

Bill No. XXXIV of 2024

THE NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR THE PRESERVATION OF
ENDANGERED LANGUAGES BILL, 2024

A

BILL

*to provide for the establishment of a National Commission for the
Preservation of Endangered Languages and for matters
connected therewith or incidental thereto*

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

1. (1) This Act may be called the National Commission for the Preservation of
Endangered Languages Act, 2024.

Short title and
commencement.

- 5 (2) It shall come into force on such date, as the Central Government may,
by notification in the Official Gazette, appoint.

2. In this Act, unless the context otherwise requires,—

Definitions.

- (a) "appropriate Government" means in the case of a State, the
Government of that State and in all other cases, the Central
Government;

- (b) "Commission" means the National Commission for the Preservation of Endangered Languages established under section 3;
- (c) "endangered languages" means any languages in the country, which are at risk of extinction or becoming obsolete due to declining native speakers, limited inter-generational transmission, significant external cultural or linguistic pressures, such as the shifting of speakers to other languages and significant decrease in domains of use and are notified as such by the Central Government under section 4 of this Act;
- (d) "member" means a Member of the National Commission for the Preservation of Endangered Languages; and
- (e) "prescribed" means prescribed by rules made under this Act.

National
Commission
for the
Preservation
of
Endangered
Languages.

3. (1) **The Central Government shall, within a period of one year from the date of commencement of this Act, by notification in the Official Gazette, establish a Commission to be known as the National Commission for the Preservation of Endangered Languages to exercise the powers conferred upon and to perform the functions assigned to it, under this Act.**
- (2) The headquarters of the Commission shall be at New Delhi.
- (3) The Commission shall have the power to regulate its own procedure.
- (4) **The Commission shall consist of the following: —**
 - (i) **a Chairperson, to be appointed by the Central Government, having specialised knowledge and remarkable experience in the field of preserving endangered languages and related activities;**
 - (ii) **four Members, to be nominated by the Central Government, from amongst persons of ability, integrity and standing who have extensive professional experience in, —**
 - (a) **language vitality and endangerment;**
 - (b) **organisations and institutions working for the preservation of endangered and indigenous languages;**
 - (c) **conceptualising and developing innovative projects for endangered language revitalisation with the support of digital technologies; and**
 - (d) **language policies of the Central Government and State Governments.**

5	(iii) one officer of the Indian Administrative Service, to be nominated by the Central Government, having at least ten years of professional experience in the management of matters related to endangered languages – Member Secretary.	
	(5) The salary and allowances payable to, and other terms and conditions of service of the Chairperson and Members of the Commission shall be such as may be prescribed by the Central Government.	
10	(6) The Chairperson and every Member of the Commission shall hold office for such period, not exceeding four years as may be specified by the Central Government in this behalf.	
15	4. (1) The Commission may appoint such number of officers and staff and experts as it may consider necessary for the efficient discharge of its functions under this Act.	Secretariat of the Commission.
	(2) The mode of recruitment, the salary and allowances payable to, and other terms and conditions of service of the officers and staff of the Commission and experts appointed under sub-section (1) shall be such as may be prescribed.	
20	5. The Central Government shall, upon the advice of the Commission, notify languages that are at risk of becoming endangered as ‘Endangered Languages’ in the Official Gazette.	Notification of Endangered Languages.
	6. The Commission shall perform all or any of the following functions, namely, to –	Functions of the Commission.
25	(i) function as an apex authority for ensuring the preservation and development of endangered languages in the country;	
	(ii) identify endangered languages in the country and conduct a detailed assessment to analyse the degree of endangerment of each language;	
30	(iii) formulate a comprehensive national policy for revitalising and developing all the endangered languages in the country, and design a strategic action plan, guidelines for implementation, and monitoring and evaluation activities for the preservation of endangered languages based on the national policy framework;	
35	(iv) support the efforts of the native speakers of endangered languages to reclaim, revitalise, maintain and strengthen their language and culture in a meaningful manner;	

