

APRIL

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MK Yadav Sir

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Rakhigarhi findings in NCERT books; Narmada Dam references dropped

In Class 12 history textbook, NCERT has said that continuity in DNA of Harappans rules out migration of Aryans; in political science textbooks, it has dropped references to Babri demolition and given added emphasis to Ram Temple movement

Maitri Porocha
NEW DELHI

The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) has proposed that findings from the DNA analysis of skeletal remains unearthed at the archaeological site of Rakhigarhi in Haryana be added to the Class 12 history textbook. It also proposed that references to how the Narmada Dam project adversely affected tribal people and drove them to greater destitution be dropped from the sociology textbook.

These are among the latest set of revisions in school textbooks proposed by the NCERT.

In the sociology textbook for Class 12, the NCERT has dropped the sentence "That Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are social groups specially marked by poverty, powerlessness and social stigma."

In a major addition to the chapter "Bricks, Beads and Bones – The Harappan Civilisation" in the Class 12 history textbook *Themes in India History Part-I*, the NCERT has stated that the study of ancient DNA from archaeological



In order to study genetic history of Harappans, DNA was extracted from the skeletal remains excavated at Rakhigarhi. FILE PHOTO

sources in Rakhigarhi suggests that the genetic roots of the Harappans go back to 10,000 BC. "The DNA of the Harappans has continued till today and a majority of the south Asian population appears to be their descendants. Due to trade and cultural contacts of the Harappans with distant regions there is a mixture of genes in small quantity. The continuity without any break in genetic history as well as cultural history rules out large-scale immigration of the so-called Aryans," the text reads.

The revised text adds that the research also indicates that people coming from the bordering areas and distant regions were absorbed in the Indian society. "At no stage, the genetic history of the Indians was either discontinued or broken. As the Harappans

started moving towards Iran and Central Asia, their genes also gradually spread in those regions," it says.

In order to study the genetic history of the Harappans, DNA was extracted from the skeletal remains excavated at Rakhigarhi. This research was carried out by Deccan College Deemed University, Pune in collaboration with the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology, Hyderabad, and the Harvard Medical College.

The analysis of the data was interpreted by some that the Harappans were the indigenous people of this region. The same team of researchers also reconstructed 3D features of the Harappan people. The NCERT stated that the reconstructed facial features of the Harappans, male

and female, show remarkable similarity with the modern population of Haryana and that the study has indicated unbroken continuity for 5,000 years in this region.

In an article for *The Hindu*, archaeologist Mudrit Trivedi had argued that "the DNA of this person from Rakhigarhi... is a mixture with contributions coming from very ancient ancestry shared with Iranian populations and that from... Andamanese or South-East Asians in the deep past of her ancestry... media coverage has stressed her 'indigeneity' and not the fact that her genetic admixture makes one rethink the social geographies which the data groups her with, which are significantly more westerly than the limits of present-day India."

On page 85 of the Class 12 sociology textbook *Indian Society*, the NCERT said the sentence "Projects such as the Sardar Sarovar dam on the river Narmada in western India and the Polavaram dam on the river Godavari in Andhra Pradesh displace hundreds of thousands of advasis, driving them to greater destitution" would be changed to

"Projects such as the Sardar Sarovar dam on the river Narmada in western India and the Polavaram dam on the river Godavari in Andhra Pradesh displaced hundreds of thousands of advasis from their original habitats".

It has also dropped other mentions about the Narmada project. In chapter three, the sentence "The coming of private property in land has also adversely affected tribals, whose community-based forms of collective ownership were placed at a disadvantage in the new system. The most recent such example is the series of dams being built on the Narmada, where most of the costs and benefits seem to flow disproportionately to different communities and regions" will now read, "The coming of private property in land has also adversely affected tribals, whose community-based forms of collective ownership were placed at a disadvantage."

The NCERT has dropped references to the Babri Masjid demolition from its political science textbooks and given added emphasis on the Ram Janmabhoomi Temple movement.

