

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT  
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:2846

ANSWERED ON:11.08.2010

EXTINCTION OF LANGUAGES

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**Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:**

- (a) whether the UNESCO has warned India that about 190 languages are on the verge of extinction;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether the Government has taken any measures to save these endangered languages of the country;
- (d) if so, the details thereof; and
- (e) if not, the reasons therefor?

**Answer**

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT(SMT. D. PURANDESWARI)

(a) & (b): The 'UNESCO Atlas of World's Languages in Danger', which according to UNESCO is a 'living' database being corrected constantly on the basis of user feedback and screening of specialists, has listed 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

However, not all these languages listed in the UNESCO's Atlas are recognised as languages in the Census of India Report, 2001. The degree of endangerment, as can be seen, varies from language to language. Therefore, it would not be correct to say that 190 languages are on the verge of extinction.

(c) to (e): The Central Institute of Indian Languages(CIIL), Mysore, under the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government, has documented/digitally recorded many of these languages. Moreover, it has implemented various programmes on data collection, description, documentation, and material production in a number of these languages in which NGOs are also involved. It has also produced dictionaries, grammars, primers, etc. in some of these languages.