

Bill No. 163 of 2025

THE CONSTITUTION (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2025

By

SHRI JAGDAMBIKA PAL, M.P.

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further to amend the Constitution of India.

BE it enacted by Parliament in the Seventy-sixth Year of the Republic of India as follows:—

1. This Act may be called the Constitution (Amendment) Act, 2025.

Short title.

5 2. In the Eighth Schedule to the Constitution, the existing entries 7 to 22 shall be re-numbered as entries from 8 to 23, respectively, and before entry 8 as so re-numbered, the following entry shall be inserted, namely:

Amendment
of the Eighth
Schedule.

“7. Indian Sign Language.”.

STATEMENT OF OBJECTS AND REASONS

For the Deaf and mute community, sign language is not simply a means of communication it is crucial for securing basic rights and it is a part of belonging to a community. While the estimates of Deaf and mute community in India vary from 1.3 million to 18 million. Measured conservatively, the World Health Organisation estimates around 6.3 million people in India have complete or partial hearing disability. However, of these, less than 2% are believed to have been formally trained in the use of Indian sign language. As a consequence, Indian sign language has been declared “potentially vulnerable” by UNESCO.

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Indian sign language has been an endeavour at bringing standardization in the way the deaf and mute population communicates in India. To this end, commendable initiatives have been taken. Indian Sign Language Research and Training Centre was established as the pivot institution to promote the use of Indian Sign Language. It created an Indian sign language dictionary which presently accounts for around 10,000 words drawing from the vocabulary of deaf community around the country. National Education Policy, 2020 intends to formalize and promote the use of ISL. As a consequence, NCERT has initiated the inclusion of ISL in the mainstream educational content.

However, accessibility and availability of quality content, lack of opportunities in professional education in Indian sign language continue to be the primary impediment in the empowerment of the community. A formal constitutional recognition by bringing Indian sign language under the Eighth schedule will go a long way in the empowerment of deaf and mute community. At the same time mainstreaming of ISL will also aid the rest of the population's taking up ISL enabling them to interact with the deaf community. Once the language gets officially recognized, the coming up of enabling infrastructure becomes easier.

The proposed constitutional amendment will also aid the proper implementation of section 16 of the “Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016” that entrusts upon the State to create enabling conditions for the deaf community to access education. Bringing Indian sign language under the Eighth Schedule will ensure the access to fundamental rights including Right to Freedom of Speech and Expression under article 19, Right to equality under article 14, right to life and liberty under article 21 and ensure dignity for the deaf community in India.

The Convention on the Rights of the Persons with Disabilities to which India is a party, makes it clear that the recognised sign language has equal status as any other spoken language. Hence, this bill will also be in line with India’s commitment to the international convention.

It will help to foster a sense of belonging for the community and promote inclusivity, linguistic diversity, educational and employment opportunities, access to information and services and strengthen the identity and cultural heritage of the deaf community in India.

Hence this Bill.

NEW DELHI;
November 11, 2024.

JAGDAMBIKA PAL

ANNEXURE
[EXTRACT FROM THE CONSTITUTION OF INDIA]

EIGHTH SCHEDULE

LANGUAGES

*	*	*	*	*
1. Assamese.				
2. Bengali.				
3. Bodo.				
4. Dogri.				
5. Gujarati.				
6. Hindi.				
7. Kannada.				
8. Kashmiri.				
9. Konkani.				
10. Maithili.				
11. Malayalam.				
12. Manipuri.				
13. Marathi.				
14. Nepali.				
15. Oriya.				
16. Punjabi.				
17. Sanskrit.				
18. Santhali.				
19. Sindhi.				
20. Tamil.				
21. Telugu.				
22. Urdu.				
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(Shri Jagdambika Pal, M.P.)