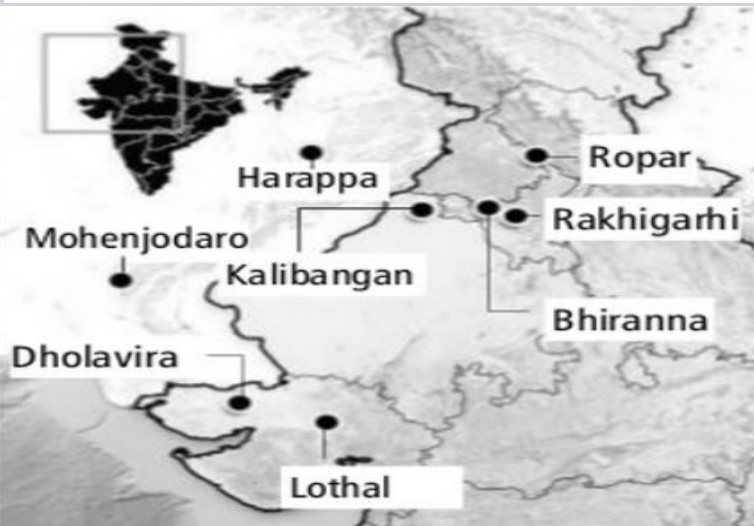
RAKHIGARHI

(Syllabus: GS Paper 1 – History)

Context: Recently, NCERT proposed revisions to school textbooks, including additions about DNA analysis findings from Rakhigarhi site and removal of references to Narmada Dam's adverse effects on tribals, aiming for more updated content.

Rakhigarhi

- **About:** Rakhigarhi stands as a significant site of the ancient Indus Valley Civilization, situated in modern-day Hissar, Haryana.
- **Excavation Initiatives by ASI:** The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) initiated the first excavation at Rakhigarhi during 1998-2001.
- **Deccan College's Contribution:** From 2013 to 2016, Deccan College of Pune conducted excavations at Rakhigarhi, adding to the archaeological understanding of the site.
- **Recognition:** Rakhigarhi's ancient mounds 6 and 7 have been identified by ASI among 19 sites to be notified as 'sites of national importance.'
- **Endangered Status and Global Awareness:** In May 2012, Rakhigarhi gained global recognition when the Global Heritage Fund declared it one of the 10 most endangered heritage sites in Asia.
- **Cluster of Archaeological Sites:** Rakhigarhi is not isolated; it's part of a cluster of significant archaeological sites in the region, including Kalibangan, Kunal, Haryana, Balu, Haryana, Bhirrana, and Banawali, all situated in the old river valley east of the Ghaggar Plain.



IMF: 8% growth projection for India not ours

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
WASHINGTON, APRIL 5

THE RECENT remarks of Krishnamurthy Subramanian, Executive Director at the International Monetary Fund, about India's growth figures does not represent the views of the IMF and were in his role as India's representative at the global body, the IMF has said.

"The views conveyed... by Mr. Subramanian were in his role as India's representative at the IMF," Julie Kozack, IMF spokesperson, told reporters here on Thursday.

She was responding to a question on recent remarks by Subramanian, in which he projected a growth rate of 8% for India, which is different from the last growth rate projections by the IMF. Subramanian, at an event in New Delhi on March 28, had said the Indian economy could grow at 8% till 2047, if the country redoubles the good policies that it has implemented over the last 10 years and accelerate reforms.

The IMF spokesperson clarified: "We do have an Executive Board... that's distinct, of course, from the work of the IMF staff."

Context: The IMF clarified that the recent remarks made by the Executive Director at the International Monetary Fund regarding India's growth figures do not reflect the views of the IMF and were made in his capacity as India's representative within the global body.

