

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA**  
**MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT**  
**RAJYA SABHA**  
**QUESTION NO 27.11.2009**  
**ANSWERED ON**  
**ENDANGERED INDIAN LANGUAGES .**

133

Smt. Jayanthi Natarajan

Will the Minister of COALCOALHUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state :-

- (a) whether according to UNESCO's Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger (2009), India now leads the World by being home to a whopping 196 endangered languages;
- (b) if so, whether a two day international seminar was held at New Delhi to discuss how to save these languages; and
- (c) if so, the details of discussions held in the seminar and steps taken by Government to protect the Indian languages from dying?

**ANSWER**

MINISTER OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

(SHRI KAPIL SIBAL)

(a) to (c): A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PARTS (a) to (c) OF RAJYA SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO.133 FOR 27.11.2009 ASKED BY SHRIMATI JAYANTHI NATARAJAN AND SHRI N. K. SINGH REGARDING ENDANGERED INDIAN LANGUAGES

(a): Yes, Sir. The 'UNESCO Atlas of World's Languages in Danger', which according to UNESCO is a 'living' data base being corrected constantly on the basis of user feed back and screening of specialist, lists 196 languages for India, whose degree of endangerment varies from 'Vulnerable' to 'Extinct' as follows:

Vulnerable Languages:	84
Definitely Endangered Languages:	62
Severely Endangered Languages:	06
Critically Endangered Languages:	35
Extinct Languages (since the 1950s)	09
TOTAL:	196

The next country in the same list with maximum number of languages under threat is United States of America(USA) with 192 languages. USA is followed by Brazil (190), Indonesia(147), China(144) and Mexico(144).

(b): The Intangible Heritage Division of the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage(INTACH), a Non-Governmental Organisation working in the field of promoting and preserving the cultural heritage and funded by various Govt. agencies and other individual funding agencies, had recently conducted a two-day International Seminar on Endangered Languages in India on 22-23 October, 2009, at the India International Centre Auditorium, Lodhi Estate, New Delhi. One of the participants in the said seminar conducted by INTACH was the Central Institute of Indian Languages(CIIL), Mysore, a subordinate office of the Ministry of Human Resource Development.

(c): A copy of the issues discussed and covered during different sessions of the two-day International Seminar on Endangered Languages in India held in New Delhi on 22-23 October, 2009, is at Annexure-A.

The Central Institute of Indian Languages (CIIL), Mysore, a subordinate office of the Ministry of Human Resource Development, was set up in the year 1969 to:

- Coordinate the work of State Language Institutes, Tribal Research Institutes and Bureaus, University Departments of Languages and Linguistics etc.
- Coordinate the development of Indian languages by conducting research in the areas of language

analysis, language pedagogy, language technology and language use in the society.

- Serve as a clearing house of information on all matters relating to the development of Indian languages in the country and abroad.
- Promote the development of languages of Scheduled Tribes, Development of methods, materials and aids for teaching Indian languages.
- Conduct of language courses through seven regional language centres etc.
- Development of human resource and production of materials in Indian languages including the minor/non-scheduled languages.
- Development of suitable translation techniques and conduct courses for translators.

CILIL is actively engaged in the development of all Indian languages including minor/non-scheduled languages and languages of Scheduled Tribes through its various programmes and schemes. The steps taken by CILIL so far in this direction include documentation of 83 non-scheduled languages with digitised data, preparation of pictorial glossaries for 29 non-scheduled languages, preparation of grammar for 49 non-scheduled languages, preparation of dictionaries for 19 non-scheduled languages and preparation of primers in 21 non-scheduled languages. In addition, 31 non-scheduled languages are taken up for field and comparative studies, folklore studies and cultural documentation.

This Ministry has also reviewed with the States/Union Territories, the progress made in the Preservation and Development of Minor Indian Languages which are not covered under the 8th Schedule of the Constitution of India. It was noticed that many States/UTs have taken concrete action to develop these non-scheduled languages.

#### Annexure-A

ANNEXURE-A REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PART (b) OF RAJYA SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO.133 FOR 27.11.2009 ASKED BY SHRIMATI JAYANTHI NATARAJAN AND SHRI N. K. SINGH REGARDING ENDANGERED INDIAN LANGUAGES

ISSUES DISCUSSED AND COVERED DURING DIFFERENT SESSIONS OF THE TWO- DAY INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR ON ENDANGERED LANGUAGES IN INDIA HELD IN NEW DELHI ON 22-23 OCTOBER, 2009 ORGANISED BY INTACH

Session I: Overview of Endangered Languages in India Pinpointing the Problems

- i) Which language family poses the biggest threat?
- ii) Which geographical areas are threatened most?
- iii) Status of the mother tongue in education and society.

Session II: Is Revival Possible or Desirable – Best Practice

- i) Problems and Solutions in Revival Programmes
- ii) How to save Endangered Languages – Documentation and Archiving

iii) Case Studies

Session III: Impact of Hindi and other Scheduled languages on Unwritten Languages

Session IV: (Part-1) Language of Education, Empowerment

(Language and Power)

i) Monolingualism in schools – its enforcement/encouragement

(Language of Understanding, Communication, Discussion)

ii) Endangerment of Mother Tongue – Insecurities, Dislocation

iii) Mother Tongue/Endangered Language inclusion in Curriculum

Session IV: (Part-2) Language of Education, Empowerment

(Language and Power)

i) Language Empowerment