



International Mother Language Day

For Prelims: International Mother Language Day, UNESCO, United Nations (UN), Bhasha Sangam, Namath Basai, National Education Policy 2020.

For Mains: India's Initiatives to Protect Indigenous Languages.

Why in News?

On [International Mother Language Day](#), which was celebrated on **February 21, 2023**, it was revealed that **India is losing many of its languages due to modernisation and globalisation**, particularly because of the lack of education.

- The theme of **2023** is “**Multilingual education - a necessity to transform education**”.

What is International Mother Language Day?

- **About:**
 - [UNESCO](#) declared **21st 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 21st February as the International Mother Language Day was suggested by **Rafiqul Islam, a Bangladeshi living in Canada**.
- **Aim:**
 - **UNESCO has emphasised the importance of mother-tongue-based education** for the preservation of [linguistic heritage](#), and the International Decade of Indigenous Languages has been initiated to safeguard cultural diversity.
- **Concern:**
 - According to the [United Nations \(UN\)](#), every two weeks, **a language disappears** and the world loses an entire cultural and intellectual heritage.
 - In India, this is especially affecting [tribal areas](#) **where children struggle to learn in schools** that do not offer instruction in their native tongues.
 - Only **6 tribal languages in the state of Odisha** have a written script, leaving many without access to literature and learning materials.

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 Indigenous Languages?

- **Bhasha Sangam:** The government has launched the "[Bhasha Sangam](#)" program, which encourages students to learn and appreciate different languages, including their mother tongues.
 - The program also aims to **promote multilingualism and cultural diversity.**
- **Central Institute of Indian Languages:** The government has also established the **Central Institute of Indian Languages**, which is dedicated to the research and development of Indian languages.
- **Commission for Scientific and Technical Terminology (CSTT):** The 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.
- **State-level Initiatives:** There are also several **state-level initiatives** to protect mother tongues. For example, the **Odisha government has launched the "Ama Ghara" program**, which provides education in tribal languages to tribal children.
 - Also, [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.

Way Forward

- Despite the current grim situation, there is **hope for India's mother tongues as the [National Education Policy 2020](#) advocates** for mother tongue-based education from the early stages of education to higher education. This **could help these languages survive in the long-term**, but it is important to address the question of **linguistic justice and ensure that language** is not a barrier to education.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question:

Q. Consider the following statements: (2021)

1. 21st February is declared to be the International Mother Language Day by UNICEF.
2. The demand that Bangla has to be one of the national languages was raised in the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Ans: (b)

Source: DTE