International Monetary Fund (IMF)

- **About:** The IMF works to achieve sustainable growth and prosperity for all of its member countries.
- **Establishment:** In 1944 in the aftermath of the Great Depression of the 1930s.
- **Member countries:** 190 countries.
- **Headquarters:** Washington, D.C
- **Representation:** Each member country has a representation on the IMF's executive board.
- **Voting Power:** The allocation of voting power on the executive board is based on the financial importance of each member country.
- **Objectives of IMF**
 - To improve and promote global monetary cooperation of the world.
 - To secure financial stability by eliminating or minimizing the exchange rate stability.
 - To facilitate a balanced international trade.
 - To promote high employment through economic assistance and sustainable economic growth.
 - To reduce poverty around the world.
- **Major reports published by IMF:**
 - Global Financial Stability Report
 - World Economic Outlook

Water levels in reservoirs at 35% of capacity; southern India's at just 20%

Context: Despite the fact that peak summer has yet to arrive, water storage in major reservoirs and river basins across the country continues to decline, as recently revealed by data released by the Central Water Commission (CWC).

Key Findings

- **Growing Concern Over Water Shortages:** The situation raises alarms for potential drinking water shortages as well as low water availability for agriculture in the coming weeks and months.
- **Dwindling Reservoir Levels Across India:** The live storage available in India's 150 major reservoirs stands at just 35% of their total capacity, lower than last year's levels and the average of the last decade.
- **Water Scarcity in South Indian States:** Southern states like Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, and Telangana are facing significant water shortages, with reservoirs only filled to 20% of capacity.
- **Impact on Major Dams and Water Sources:** Critical dams like Nagarjuna Sagar and Srisailem are experiencing dwindling water levels, affecting irrigation, drinking water supply, and electricity generation.
- **Water Deficiency Across States:** At least 13 out of 21 states monitored by the CWC have water levels below normal, indicating a widespread water deficiency across the country.
- **Declining River Basin Storage:** River basins, including major rivers like Krishna and Cauvery, are experiencing declining water levels, with some rivers completely devoid of water for weeks.

Central Water Commission (CWC)

- **About:** It operates as an attached office of the Ministry of Jal Shakti, falling under the Department of Water Resources, River Development, and Ganga Rejuvenation.
- **Headquarters:** New Delhi.
- **Organizational Structure:** Led by a Chairman holding the status of Ex-Officio Secretary to the Government of India.
- **Wings Division:** Operations are segmented into three wings: Designs and Research (D&R) Wing, River Management (RM) Wing, and Water Planning and Projects (WP&P) Wing.
- **Divisional Authority:** Each wing is overseen by a full-time Member, carrying the status of Ex-Officio Additional Secretary to the Government of India.
- **Functions of Central Water Commission**
 - **Coordination and Initiation:** Responsible for initiating, coordinating, and advancing schemes in consultation with State Governments for water resource control, conservation, and utilization nationwide.
 - **Scope of Operations:** Undertakes investigations, constructions, and execution of schemes related to flood control, irrigation, navigation, drinking water supply, and water power development.

SAT gets new presiding officer, technical member

Tribunal was without presiding officer or a judicial member for three months



KHUSHBOO TIWARI
Mumbai, 5 April

The Finance Ministry has appointed P S Dinesh Kumar (pictured), a retired judge, as the presiding officer of the Securities Appellate Tribunal (SAT) for four years. Kumar is a former chief justice of the Karnataka High Court.

He was a judge at the High Court until 2015 and vacated office in February this year. His tenure as chief justice was less than a month. Kumar assumed charge on January 31 after the Supreme Court collegium recommended his name to the government on January 19.

Before being elevated as a

judge in 2015, Kumar practised as a lawyer for almost 25 years.

The ministry has also appointed Dheeraj Bhatnagar as a technical member of the tribunal for four years or till he reaches the age of 67, whichever is earlier. Bhatnagar retired as principal chief commissioner of Income Tax, Delhi.

The tribunal was without a presiding officer or a judicial member for three months after Justice Tarun Agarwala demitted office in December 2023.

The three-member tribunal has been functioning with only Meera Swarup as its technical member.

SAT hears and disposes of appeals against the orders of the

Securities and Exchange Board of India, the Insurance Regulatory Development Authority of India, and the Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority along with appeals against the stock exchanges and depositories.

Legal experts had raised concerns on the prolonged vacancy at the tribunal where several cases were pending. Several cases including that of Sahara India Life Insurance, Bombay Dyeing and National Spot Exchange may be heard afresh by the tribunal.

