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## NCERT Books in Indian Sign Language

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### Why in News

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The **Indian Sign Language Research and Training Centre (ISLRTC)** and the **National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT)** signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to make NCERT textbooks accessible to hearing-impaired students in sign language.

### Key Points

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- **About the MoU:** NCERT textbooks, teachers' handbooks and other materials for Class I-XII of all subjects in Hindi and English medium would be converted into Indian Sign Language (ISL) in digital format.
- **Significance:**
  - It is a step towards fulfilling needs of **Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPWD) Act, 2016** and **New Education Policy, 2020**.
  - Signing of this MoU is based on the United Nations Children's Fund - **UNICEF's** initiative "**Accessible Digital Textbooks for All**".
  - So far, hearing impaired children used to study only through verbal or written medium now they can study through **Indian Sign Language which is the same all over the country**.
  - In the **childhood days**, cognitive skills of children are developed and it is very necessary to **provide them educational material as per their learning needs**.

It will not only enhance their vocabulary but also enhance their capabilities to understand concepts.

- **Indian Sign Language (ISL):**
  - Broadly, it's a **set of hand and facial gestures** used to communicate, most often by the hearing and speech impaired.
  - It has its own grammar, syntax and regional "dialects", essentially different gestures for the same word or sentiment.
  - The **main difference from spoken languages** lies in form: Sign languages are visual, spoken ones are auditory.
    - Sign language is recognized **as an official language** in many countries across the world like the USA.

## Hearing Impairment in India

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- **Statistics:**
  - According to the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2018, the prevalence of hearing impairment (HI) in India is around **6.3%** (63 million people suffering from significant auditory loss).
    - The estimated prevalence of **adult-onset deafness** in India is 7.6% and childhood-onset deafness is 2%.
  - The larger percentage of Indian population also suffers from milder degrees of hearing loss and unilateral (one sided) hearing loss.
  - **Nearly 50% of deafness can be prevented** if primary health-care approach is adopted for otological care (care of ear and its diseases) across the world.
- **Initiative for Prevention:**
  - **National Program for Prevention and Control of Deafness (NPPCD):** It was launched in 2006 in an effort to tackle the high incidence of deafness in the country, in view of the preventable nature of this disability.
    - **Funding Pattern:**
      - **60:40** for all states except for the North Eastern and Himalayan States (90:10).
      - In case of Union Territories, Central funding is 100% for all UTs except the UTs with legislature, where this ratio is 60:40.
    - **Objectives** of the Program:
      - To prevent the avoidable hearing loss on account of disease or injury.
      - Early identification, diagnosis and treatment of ear problems responsible for hearing loss and deafness.
      - To medically rehabilitate persons of all age groups, suffering with deafness.
      - To develop institutional capacity for ear care services by providing support for equipment and material and training personnel.

- **Other initiatives:**

- **Accessibility of news and educational videos** with the incorporation of sign language/or written text subtitles and transcripts.
- **Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPWD) Act, 2016:** Includes provisions for hearing impaired people.
- **New Education Policy, 2020: Universalization of education** (including disabled) from preschool to secondary level with **100%** Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in school education by **2030**.

### **Indian Sign Language Research and Training Centre**

- **ISLRTC** is an **autonomous** national institute of Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD), **Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment**.
- It was established in **2015**.
- It is dedicated to the task of developing man-power for popularizing the use of Indian Sign Language, teaching and conducting research in Indian Sign Language.

### **NCERT:**

- It is an **autonomous** organization under the **Ministry of Education (MoE)** which is responsible for:
  - Ensuring qualitative improvement in school education by **undertaking and promoting research** in areas related to school education.
  - Prepare and publish model textbooks, supplementary material.
  - Develop and disseminate innovative educational techniques and practices.
- Act as a **nodal agency** for achieving the goals of **Universalization of Elementary Education**.

**Source: PIB**