



# International Day of Sign Languages 2023

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## Why in News?

On the occasion of International Day of Sign Languages (23<sup>rd</sup> September), the Government of India has introduced several initiatives to improve **communication and accessibility for the hearing-impaired**.

- Initiatives for the hearing-impaired include **online Indian Sign Language (ISL) courses, introduction of 267 signs for financial terms in ISL**, a comprehensive ISL dictionary, tailored courses for special schools, and **a WhatsApp-based video relay service for improved communication**.

## What is International Day of Sign Languages?

### ▪ About:

- International Day of Sign Languages is an annual event that **promotes the linguistic and cultural diversity of deaf communities** around the world.
- In 2017, the [United Nations General Assembly](#) proclaimed 23<sup>rd</sup> September as the official day to celebrate the International Day of Sign Languages.
- It is an opportunity to **raise awareness of the importance of sign languages** in the lives of deaf communities and the need to protect them as an essential part of human diversity.
- Millions of people around the world use sign language as their primary means of communication.
  - They are complex visual-gestural communication systems with their own grammar and syntax.

### ▪ Theme of 2023:

- A World Where Deaf People Can Sign Anywhere.

### ▪ History:

- The World Federation of the Deaf (WFD), a federation of 135 national federations of the deaf, proposed the **idea for the day on behalf of the estimated 70 million deaf people around the world**.
- The Permanent Mission of Antigua and Barbuda to the United Nations, along **with 97 other UN Member States, sponsored a resolution**, which was unanimously adopted in December, 2017.
- The date of September 23 was chosen to **honour the day in 1951 when the WFD was established**.
- In 2018, as part of the International Week of the Deaf, the International Day of Sign Languages was **observed for the first time**.

### ▪ Status of Deaf People:

- According to the **World Federation of the Deaf**, there are over 70 million deaf people in the world.
- More than 80% of them live in underdeveloped countries. They collectively use more than **300 different sign languages**.

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