The ministry had first invited applications in August 2023 to fill the position of the presiding officer at the tribunal.

Context: The Finance Ministry has appointed P S Dinesh Kumar, a retired judge, as the presiding officer of the Securities Appellate Tribunal (SAT) for four years.

Securities Appellate Tribunal (SAT)

- **About:** It is a statutory and autonomous body.
- **Establishment:** Under the provisions of the Securities and Exchange Board of India Act, 1992.
- **Headquarters:** Mumbai.
- **Composition:** Presiding officer, Judicial members and technical members.
 - The appointment of Presiding officer and other members of SAT is done by a committee headed by Prime Minister of India.
- **Tenure:** Presiding Officer: 5 years from the date of appointment or re-appointment.
- **Powers**
 - Orders issued by the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) in relation to cases filed before it.
 - Orders issued by the Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) in relation to cases filed before it.
 - Hear the orders passed by Securities and Exchange Board of India.

Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI)

- **Establishment:** As a statutory body in the year 1992.
- **Headquarters:** Mumbai, Maharashtra
- **Ministry:** Ministry of Finance
- **Aim:** To protect the interests of investors in securities and to promote the development of, and regulate the securities market.

‘One Vehicle, One FASTag’ rule is here; all extra tags will be deactivated

Context: he National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) has rolled out the ‘One Vehicle, One FASTag’ scheme.

One Vehicle, One FASTag Initiative

- **About:** The NHAI has taken this initiative after the recent reports of multiple FASTags being issued for a particular vehicle and FASTags being issued without KYC in violation of the Reserve Bank of India’s (RBI) mandate.
- **Aim:** To discourage user behaviour of using single FASTag for multiple vehicles or linking multiple FASTags to a particular vehicle.
- **Objective:** To enhance efficiency of the Electronic Toll Collection system and provide seamless movement at the Toll Plazas.

FASTag

- **About:** FASTag is an electronic toll collection system in India, managed by the National Highway Authority of India (NHAI), utilizing **Radio Frequency Identification (RFID)** technology.
- **Payment Mechanism:** FASTag facilitates toll payments directly from the linked prepaid or savings account or directly from the toll owner, employing RFID technology.
- **Dedicated Lanes:** Dedicated lanes for FASTag users have been established at select toll plazas, streamlining the toll collection process.

National Highways Authority of India (NHAI)

- **About:** It was established under the NHAI Act in 1988, marking its inception as the apex body for highway management in India. It’s headquarter is located in Delhi.
- **Autonomous Organization:** NHAI operates autonomously, functioning independently within the framework of its statutory mandate, thereby ensuring efficient management of the nation's highway network.

Parameters	RFID	BARCODE
Line of sight	Not required	Required
Read Range	Passive UHF: Up to 40 feet (fixed readers) Up to 20 feet (handheld readers) Active UHF - Up to 100's of feet or more	Several inches up to several feet
Read Rate	10's, 100's or 1000's simultaneously	Only one at a time
Identification	Can uniquely identify each item/asset tagged.	Most barcodes only identify the type of item (UPC Code) but not uniquely.
Read/Write	Many RFID tags are Read/Write	Read only
Technology	RF (Radio Frequency)	Optical (Laser)
Interference	Like the TSA (Transportation Security Administration), some RFID frequencies don't like Metal and Liquids. They can interfere with some RF Frequencies.	Obstructed barcodes cannot be read (dirt covering barcode, torn barcode, etc.)
Automation	Most "fixed" readers don't require human involvement to collect data (automated)	Most barcode scanners require a human to operate (labor intensive)

No to NOTA? Fewer takers for last button

SAMREEN VIANI
New Delhi, 5 April

The share of voters pressing the NOTA button has been on a decline in general elections since a Supreme Court order sealed a spot for it on electronic voting machines across India in 2013.

The portion of 'none of the above' option or NOTA dropped from 1.08 per cent in 2014 general election to 1.06 per cent in 2019 polls.

And, according to an analysis of data from the Election Commission and Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR), the assembly elections also point towards a similar trend after 2019. The share of NOTA in the total votes polled remained over 1 per cent in the states that had their assembly elections in 2018, 2019 and 2020, according to data from ADR.

