

MATRIBHASHA DIWAS Press Release

The UNESCO has been observing February 21st every year as International Mother Language Day to promote and disseminate mother tongues and the fuller awareness of the linguistic and cultural traditions throughout the world and to inspire solidarity based on understanding, tolerance and dialogue. The MHRD is celebrating it as Matribhasha Diwas all over India with the objective of sensitizing the people on the need for the greater use of mother tongues and other Indian languages for development and progress of the nation, to impart communicative skills and proficiency in mother tongue especially amongst the English medium students, to give fillip to "Knowledge Creation" in mother tongues, to encourage translation from other languages to mother tongues, to encourage adaptation of latest technologies for mother tongues and to help people to learn one more Indian language. All the schools, colleges, universities and language related institutions under both Central and State Governments were requested to celebrate this by holding seminars, workshops and special lectures, various competitions for students on the importance of mother tongues, India's vast and diverse language heritage and on ways and means to preserve and support about all mother tongues existing in India. Some of the unique features of this celebration would be new types of competitions like GK competition on Indian language heritage, translation from other languages to mother tongues, speech competitions in mother tongues on modern subjects etc, exhibition on Indian mother tongues etc.

India was never a monolingual country. Not only the country but every region, every city is multilingual. From time immemorial, all the languages not only coexisted together but also supplemented and enriched each other. Hence the very culture of this land is inclusive. In order to strengthen this feeling of oneness or nearness, during Matribhasha Diwas celebrations, people are encouraged not only to use one's mother tongue more and more but also to learn other's mother tongue. Schools and colleges are encouraged to take up year-long activities to facilitate using one's own mother tongue better and learning other's mother tongue faster and also to create a congenial atmosphere and appreciating and encouraging Indian mother tongues. Language festivals are also held in different places for the first time.

The Census 2001 reported the existence of 22 Scheduled languages, 100 non-scheduled languages spoken by more than ten thousand persons each, 1635 rationalised mother tongues (including foreign languages) and 1957 'other' mother tongues in India that need to be studied, protected and promoted. In the Matribhasha Diwas was organised by MHRD in Ethiraj College for Women in Chennai today, Honourable Human Resource Development Minister Shrimati Smriti Zubin Irani released 1008 books in 22 languages for children produced by Central Institute of Indian Languages, Mysore, launched online course on Classical Tamil developed by Central Institute of Classical Tamil, Chennai, and 5 volumes of Sanskrit translation of Kalki's legendary Tamil work "Ponniyin Selvan" published by Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan, Delhi.

Hon'ble Minister, Smt. Irani addressed the gathering in four languages, Kashmiri, Tamil, Hindi and English. She said, "India is a land of rich linguistic diversity; it speaks in hundreds of mother tongues from Kashmir to Kanyakumari. Multilingualism in our nation extends back to several millennia. This multilingualism is an asset, a heritage we have inherited and is, in fact, a resource. We can confidently say that all the mother tongues of this country are various

expressions of a single soul. There are thousands of mother tongues spoken in our country. This is not just a number, but a reason to be proud about. One should learn to appreciate the plurality. I am told that Mahakavi Subramania Bharathi learnt over 30 languages because he appreciated all those languages, yet, he found Tamil, his mother tongue, was the sweetest of all. He appreciated all, and he also translated from many languages. But he loved Tamil, his mother tongue, the most.

She appreciated the efforts of the three language Institutes of MHRD, namely, Central Institute of Classical Tamil, Central Institute of Indian Languages and Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan.

Addressing the students, faculty and other guests, Hon'ble Minister Smt. Smriti Zubin Irani said, "It is my proud privilege to say that we are a nation blessed with many mother tongues. Today is a day when we bow to the love for our mother tongues. I was introduced here as someone who spoke many languages, and I am proud to say '*Hindi hain ham watan hai Hindustaan hamaaraa*', irrespective of the languages that we speak and irrespective of the place we hail from. One thing that binds us is our deep need to ensure that India reaches the new glories and face the future. The ladies, especially the girls who are seated in our midst today, you and the youth of the country are the bearers of good fruits and good practices As you carry along your education and research, carry along the merits of your mother tongue so that the seed that is sown today bears very nutritious fruits for our history, our culture, our heritage and nation one day."