



Classical Languages

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Why in News

Recently, a Bill to grant the status of Central universities to three deemed Sanskrit universities was passed by the Rajya Sabha.

- The Central Sanskrit Universities Bill, 2019 gives Central status to the Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan and Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri Rashtriya Sanskrit Vidyapeeth in Delhi and the Rashtriya Sanskrit Vidyapeeth in Tirupati.
- The government has been accused of neglecting other classical languages in India.

Key points

- Currently there are **six languages** that enjoy the '**Classical**' status in India:
 - Tamil (declared in 2004), Sanskrit (2005), Kannada (2008), Telugu (2008), Malayalam (2013), and Odia (2014).
 - All the Classical Languages are **listed in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution.**
- The **Ministry of Culture** provides the guidelines regarding Classical languages.
- **Guidelines for declaring a language as 'Classical' are:**
 - High antiquity of its early texts/recorded history over a period of 1500-2000 years;
 - A body of ancient literature/texts, which is considered a valuable heritage by generations of speakers;
 - The literary tradition be original and not borrowed from another speech community;
 - The classical language and literature being distinct from modern, there may also be a discontinuity between the classical language and its later forms or its offshoots.

- Once a language is notified as a Classical language, **the Human Resource and Development Ministry provides certain benefits to promote it:**
 - Two major annual international awards for scholars of eminence in classical Indian languages
 - A Centre of Excellence for studies in Classical Languages is set up
 - The University Grants Commission is requested to create, to start with at least in the Central Universities, a certain number of Professional Chairs for the Classical Languages so declared.

Source: TH