



Protests Against Hindi in Northeastern States

For Prelims: Three-language policy, Sixth Schedule of the Constitution, Constitutional Provisions Related to Language, Kothari Commission 1968

For Mains: Government Policies & Interventions, Identity politics, Linguistic Organization of States, Kothari Commission 1968, Unity in diversity

Why in the News?

Recently, the Government of India provided that **Hindi would be made compulsory up to Class 10 in the eight northeastern states.**

- Hindi is described as **“the language of India”**.
- However, the move has been met with **protests from various organisations in the Northeast**. Also, several south Indian states have criticised the central government decision.
- Instead, these groups are supportive of **three-language policy** - English, Hindi and the local language.

What are the Arguments Presented by Northeastern Organization?

- **Sixth Schedule:** The state is protected by the **Sixth Schedule of the Constitution** and the Centre would not be able to impose Hindi on the students.
- **Discrimination:** Centre's move will provide **Hindi-speakers the economic, academic and administrative edge** and let them control non-Hindi speaking regions of the country in the long run.

What is the Issue with Hindi Language and Identity?

- **Linguistic Organization of States:** In India most of the states have been formed on linguistic basis.
 - **Conflicts over identity**, especially over languages tend to be escalated due to limited resources in India.
- **Examples of Linguistic Division:** The status of language has been a critical issue that has caused division of states in the past.
 - Such states as **Andhra Pradesh (1st state formed on linguistic basis), Punjab and Gujarat** were created due to statehood demand on linguistic basis.
- **Instrument of Managing Conflict:** Language policy is one method by which **governments attempt to manage ethnic conflict**.
 - Thus, to develop federal cooperation, autonomy of the states over language policy can be a more viable option than the imposition of a three language formula.

What is the Three-Language Formula & Its Need?

- **About:** Three-Language Formula was first proposed by **Kothari Commission 1968**. Under this

scheme:

- **First language:** It will be the mother tongue or **regional language**.
- **Second language:** In Hindi speaking states, it will be other modern Indian languages or English. In non-Hindi speaking states, it will be **Hindi or English**.
- **Third Language:** In Hindi speaking states, it will be **English or a modern Indian language**. In the non-Hindi speaking state, it will be English or a modern Indian language.
- **Need:** The primary aim is to promote multilingualism and national harmony.
 - The Kothari Committee's report observes that learning **languages is an important part of a child's cognitive development**.
- **Modus Operandi:** At the secondary stage, State governments were to adopt the three-language formula.
 - It included the study of a **modern Indian language**, preferably one of the southern languages, apart from Hindi and English in the Hindi-speaking States.
 - In the '**non-Hindi speaking States**', Hindi should be studied along with the regional language and English.
- **Issue in Implementation:** The states in the **hindi belt (such as in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar)** could not promote learning of south Indian languages under a three language formula.
 - The states like **Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and Tripura were not ready to teach Hindi** in their school curriculum.
 - Instead they demanded autonomy of this issue.

What are Constitutional Provisions Related to Languages?

- **Article 29** of the Constitution of India **protects the interests of minorities**. The Article states that any section of the **citizens who have a distinct language, script or culture of its own shall have the right to conserve the same**.
- **Article 343** is about the official language of the Union of India. According to this Article, it is to be **Hindi in Devnagri script, and numerals should follow the international form of Indian numerals**.
 - This Article also states that **English will continue to be used as an official language for 15 years from the commencement of the Constitution**.
- **Article 346** is about the **official language for communication between the states and between a state and the Union**.
 - The Article states that the "authorised" language will be used. However, **if two or more states agree that their communications shall be in Hindi, then Hindi may be used**.
- **Article 347** gives the **President** the **power to recognise a language as an official language of a given state**, provided that the President is satisfied that a substantial proportion of that state desires that the language be recognised.
 - Such recognition can be for a part of the state or the whole state.
- **Article 350A** facilities for instruction in **mother-tongue at the primary stage**.
- **Article 350B** provides for the establishment of a **Special Officer for linguistic minorities**.
 - The Officer shall be **appointed by the President** and shall investigate all matters relating to the safeguards for linguistic minorities, reporting directly to the President.
 - The President may then place the reports before each house of the Parliament or send them to the governments of the states concerned.
- **Article 351** gives power to the union government to issue a directive for development of the Hindi language.
- **The Eighth Schedule** of the Constitution of India contains a list of **22 recognised schedule languages**.

Way Forward

- **Unity in diversity** has always been the strength of India. Therefore, in the context of identity associated with language and India being a federal polity, both **center and states should follow cooperative models** and avoid **language hegemony/chauvinism**.

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