- (v) perform such functions regarding the formulation and implementation of schemes for the preservation of endangered languages as may be assigned to it by the appropriate Government;
- (vi) coordinate with various Government departments both of the Central and State Governments as well as other institutions and organisations working in this field for creating technological tools, educational materials and permanent records of endangered languages including audio and video records of the native speakers, dictionaries, lexicons and grammar of the languages for the purpose of maintenance and transmission;
- (vii) conduct in-depth research and suggest to the appropriate Government better ways of ensuring the preservation of endangered languages in the country;**
- (viii) advise the appropriate Government in matters related to the promotion of endangered language learning and preservation of indigenous cultural activities in order to increase the number of endangered language speakers;
- (ix) support the institutions, organisations and individuals who are engaged in the promotion and preservation of endangered languages in the country;**
- (x) enquire into any complaints concerning the deprivation of the rights of people speaking endangered languages and to recommend to the appropriate Government the action to be taken in such matters;
- (xi) act as a national-level grievance redressal mechanism in matters related to endangered language development and preservation of the welfare and empowerment of native speakers of the endangered languages; and
- (xii) advise the appropriate Government on such matters arising out of the administration of this Act or as may be referred to it by the appropriate Government, from time to time.

Commission
to have
powers of
Civil Court.

- 7.** The Commission shall, while investigating any matter referred to it under clauses (x) and (xi) of section 6, have all the powers of a Civil Court trying a suit and, in particular in respect to the following matters, namely, –
- (a) summoning and enforcing the attendance of any person from any part of India and examining him on oath;
 - (b) requiring the discovery and production of any document;
 - (c) receiving evidence on affidavits;
 - (d) requisitioning any public record or copy thereof from any court or office;

	(e) issuing commission for the examination of witnesses and documents; and	
	(f) any other matter which may be prescribed.	
5	8. The appropriate Government shall consult the Commission on all policies affecting the preservation of the endangered languages in the country.	Appropriate Government to consult the Commission.
	9. (1) The Central Government shall, by notification in the official Gazette, constitute a Special Fund to be known as the Endangered Languages Fund to implement the provisions of this Act;	Endangered Languages Fund.
10	(2) The Central Government and the State Governments, shall from time to time, after due appropriation made in this behalf by the Parliament or the respective State Legislature by law, contribute such sums of money to the Endangered Language Fund, in such ratio as may be prescribed.	
	(3) The Fund shall be administered by the Commission.	
15	10. (1) The Commission shall prepare every year, in such form and within such time as may be prescribed by the Central Government, an annual report giving a true and full account of its activities during the previous year including audited annual statement of accounts and copies thereof shall be forwarded to the Central Government.	Annual Report of the Commission.
20	(2) The President shall cause to be laid before each House of Parliament the report submitted by the Commission under sub-section (1) along with a memorandum explaining the reasons for not accepting any of the recommendations made therein, within a period of one year from the date of receipt of such report.	
25	(3) Where the report or any of its part is related to any of the issues connected with the State Government, a copy of such report shall be forwarded to the Governor of that State, who shall in turn, cause to be laid before the State legislature concerned, such report along with an explanatory memorandum concerned with the action taken or proposed to be taken on the recommendations related to the State, if any, and reasons for not accepting any of the recommendations made therein, within a period of one	
30	year from the date of receipt of such report. .	
	11. The provisions of this Act shall be in addition to and not in derogation of the provisions of any other law for the time being in force.	Act not in derogation of any other law.
35	12. The provisions of this Act and rules made there under shall have effect notwithstanding anything inconsistent therewith contained in any other law for the time being in force.	Act to have an overriding effect.

- 13.** If any difficulty arises in giving effect to the provisions of this Act, the Central Government may make such order or give such direction, not inconsistent with the provisions of this Act, as may appear to be necessary or expedient for removing such difficulty.

