



## International Mother Language Day

**For Prelims:** International Mother Language Day, Indian Initiatives to protect Indian Languages, University Grants Commission, Eighth Schedule.

**For Mains:** Education, Government Policies & Interventions, Significance of International Mother Language Day.

### Why in News

Every year, the [United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization \(UNESCO\)](#) celebrates 21<sup>st</sup> February as **International Mother Language Day** to promote mother tongue-based multilingual education.

- The **theme of 2022** is: **“Using technology for multilingual learning: Challenges and opportunities”**, it focuses on the potential role of technology to advance multilingual education and support the development of quality teaching and learning for all.
- The world has **over 7,000 languages whereas India alone has about 22 officially recognized languages**, 1635 mother tongues, and 234 identifiable mother tongues.

### What is International Mother Language Day?

- UNESCO declared 21<sup>st</sup> February as **International Mother Language Day** in 1999 and the World has been **celebrating the same since 2000**.
- The day also commemorates **a long struggle by Bangladesh to protect its mother language Bangla**.
- The resolution to mark 21<sup>st</sup> February as the International Mother Language Day was suggested by **Rafiqul Islam, a Bangladeshi living in Canada**.
  - He proposed the said date to commemorate the 1952 killings in Dhaka during the [Bangla Language Movement](#).
- The aim is to protect the **diverse culture and intellectual heritage of different regions** of the world.
  - According to the [United Nations \(UN\)](#), every two weeks, a language disappears and the world loses an entire cultural and intellectual heritage.
  - Due to [globalisation](#), the rush for learning foreign languages for better job opportunities is a major reason behind the disappearance of mother languages.

### What are Global Efforts for Protection of Languages?

- The UN has designated the period between 2022 and 2032 as the **International Decade of Indigenous Languages**.
  - Earlier, the [United Nations General Assembly](#) had proclaimed 2019 as the International Year of Indigenous Languages (IYIL).
- The **Yuelu Proclamation**, made by UNESCO at Changsha (China) in 2018, plays a central role in guiding the efforts of countries and regions around the world to protect linguistic resources and

diversity.

## What are India's Initiatives to Protect Mother Tongues?

- The recently announced [National Education Policy 2020](#) has given maximum attention to the development of mother tongues.
- The Commission for Scientific and Technical Terminology (CSTT) is providing **publication grants towards the publications of University Level Books** in regional languages.
  - It was established in 1961 to evolve technical terminology in all Indian Languages.
- The **National Translation Mission (NTM) is being implemented** through the Central Institute of Indian Languages (CIIL), Mysore under which the text books of various subjects prescribed in Universities and Colleges are being translated in all languages of the Eighth Schedule.
- **“Protection and Preservation of Endangered Languages”** scheme for conservation of threatened languages.
- The [University Grants Commission \(UGC\)](#) also promotes regional languages in higher education courses in the country and supports nine Central Universities under the scheme “Establishment of Centre for Endangered Languages in Central Universities”.
- Other Initiatives by the Government of India include the **Bharatavani project** and the proposed setting up of a Bharatiya Bhasha Vishwavidyalaya (BBV).
- Recently, an initiative [Namath Basai](#) by Kerala State Government has proved to be very beneficial in educating children from tribal areas by adopting vernacular languages as medium of instruction.
- Google’s Project Navlekha uses technology to protect mother language. The project is aimed at increasing the online content in Indian local languages.

## What are the Related Constitutional and Legal Provisions?

- **Article 29 of the Constitution** (Protection of interests of minorities) gives all citizens right to conserve their language and **prohibits discrimination on the basis of language**.
- **Article 120** (Language to be used in Parliament) provides for use of Hindi or English for transactions of Parliament but gives the right to members of Parliament to **express themselves in their mother tongue**.
- **Part XVII** of the Indian Constitution deals with the [official languages in Articles 343 to 351](#).
  - **Article 350A (Facilities for instruction in mother-tongue at primary stage)** provides that it shall be the endeavour of every State and of every local authority within the State to provide adequate facilities for **instruction in the mother-tongue at the primary stage of education** to children belonging to linguistic minority groups.
  - **Article 350B (Special Officer for linguistic minorities)**: The President should appoint **a special officer for linguistic minorities** to investigate all matters relating to the constitutional safeguards for linguistic minorities and to report to him.
    - The President should place all such reports before the Parliament and send them to the state government concerned.
- [The Eighth Schedule](#) recognises following 22 languages: Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Kashmiri, Konkani, Malayalam, Manipuri, Marathi, Nepali, Oriya, Punjabi, Sanskrit, Sindhi, Tamil, Telugu, Urdu, Bodo, Santhali, Maithili and Dogri.
- [Right to Education \(RTE\) Act, 2009](#) says that the medium of instruction shall, as far as practicable, be in a child’s mother tongue.

[Source: PIB](#)