However, in the subsequent years the share of NOTA declined gradually and remained under one percentage.

Over a million NOTA votes were polled in the nine states that had their assembly elections in 2023 but they accounted for less than one percentage of the total votes.

A state-wise analysis of NOTA votes shows that Tripura and Chhattisgarh had a marginally higher share of NOTA votes compared to the other seven states that had their assembly elections in 2023.

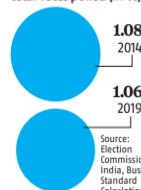
NOTA accounted for about 1.4 per cent of the total votes polled in Tripura and 1.3 per cent of the votes polled in Chhattisgarh.

Just 0.3 per cent of the votes in Nagaland were under the NOTA category, the lowest among the states in 2023. The majority of states which held elections in 2023 saw less than 1 per cent share for NOTA.

Back in 2013, the Supreme Court (SC) had asked the Election Commission to include the option of NOTA in the ballot paper to allow the Indian voter to express their "right to reject", candidates they consider unworthy of their vote.

DIP IN SHARE

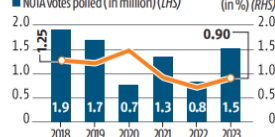
Share of NOTA votes in total votes polled (in %)



Source: Election Commission of India, Business Standard Calculations

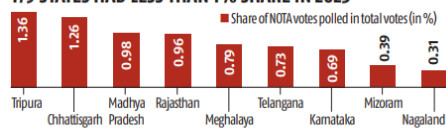
ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS POINT TO LOWER TRACTION

Share of NOTA votes in total votes polled (in %)



Note: Graph shows the number and share of NOTA votes polled in various assembly elections held in the respective years
Source: Association for Democratic Reforms, Election Commission of India, Business Standard Calculations

7/9 STATES HAD LESS THAN 1% SHARE IN 2023



Note: Graph shows the share of NOTA votes polled in various assembly elections held in 2023
Source: Election Commission of India, Business Standard calculations

NOTA in Rajya Sabha

- **Supreme Court's Interpretation:** The Supreme Court clarified in 2018 that NOTA is intended solely for universal adult suffrage and direct elections, excluding polls conducted through proportional representation, such as those in the Rajya Sabha.
- **Contravention of Constitutional Provisions:** Application of NOTA in Rajya Sabha elections was deemed contradictory to Article 80(4) of the Constitution and the precedent set by the Supreme Court in PUCL v Union of India (2013).
- **Undermining Fairness in Indirect Elections:** NOTA's inclusion in Rajya Sabha elections undermines the fairness of indirect elections by disregarding the significance of an elector's role and compromises democratic principles.

Context: In recent general elections, the utilization of the NOTA (None of the Above) option has witnessed a consistent decrease. This trend follows a Supreme Court directive in 2013, which mandated the inclusion of the NOTA button on electronic voting machines nationwide.

NOTA

- **About:** NOTA, meaning 'None of the Above', has been a key component of the Indian voting system for the last eight years.
- **Purpose:** It allows voters to officially reject all candidates contesting in an election.
- **Supreme Court Ruling:** The Supreme Court of India mandated the inclusion of the NOTA option in electronic voting machines on September 27, 2013.
- **First Usage of NOTA:** It was first implemented in the 2013 assembly elections in Chhattisgarh, Mizoram, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and Delhi.
- **Objectives:** Enable voters who don't support any candidate to express their rejection without revealing their choice.
 - Ensure eligible voters can reject candidates they deem unworthy.
 - Uphold the right to vote by allowing disapproval to be registered.
- **Global Adoption of NOTA:** Countries like Colombia, Ukraine, Brazil, Bangladesh, Finland, Spain, Sweden, Chile, France, Belgium, and Greece have adopted NOTA.
 - The US, particularly Texas since 1975, also allows NOTA in some cases, despite facing opposition.

Foreign Investors to be Allowed to Invest in Sovereign Green Bonds via IFSC

Mobile app for RBI Retail Direct gilt scheme being developed

Bhaskar.Dutta@timesgroup.com

Mumbai: Taking fresh steps to deepen debt markets, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Friday said that foreign investors in the International Financial Services Centre would be permitted to invest in sovereign green bonds.