Power to
remove
difficulties.

Power to
make rules.

- 14.** (1) The Central Government may, by notification in the Official Gazette, 5
make rules, for carrying out the provisions of this Act.

(2) Every rule made by the Central Government under this section shall be laid, as soon as may be after it is made, before each House of Parliament while it is in session for a total period of thirty days which may be comprised in one session or in two or more successive sessions, and if, before the expiry of the session immediately following the session or the successive sessions aforesaid, both Houses agree in making any modification in the rule or both Houses agree that the rule should not be made, the rule shall thereafter have effect only in such modified form or be of no effect, as the case may be; so however, that any such modification or annulment shall be 10
without prejudice to the validity of anything previously done under that rule. 15

STATEMENT OF OBJECTS AND REASONS

People's ability and freedom to use their native language is essential for human dignity and peaceful co-existence. Language is a systematic form of communication. It facilitates meaningful interactions with one another, enables cultural expressions in a variety of forms, as well as the transmission of centuries-long knowledge, history, world views, beliefs, and traditions. When the State fails to guarantee the 'right to use one's own language', it seriously limits the boundaries of the freedom of thought and expression enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and the Fundamental Rights guaranteed in the Indian Constitution. Hence, it is critical to protect and preserve all the languages irrespective of the number of speakers. Realising the alarming rate of the disappearance of indigenous languages at the global level, UNESCO has already declared the decade of 2022-2032 as the International Decade of Indigenous Languages.

An 'endangered language' is one that is likely to become extinct in the near future. As per census 2011, more than 19,500 languages or dialects are spoken in India as mother tongues, while only 121 languages are spoken by 10,000 or more people. This shows the quantum of endangered languages in our country. Many languages are falling out of use and are being replaced by others that are more widely used in the region. Unless current trends are reversed, these endangered languages will become extinct soon. Many other languages are no longer being learned by new generations of children or by new adult speakers. Hence, these languages will become extinct when their last speaker dies. In fact, dozens of languages today have only one native speaker still living, and that person's death will mean the extinction of the language.

According to the Peoples Linguistic Survey of India, India has already lost 250 languages during the last 50 years. Although successive Governments have undertaken many programmes at the national and state level to conserve the endangered languages, these efforts are not sufficient for protecting and preserving the vulnerable languages in the country. There is an urgent need to understand the gravity of the problem at the national level and formulate a proactive action plan to preserve these endangered languages. Therefore, establishment of a National Commission for the Preservation of Endangered Languages is perceived as the most effective and pragmatic policy initiative to revive, preserve and develop the endangered languages in the country.

Hence, this Bill.

SANDOSH KUMAR P.

FINANCIAL MEMORANDUM

Clause 3 of the Bill provides for the establishment of the National Commission for the Preservation of Endangered Languages and appointment of a Chairperson, Members, Member Secretary to the Commission. Clause 4 provides for the appointment of officers and staff and experts to assist the Commission in the efficient discharge of its functions. Clause 5 provides that the Commission shall conduct in-depth research to suggest to the Government better ways of ensuring the preservation of endangered languages in the country as well as support the institutions, organisations and individuals who are engaged in the promotion and preservation of endangered languages in the country as part of its functions. Clause 9 provides for the constitution of an Endangered Language Fund to which the Central and State Governments shall contribute in such ratio as may be prescribed.

The Bill, therefore, if enacted, would involve both recurring and non-recurring expenditure from the Consolidated Fund of India. However, at this juncture, it is difficult to estimate the actual expenditure likely to be involved.

MEMORANDUM REGARDING DELEGATED LEGISLATION

Clause 14 of the Bill empowers the Central Government to make rules for carrying out the purposes of the Bill. As the rules will relate to matters of detail only, the delegation of legislative power is of a normal character.

RAJYA SABHA

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(Shri Sandosh Kumar P., M.P.)