal students in their own environment.
- Currently, NESTS oversees management of the schools in different states, where separate State Education Societies for Tribal Students (SESTS) have been set up.
- While NESTS issues guidelines on syllabus, school criteria, etc., on-ground management was under the SESTS’.
- After the overhaul, the ministry would have to scrap all SESTSs, and set up Regional Offices (RO) under direct control of NESTS.
- Following this, once the staffers were sanctioned at the ROs, the NESTS would be able to directly sanction the number of teaching positions and recruit as per the Central reservation policies, by which the schools would be bound.

Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS)-

- EMRS started in the year 1997-98 to impart quality education to ST children in remote areas in order to

enable them to avail of opportunities in high and professional educational courses and get employment in various sectors.

- The schools focus not only on academic education but on the all-round development of the students. Each school has a capacity of 480 students, catering to students from Class VI to XII.
- Hitherto, grants were given for construction of schools and recurring expenses to the State Governments under Grants under Article 275 (1) of the Constitution.
- In order to give further impetus to EMRS, it has been decided that by the year 2022, every block with more than 50% ST population and at least 20,000 tribal persons, will have an EMRS.
- Eklavya schools will be on par with Navodaya Vidyalaya and will have special facilities for preserving local art and culture besides providing training in sports and skill development.
- Across the country, as per census 2011 figures, there are 564 such sub-districts out of which there is an EMRS in 102 sub-districts.
- In 2018-19, at the bidding of Mr. Modi, the Cabinet approved the revamping of the EMRS scheme. The new guidelines 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. The new guidelines also reduced the minimum land requirement from 20 acres to 15 acres.