"A scheme for investment and trading in SGrBs (sovereign green bonds) by eligible foreign investors in IFSC is being notified separately in consultation with the government

and the IFSC Authority," the RBI said in its statement on development and regulatory policies, released along with the central bank's policy statement on Friday.

At present, foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) registered with the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) are allowed to invest in sovereign green bonds under the various routes available for FPI investment in government bonds.

Last month, the RBI announced the sale of sovereign green bonds worth a total of ₹12,000 crore via two tran-

ches in April-September. The government had started issuing sovereign green bonds in FY23. Proceeds of such bonds are used for environmentally sustainable projects.

In November, the RBI said that sovereign green bonds would be counted as specified securities eligible under the Fully Accessible Route (FAR) for overseas investors.

RBI also said a mobile application was being developed to improve ease of access for the central bank's Retail Direct Scheme for investment in government securities.

Context: Recently, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) announced on Friday that foreign investors in the International Financial Services Centre would be allowed to invest in sovereign green bonds.

International Financial Services Centre Authority

- **About:** IFSCA was established on April 27, 2020, as mandated by the International Financial Services Centres Authority Act, 2019.
- **Headquarters:** GIFT City, Gandhinagar in Gujarat.
- **Composition:** Nine members, appointed by the central government.
- **Objective:** To develop a strong global connect and focus on the needs of the Indian economy as well as to serve as an international financial platform for the entire region and the global economy as a whole.

Sovereign Green Bond

- **Meaning:** Bonds issued by any sovereign entity, inter-governmental groups or alliances and corporates with the aim that the proceeds of the bonds are utilised for projects classified as environmentally sustainable.
- They are financial instruments that finance green projects and provide investors with regular or fixed income payments.

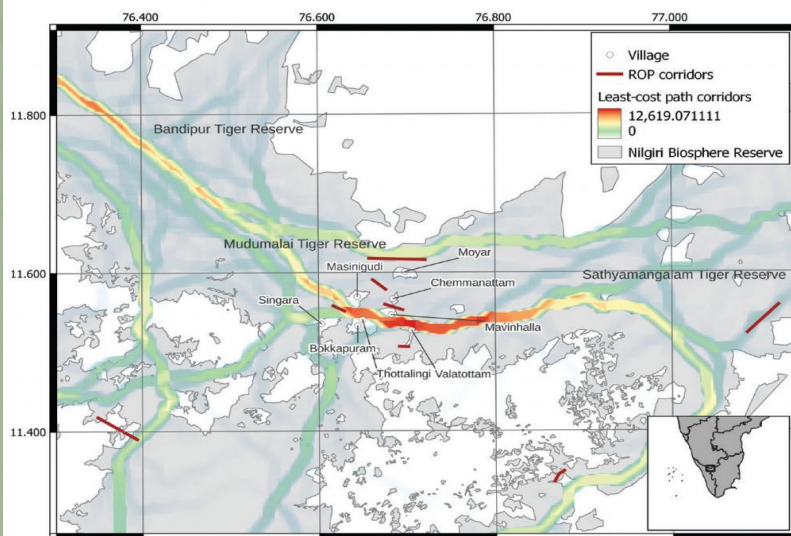
Role of IFSCA

- **Unified Regulatory Authority:** IFSCA serves as a unified regulatory authority responsible for the development and oversight of financial products, services, and institutions within India's International Financial Services Centre (IFSC).
- **Transition from Domestic Regulators:** Before IFSCA's establishment, domestic financial regulators such as RBI, SEBI, PFRDA, and IRDAI governed business activities within IFSC.
- **Inter-Regulatory Coordination:** Recognizing the complexity of IFSC business dynamics, IFSCA facilitates inter-regulatory coordination within the financial sector to ensure effective regulation and foster a conducive business environment.
- **Global Connect and Economic Focus:** IFSCA's primary objectives include developing strong global connections, addressing the needs of the Indian economy, and serving as a prominent international financial platform for the region and the global economy at large.

