



CLASSICAL LANGUAGES - POLITY

NEWS: The Union Cabinet recently approved classical status for five languages—Marathi, Bengali, Assamese, Pali, and Prakrit.

WHAT'S IN THE NEWS?

About classical status

- The designation of a language as classical aims to honor its historical significance and its role in preserving India's cultural heritage.
- These languages have been crucial in safeguarding ancient knowledge, philosophies, and values over thousands of years.
 - **Previous Declarations:** Other classical languages declared include Tamil, Sanskrit, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, and Odia.

Criteria for Classical Languages:

- Initially established in 2004, classical languages must have:
 - A history of over a thousand years.
 - A body of ancient literature viewed as valuable.
 - An original literary tradition.
- **Changes:** In 2005, criteria were modified to require a history of 1,500 to 2,000 years and acknowledged potential discontinuity with modern forms.
 - **Revised Criteria:** The Linguistic Experts Committee modified criteria in July 2024, allowing for a broader definition, including:
 - Knowledge texts beyond poetry.
 - Historical inscriptional evidence.
 - Acknowledgment of modern languages' connections to classical forms.

SINCE 2006



Criteria for conferring the status of Classical Languages

Government guidelines for classical languages include:



Early texts/recorded language history must be > 1500-2000 years



A body of ancient literature/texts, which is considered a valuable heritage by generations of speakers



The literary tradition to be original and not borrowed from another speech community

Significance:

- The recognition of languages as Classical Languages will create significant employment opportunities, particularly in academia and research.
- It will also generate jobs in archiving, translation, publishing, and digital media through the preservation and digitization of ancient texts.
- This initiative encourages scholarly research and revitalization of ancient knowledge systems, reinforcing India's intellectual and cultural identity. Additionally, it fosters pride and ownership among language speakers, promoting national integration and supporting the vision of a self-reliant, culturally rooted India.
- Central government funding is provided for research, translation, and preservation efforts across classical languages.

Related Steps

- The Ministry of Education has implemented several initiatives to promote Classical Languages:



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MAKING YOU SERVE THE NATION

- **Central Universities:** Three were established in 2020 to promote Sanskrit.
- **Central Institute of Classical Tamil:** Created to facilitate the translation of ancient Tamil texts, promote research, and offer courses for students and scholars.
- **Centres for Excellence:** Set up for Kannada, Telugu, Malayalam, and Odia studies under the Central Institute of Indian Languages in Mysuru.
- **Awards:** National and international awards have been introduced to recognize achievements in Classical Languages.
- **Additional Benefits:** Includes National Awards for Classical Languages, university chairs, and dedicated centers for promotion.

Way Forward

- The Union Cabinet's decision to grant Classical Language status to Marathi, Pali, Prakrit, Assamese, and Bengali highlights their vital role in India's cultural and intellectual heritage.
- This recognition not only celebrates their historical and literary importance but also demonstrates the government's commitment to preserving linguistic diversity.
- By safeguarding these languages for future generations, the government reinforces a vision of cultural self-reliance and national integration, aligning with the goals of Atmanirbhar Bharat and a culturally rooted India.

Source: <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/five-languages-got-classical-status-after-original-literary-tradition-norm-was-dropped/article68724949.ece>