

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
HOME AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:3162
ANSWERED ON:11.02.2014
SURVEY ON LANGUAGES
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Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Government has conducted any survey with regard to the total notified and spoken languages/dialects in the country;
- (b) if so, the names and number of such languages and dialects, State/UT-wise; and
- (c) the measures taken to preserve the languages/dialects which are on the verge of extinction?

Answer

MINISTER OF THE STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI R.P.N SINGH)

(a) The office of Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India in Ministry of Home Affairs conducts Population Census wherein data on various demographic and socio-economic parameters including that on languages / mother tongues spoken by people are collected. The returns in the Census are respondent based. Since Census 1971, in accordance with the decisions of the Govt. of India, names of linguistically identifiable mother tongues returned by 10,000 or more speakers at all India level are only being published. The data on mother tongues in each Census are presented in the form of Language Tables under Scheduled (Part-A) and Non-Scheduled (Part-B) categories, through a process of scrutiny, rationalization, classification following the linguistic methods and principles as well as the existing knowledge base in the discipline.

The Scheduled languages comprise of 22 languages and the Non-Scheduled languages comprise of 100 languages. The linguistically identifiable mother tongues which returned 10,000 or more speakers at the all-India level are grouped under the languages and presented in Part-A or Part-B in respect of Scheduled or Non-Scheduled languages respectively. The total number of mother tongues presented in Census 2001 was 234. The term "dialect" is not used in the census publications. However, the Central Institute of Indian Languages (CIIL), Mysore under the aegis of Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India has conducted dialect survey of Khasi, a language spoken in Meghalaya, and Kashmiri, a language spoken in Jammu and Kashmir to study the linguistic structure of these languages. But the Institute has not conducted any survey with regard to the total notified and spoken languages/ dialects in the country.

(b) The number of languages and mother tongues returned at Census 2001 in the different States/ UTs is attached as Annex I. The names of the languages and mother tongues, State/UT wise, is attached as Annex II.

(c) As per the information contained in the Ministry of Human Resource Development, there are no objective criteria to determine whether a language / dialect is on the verge of extinction or not. The UNESCO list of endangered languages does mention that there are 39 languages / dialects in India which are critically endangered and they may be said to be heading towards extinction. The CIIL has recently started a scheme for protection and preservation of endangered languages of the country. Under the Scheme, grammatical descriptions, monolingual and bilingual dictionaries, language primers, anthologies of folklore, encyclopedias, etc. of all the so called endangered languages/ dialects, especially those spoken by less than 10 thousand persons, are to be prepared.