Efforts to reconnect elephant corridors must be carefully planned

Reconnection potential

Using information from field data, GIS and adapted algorithms can help identify functional corridors to target for restoration



In this figure, connectivity is represented in the form of factorial least-cost paths. Corridors are calculated over a composite resistance map including land use, slope, elevation and habitations. The corridors start from core areas (the tiger reserves) and sometimes extend beyond the limits of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve, where "structural" corridors should be established and eventually restored. Areas with highest connectivity in red are essential to elephant populations. In comparison, expert corridors, as identified in the "Right of Passage: Elephant Corridors of India" report (ROP) by the Wildlife Trust of India, do not display an overall logic regarding connectivity. Most are in protected areas or reserved forests, a few cut across villages and most seem to be placed at random. Corridors have not been prioritised based on their relative importance
 Source: "Predicting landscape connectivity for the Asian elephant in its largest remaining subpopulation", *Animal Conservation*, October 2016

Context: Efforts to reconnect elephant corridors are crucial for preserving biodiversity and ensuring the viability of the Asian elephant population. However, careful planning is essential to execute this endeavor effectively.

Elephant Corridor

- **About:** It can be defined as a narrow stretch of land that facilitates the movement of elephants between two or more adjacent habitats that are conducive to their well-being.
- **State Wise Distribution:** West Bengal takes the lead with 26 corridors, making up 17% of the total.
 - East central India - 52 corridors, The North East region - 48 corridors, Southern India - 32 corridors., and Northern India - 18 corridors.
- **Objective:**
 - Wildlife corridors facilitate animal movement between habitat patches; and in the process maintain the long-term demographic and genetic viability of elephant populations.
 - It is amply recognized that demographic isolation and lack of genetic viability could threaten elephant populations with extinction risks. Considering this, securing elephant corridors is a central strategy for elephant conservation in the country.
- **Notification:** Each state could notify the area of the corridor falling in their respective jurisdiction as conservation reserve under **Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972.**

Geographic Information Systems

- **About:** GIS are computer-based tools used to store, visualize, analyze, and interpret geographic data.

WHO launches gen-AI powered digital health promoter S.A.R.A.H. for public health

Context: The World Health Organization (WHO) recently announced the launch of S.A.R.A.H., a digital health promoter prototype featuring an enhanced empathetic response driven by generative artificial intelligence (AI).

S.A.R.A.H. (Smart AI Resource Assistant for Health):

- **About:** It is a pioneering digital health promoter prototype.
- **Launched by:** World Health Organisation (WHO), S.A.R.A.H. aims to empower individuals worldwide to access their right to health.
- **Objective:** To provide an additional resource for people to enhance their health awareness, regardless of their geographical location.
- **Key Features:**
 - **Comprehensive Health Information:** S.A.R.A.H. is trained to disseminate information covering various health topics, including promoting healthy habits and addressing mental health concerns.
 - **Risk Factor Awareness:** It aids users in understanding risk factors associated with prevalent global causes of mortality, such as cancer and heart disease.
 - **Support for Healthy Lifestyle Choices:** S.A.R.A.H. facilitates access to current information on strategies like smoking cessation, physical activity, nutritious eating, and stress management.
 - **Multilingual and Accessible:** With support for 8 languages, S.A.R.A.H. engages users around the clock on diverse health topics, accessible across multiple devices.
 - **Real-time Accuracy:** Unlike traditional scripted assistants, S.A.R.A.H. leverages generative AI, ensuring more precise and timely responses to user queries.

Merge Data on Unorganised Workers with e-Shram: Labour Min to States

Bid to remove duplication & arrive at net eligible beneficiaries under one umbrella digital system

Yogima.Sharma
@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: The labour ministry has directed all concerned ministries and states to reverse integrate data on unorganised sector workers with the e-Shram portal, a move aimed at removing duplication and arriving at the net eligible beneficiaries across India under one umbrella digital system.

In a meeting chaired by labour secretary Sumita Dwivedi on Thursday, it was decided to develop one common form for registration across all social sector schemes to enhance ease of living for the unorganised workers while fast-tracking registrations on the portal, sources aware of the deliberations told ET.

