

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

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:1716
ANSWERED ON:10.08.2011
EXTINCTION OF LANGUAGES
Singh Smt. Meena

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

- (a) whether the UNESCO has warned India that about 196 languages are on the verge of extinction;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether the Government has taken/proposed to be taken any measures/steps to save these endangered languages of the country;
- (d) if so, the details thereof; and
- (e) if not, the reasons therefor?

Answer

MINISTER OF THE STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (Dr. 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 196 languages are on the verge of extinction.

(c) to (e): The Ministry has set up a Round Table under the Chairmanship of Human Resource Development Minister for protection and preservation of Indigenous Traditional Knowledge and Endangered Languages. The Central Institute of Indian Languages (CIIL), Mysore, under the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, 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.