Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation

NSO launches "Statathon – A Data Journey Towards Viksit Bharat"

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The National Statistical Office (NSO), India, in collaboration with the Innovation Cell of the Ministry of Education (MoE), today launched a Grand Challenge titled "Statathon – A Data Journey Towards Viksit Bharat". The problem statements for the challenge were unveiled by Dr. Saurabh Garg, Secretary, MoSPI, at an event held in New Delhi.

The Grand Challenge is a national-level competition designed to harness emerging technologies and innovative solutions to transform the landscape of official statistics in India. Organised under the aegis of MoSPI's Data Innovation Lab (DI Lab) initiative, the Statathon marks an important milestone in the commemoration of 75 years of the National Sample Survey (NSS).

The challenge invites participation to address five problem statements, each covering different phases of the data lifecycle; collection, processing & analysis, and dissemination. Through this initiative, NSO aims to explore the potential of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and other frontier technologies to enhance the efficiency, quality, and accessibility of statistical data systems.

Problem Statements

· API Gateway for Survey Datasets

Development of a scalable, configurable, and privacy-compliant API gateway enabling SQL-based data retrieval from NSS datasets.

· AI-Powered Smart Survey Tool

Creation of an AI-enabled, multilingual, mobile-friendly survey application using digital platforms for real-time data collection.

· AI-Enhanced Application for Automated Data Processing

Development of AI based configurable modules for data scrutiny, statistical analysis, and report generation.

· Semantic Search for Occupation Classification (NCO)

Implementation of a semantic search interface using NLP and Gen AI for intuitive, context-aware searches across occupational codes.

· Evaluation and Enhancement of Data Anonymisation Practices

Review of current anonymisation methods and development of a robust safe data tool to ensure data privacy and security.

Registrations and idea submissions for the Statathon are now open and will remain so for one month. Interested participants can apply at the official portal: https://gc.mic.gov.in/home. The evaluation will be conducted in two phases:

Phase 1: 50 teams will be shortlisted and provided mentorship and training by domain experts from government and industry.

Phase 2: From these, 25 teams will receive financial support of ₹50,000 each and continue under guided mentorship to develop their solutions.

The Grand Finale is scheduled to be held later this year. Winners in each problem category will receive a prize of ₹1,00,000, while runner-ups will receive ₹50,000.

Shri R. Rajesh, Additional Director General, MoSPI, welcomed the participants and underscored the importance of encouraging innovation in the use of NSS data. He called upon students and researchers to participate in large numbers.

Dr. Abhay Jere, Chief Innovation Officer, MoE, lauded the collaborative efforts of MoSPI and MoE, highlighting the initiative's potential to engage a large number of innovators.

Shri P. R. Meshram, Director General, MoSPI, gave an overview of the Data Innovation Lab and highlighted the in-house innovations developed over the past year.

Prof. T.G. Sitharam, Chairman, AICTE, in his virtual address, commended MoSPI's collaboration with MoE and emphasized the potential of Statathon to revolutionize data collection, analysis, and usage for policy formulation.

Dr. Saurabh Garg, Secretary, MoSPI, acknowledged the enthusiastic participation from institutions across the country. He noted that the proposed problem statements align with the ministry's future direction, and successful solutions could be integrated into the official statistical system. He encouraged youth and students to make full use of the mentorship opportunities offered through the challenge.

The launch event was attended by over 300 participants, including senior officials from MoSPI and MoE, AICTE, academic institutions, researchers, and start-ups. The Statathon reflects the Government of India's commitment to advancing the nation's data systems through open innovation and fostering a collaborative ecosystem to develop digital public goods for a Viksit Bharat.

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