According to the sources, this will help the government do away with frauds and ensure saturation of social security schemes for over 400 million unorganised workers in the country as it aims for a universal social security in India.

Widening Coverage

Govt wants 100% social security coverage for unorganised workers

Ministry to issue SOPs for ministries to integrate data

Will introduce single registration form for all schemes

Data: Number of schemes under myScheme initiative

Scheme Category	No. of schemes
Agriculture, rural, environment	193
Banking, insurance, financial services	111
Business and entrepreneurship	17
Education and learning	406
Health and wellness	100
Housing & shelter	16
Public safety, law & justice	7
Science, IT & communication	48
Skills and employment	108
Social welfare and empowerment	539
Sports and culture	61
Transport and infrastructure	27
Travel and tourism	17
Utility and sanitation	24
TOTAL	1,843

The central labour ministry will soon firm up the standard operating procedures (SOPs) for all ministries to do reverse integration through API Setu, an open application programming interface (API) platform from the ministry of electronics and IT (MeitY).

"Once this is done, the system will prompt unorganised workers to enrol for schemes for which they are eligible out of nearly 1,900 schemes listed under the 'myScheme' initiative of the government, which is already integrated with the e-Shram portal," one of the sources said.

The drive to wean out duplication and up the pace of registration on the e-Shram portal is expected to benefit weavers, handloom workers, fishermen and fisherwomen, toddy tappers, agricultural workers, leather workers, plantation labourers and beedi workers, among others.

Since 2023, the labour ministry has been mapping different schemes data with e-Shram data to identify the e-Shram registrants who have not yet received the benefits of these schemes. The idea is to ensure all workers registered on the portal get the benefits of existing schemes running across ministries and states.

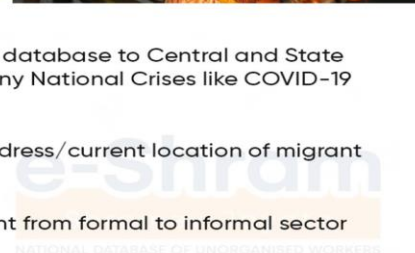
The portal, launched in August 2021, has 265.2 million unorganised workers as on date with average daily enrolment of 20,000 workers. The government had estimated India's unorganised workforce at 370 million at the time of launch of the portal and the registrations over the last three years, though robust, are way behind the target.



WELFARE OF MIGRANT WORKERS

Objectives of e-SHRAM

- Integration of Social Security Schemes e.g. PM-SYM, PMJJBY, PM-SBY, PMJAY
- Providing a comprehensive database to Central and State Governments for tackling any National Crises like COVID-19 in future
- Ascertaining status and address/current location of migrant workers
- Ascertaining their movement from formal to informal sector and vice versa
- Sharing of information with other Ministries/State Governments for delivery of social security schemes
- Portability of welfare benefits to migrant and construction workers



NATIONAL DATABASE OF UNORGANISED WORKERS

E-SHRAM PORTAL (Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Economy)

Context: The labour ministry has directed all concerned ministries and states to reverse integrate data on unorganised sector workers with the **e-Shram portal**, a move aimed at removing duplication and arriving at the net eligible beneficiaries across India under one umbrella digital system.

e-SHRAM Portal

- Launch:** The portal was launched on August 26, 2021.
- Aim:** with the aim of creating a national database of unorganised workers (NDUW).
- Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Labour & Employment.
- e-Shram Card:** Workers will be provided with an e-SHRAM card which will have a **12 digit unique number**.
 - The details of workers will also be shared by the state government and departments.
- Single window:** This will be a **single-point reference to help authorities** reach out to and track workers in the informal sector, and offer welfare in times of crisis.
- Beneficiaries:** The database will include **construction workers, migrant workers, gig and platform workers**, street vendors, domestic workers, agriculture workers, migrant workers and similar other sub-groups of unorganised workers.
- Self enrolment:** It will be **available in public for open access** where workers can self-enrol through Aadhaar and mobile numbers.

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