

The Government Remains Steadfast in its Commitment to the Development of India's Linguistic Heritage: Union Minister Shri G Kishan Reddy

Grant of Classical Language Status to 5 Languages Underlines this Commitment: Shri G Kishan Reddy

NEP 2020 a Transformative Step in Promoting Indian Languages: Union Minister

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The Government of India remains steadfast in its commitment to the preservation, promotion, and development of India's rich linguistic heritage. Addressing a press conference today, Union Minister Shri G. Kishan Reddy emphasized the government's vision for a developed India by 2047 and highlighted the pivotal role of languages in cultural development and national unity. He said that with immense diversity in languages is a unique model in the world, where languages are not merely tools for communication but invaluable repositories of knowledge, culture, and traditions.



Historically, languages have often been at the center of political interests, with attempts to suppress regional languages limiting people's freedom of expression. For instance, in 1835, Macaulay's policies sidelined classical Indian languages, promoting English as the medium of education and emphasizing European knowledge systems. Recognizing the historical challenges, the government has consistently worked towards preserving and protecting regional languages, viewing them as powerful instruments of empowerment and personal expression, said the Minister. As Atal Bihari Vajpayee once said, "Language is not merely a medium of expression but the soul of our culture", minister said.

Shri Reddy said that the inclusion of languages in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution has been a significant step in this direction. Initially, the Eighth Schedule included 14 languages, which has now expanded to 22, reflecting India's diversity. In 1967, Sindhi was added to the Eighth Schedule and Atal Bihari Vajpayee eloquently expressed his solidarity by stating, "I speak Hindi, but Sindhi is my *mausi* (maternal aunt)." Konkani, Manipuri, and Nepali were added to the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution in 1992. Later, under Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee's government in 2003, the government reiterated its staunch support for development of India's regional languages and included Bodo, Dogri, Maithili, and Santhali languages through an amendment introduced by the then Deputy Prime Minister Shri Lal Krishna Advani. Addition of Santhali, showed government's commitment and respect towards tribal culture and values.



Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi focus on develop of Indian languages as further received a massive thrust as demonstrated by recognition of Kashmiri, Dogri, Urdu, Hindi, and English as official languages in Jammu & Kashmir following the abrogation of Article 370. This decision marked a significant step towards inclusivity and empowerment of local communities.

Minister highlighted that classical languages, which safeguard India's ancient cultural heritage, have also received focused attention. The government has consistently worked to grant classical language status to ancient languages, reflecting their historical and cultural pride. Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Union Cabinet approved the designation of Marathi, Pali, Prakrit, Assamese, and Bengali as classical languages in October 2024, increasing the total number to 11. India is now the only country in the world to have recognized 11 classical languages. To promote these languages, several initiatives have been taken, such as establishing three Central Universities for Sanskrit in 2020, setting up the Central Institute of Classical Tamil for research and translation, and creating special study centers for Kannada, Telugu, Malayalam, and Odia under the Central Institute of Indian Languages, Mysore. National and international awards, university chairs, and special centers have been instituted to encourage achievements in this field.

Shri Reddy said that the landmark National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, introduced under the Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership has been a transformative step in promoting Indian languages. The policy emphasizes teaching in the mother tongue or local language up to Class 5 and, wherever possible, up to Class 8. High-quality textbooks and bilingual teaching methods have been recommended to enhance comprehension and intellectual development among students. NEP 2020 also encourages higher education institutions to provide courses in local languages and promotes the use of regional languages in STEM education and career counseling. Studies worldwide have shown that learning in one's mother tongue leads to better understanding, cognitive development, and confidence building. The policy also focuses on preserving tribal languages to safeguard India's indigenous cultures, benefitting children from tribal communities.

To support language development in school education, 104 primary books have been introduced in 22 states and union territories to enable children to learn in their mother tongue or local language. Indian Sign Language (ISL) has been developed, with teaching materials and books translated into ISL for classes 1 to 12. Over 200 TV channels provide educational content in 29 languages, while the DIKSHA platform offers over 3,66,370 e-content pieces in 133 languages, including 126 Indian and seven foreign languages. The government has also launched initiatives like the National Digital Library and ULLAS App to foster reading habits and make educational resources accessible in multiple languages, the minister said.

In higher education, significant strides have been made, including the establishment of 51 Indian Knowledge Systems centers, translation of 1,500 undergraduate textbooks into 12 Indian languages, and the integration of Indian Knowledge Systems into the curriculum of over 8,000 higher education institutions. Competitive exams like JEE, NEET, and CUET are now conducted in 13 regional languages, and engineering courses are available in eight Indian languages. Additionally, undergraduate students benefit from 428 programs offered in 19 central institutions in 12 Indian languages, with study materials accessible through platforms like e-KUMBH and Anuvadini.

Hindi, as an official language, has also received considerable attention. Marking 75 years of Hindi's recognition as an official language, the government has taken steps to promote it alongside other Indian languages, ensuring linguistic unity while respecting diversity. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has showcased Hindi on international platforms, enhancing its global identity and fostering pride in Indian languages. Initiatives like Hindi Advisory Committees in ministries, Town Official Language Implementation Committees (TOLIC) across India and abroad, and the creation of the comprehensive "Hindi Shabd Sindhu" dictionary have strengthened its role in governance and communication.

Technological advancements have been leveraged to promote Indian languages. The National Language Translation Mission and the Bhashini Project use digital technology to bridge linguistic barriers, enabling seamless communication among diverse language speakers. Educational institutions and ed-tech companies have been encouraged to develop digital learning materials in regional languages, making education more accessible.

Cultural initiatives under the Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat program, such as the Saurashtra Tamil Sangamam and Kashi Tamil Sangamam, celebrate India's linguistic and cultural unity. These events highlight the historical connections between regions and promote cultural exchange. The Prime Minister's emphasis on preserving Tamil, one of the world's oldest languages, underscores the collective responsibility of all Indians to protect and enrich their linguistic heritage.

The government's vision includes making all Indian languages globally competitive and ensuring that modern education is accessible in regional languages. Initiatives like language-based tourism, literature festivals, and linguistic research aim to showcase India's diversity on the global stage. As Prime Minister Modi aptly stated in Mann Ki Baat, "Just as we cannot abandon our mother, we cannot abandon our mother tongue."

Minister said that languages are not merely a collection of words but bridges connecting generations and communities. By fostering linguistic pride and leveraging technology for language preservation and promotion, India is paving the way for a vibrant and unified future. The government remains steadfast in its commitment to developing Indian languages, guiding the nation towards 'Viksit Bharat' that embraces its cultural and linguistic wealth.

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