

Constitutional provisions relating to Eighth Schedule

The Constitutional provisions relating to the Eighth Schedule occur in article 344(1) and 351 of the Constitution. Article 344(1) provides for the constitution of a Commission by the President on expiration of five years from the commencement of the Constitution and thereafter at the expiration of ten years from such commencement, which shall consist of a Chairman and such other members representing the different languages specified in the Eighth Schedule to make recommendations to the President for the progressive use of Hindi for official purposes of the Union. Article 351 of the Constitution provides that it shall be the duty of the Union to promote the spread of the Hindi language to develop it so that it may serve as a medium of expression for all the elements of the composite culture of India and to secure its enrichment by assimilating without interfering with its genius, the forms, style and expressions used in Hindustani and in the other languages of India specified in the Eighth Schedule, and by drawing, wherever necessary or desirable, for its vocabulary, primarily, on Sanskrit and secondarily on other languages. It would thus appear that the Eighth Schedule was intended to promote the progressive use of Hindi and for the enrichment and promotion of that language.

List of languages in the Eighth Schedule

The Eighth Schedule to the Constitution consists of the following 22 languages:-

(1) Assamese, (2) Bengali, (3) Gujarati, (4) Hindi, (5) Kannada, (6) Kashmiri, (7) Konkani, (8) Malayalam, (9) Manipuri, (10) Marathi, (11) Nepali, (12) Oriya, (13) Punjabi, (14) Sanskrit, (15) Sindhi, (16) Tamil, (17) Telugu, (18) Urdu (19) Bodo, (20) Santhali, (21) Maithili and (22) Dogri.

Of these languages, 14 were initially included in the Constitution. Sindhi language was added in 1967. Thereafter three more languages viz., Konkani, Manipuri and Nepali were included in 1992. Subsequently Bodo, Dogri, Maithili and Santhali were added in 2004.

Demands of languages for inclusion in the Eighth Schedule

At present, there are demands for inclusion of 38 more languages in the Eighth Schedule to the Constitution. These are:-

(1) Angika, (2) Banjara, (3) Bazika, (4) Bhojpuri, (5) Bhoti, (6) Bhotia, (7) Bundelkhandi (8) Chhattisgarhi, (9) Dhatki, (10) English, (11) Garhwali (Pahari), (12) Gondi, (13) Gujjar/Gujjari (14) Ho, (15) Kachachhi, (16) Kamtapuri, (17) Karbi, (18) Khasi, (19) Kodava (Coorg), (20) Kok Barak, (21) Kumaoni (Pahari), (22) Kurak, (23) Kurmali, (24) Lepcha, (25) Limbu, (26) Mizo (Lushai), (27) Magahi, (28) Mundari, (29) Nagpuri, (30) Nicobarese, (31) Pahari (Himachali), (32) Pali, (33) Rajasthani, (34) Sambalpuri/Kosali, (35) Shaurseni (Prakrit), (36) Siraiki, (37) Tenyidi and (38) Tulu.

Present status on inclusion of languages in the Eighth Schedule

“As the evolution of dialects and languages is dynamic, influenced by socio-economic-political developments, it is difficult to fix any criterion for languages, whether to distinguish them from dialects, or for inclusion in the Eighth Schedule to the Constitution of India. Thus, both attempts, through the Pahwa (1996) and Sitakant Mohapatra (2003) Committees to evolve such fixed criteria have not borne fruit. The Government is conscious of the sentiments and requirements for inclusion of other languages in the Eighth Schedule and will examine the requests keeping in mind these sentiments, and other considerations such as evolution of dialects into language, widespread use of a language etc.”