

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
HOME AFFAIRS  
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:3236  
ANSWERED ON:11.02.2014  
REGIONAL LANGUAGES  
Muttamwar Shri Vilas Baburao

**Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:**

- (a) whether it is a fact that as per census of 1961 and 1971, many of the languages in 1961 census have been eliminated in the subsequent census of 1971;
- (b) if so, the details thereof along with the number of languages in 1961 and 1971; and
- (c) the criteria adopted to recognise the regional languages?

**Answer**

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

(a): The office of Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India in MHA conducts Population Census in the year ending with '1' wherein data on various demographic and socio-economic parameters including that on languages / mother tongues spoken by people are collected. In Census 1961, name of all mother tongue returns were published irrespective of the number of speakers. The number of mother tongue names published in 1961 Census was 1652. Out of these, 208 Mother Tongues were reported by 10,000 or more speakers at the all-India level. Since Census 1971, in accordance with the decisions of the Govt. of India, names of mother tongues returned by 10,000 or more speakers at the all India level are only being published. The number of mother tongues with 10,000 or more speakers at the all-India level, as per 1971 Census was 132. The returns in the Census are respondent based. Hence, the question of deliberate elimination of languages / mother tongues does not arise.

(b): The lists of languages/ mother tongues returned at Census 1961 & 1971 are attached as Annex I & II respectively.

(c): As per the information available in the Ministry of Human Resource Development, there is no provision of recognizing a language as a 'regional language' by the Government of India or the State Governments. Hence, the question of adopting any criteria to recognize any language as a 'regional language' doesn't arise. However, the State Government may recognize a so called regional language to be used in education as a subject/medium or as an official language of the State if a sizeable number of people speak that language in the concerned State or a particular area in the State. For example, the official language of Assam is Assamese, but Bengali has been recognized as an associate official language in three districts of Assam. In Manipur, Mao, Kom, Paite etc. are some of the languages which are spoken at the regional/ local level and are not the official languages of Manipur have been recognized as languages to be used in school education.

The office of Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India has also not adopted any criteria to recognize the so called regional languages. This office only ascertains number of languages/mother tongues as spoken in the country derived from the mother tongue returns during decennial Census enumeration based on the following two questions canvassed in the entire country synchronously:

i) Mother Tongue

ii) Other Languages Known

Since 1971 Census, the data on mother tongues are being 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.