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Centre sanctions 116 new tourist spots across the country

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

The Centre has sanctioned 116 new tourist destinations across the country under various schemes in partnership with State governments which would be developed at a cost of ₹4,088 crores.

Out of these, 34 have been sanctioned under the *Swadesh Darshan 2.0* scheme, 42 have been identified under the “Challenge Based Destination Development (CBDD)”, a sub-scheme of *Swadesh Darshan*, and 40 would be developed under Special Assistance to States for Capital Investment (SAS-CI).

The *Swadesh Darshan* scheme aims to develop sustainable and responsible tourism destinations by focusing on theme-based circuits and providing financial assistance to State governments for infrastructure development. The scheme was revamped as *Swadesh Darshan 2.0* (SD2.0) with the objective to develop sustainable tourism destinations.

The Ministry has also formulated CBDD as a sub-scheme under SD2.0 aiming for holistic development of destinations to enhance tourist experience.



The *Swadesh Darshan* scheme aims to develop sustainable tourism destinations.

The Centre, through the Union Finance Ministry, sanctioned 40 projects in 23 States for ₹3,295.76 crore in 2024-25 under the ‘SASCI - Development of Iconic Tourist Centres to Global Scale’ scheme with the objective to comprehensively develop iconic tourist centres in the country, branding, and marketing them at global scale, Union Minister for Culture and Tourism Gajendra Singh Shekhawat informed Parliament earlier this week.

Tribal homestays

The Centre has also approved the initiative to develop tribal homestays under the *Swadesh Darshan* scheme as part of the *Pradhan Mantri Janjatiya Unnat Gram Abhiyan*.

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Content.

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Fact

- **The scheme was revamped as Swadesh Darshan 2.0 (SD2.0) with the objective to develop sustainable tourism destinations.**
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Fact

Swadesh Darshan Scheme

- **It was launched in 2015 by the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, to develop sustainable and responsible tourism destinations in the country.**
- **It is 100% centrally funded scheme.**
- **Under the scheme, the Ministry of Tourism provides financial assistance to State governments, Union Territory Administrations or Central Agencies for development of tourism infrastructure in the country.**
- **Operation & Maintenance (O&M) of the projects sanctioned under Swadesh Darshan Scheme is the responsibility of the respective State Government/UT Administration.**

Swadesh Darshan 2.0:

- **The Ministry of Tourism has revamped its Swadesh Darshan scheme as Swadesh Darshan 2.0 (SD2.0) for development of sustainable and responsible tourist destinations covering tourism and allied infrastructure, tourism services, human capital development, destination management and promotion backed by policy and institutional reforms.**
- **The objective for the Swadesh Darshan 2.0 scheme envisage increase in private sector investment in tourism & hospitality.**
- **It may help in increasing Public Private Partnerships (PPP) in the field of tourism and operation and maintenance of the created assets under the scheme.**

- **About PMJUGA:** It is a centrally sponsored scheme for the welfare of tribal families in tribal-majority villages and aspirational districts.
- **Target Areas and Coverage:** It will cover 549 districts and 2,740 blocks spread across all tribal majority villages across 30 States/UTs.
- It will cover around 63,000 villages benefitting more than 5 crore tribal people.
- According to the 2011 Census, India has a Scheduled Tribe (ST) population of 10.42 crore (8.6%), consisting of over 705 tribal communities.
- **Objective:** It envisions fulfilling critical gaps in social infrastructure like health, education, livelihood, through different schemes of Government of India by convergence and outreach.
- **Goals of the Mission:** It comprises 25 interventions which will be implemented by 17 ministries through funds allocated to them under the Development Action Plan for Scheduled Tribes (DAPST) in the next 5 years to achieve the following goals.

- **Tribal Home Stay:** To boost tourism in tribal areas and provide alternative livelihoods, the Ministry of Tourism will promote 1,000 homestays under the Swadesh Darshan scheme.
- **Villages with tourist potential** will receive funding for 5-10 homestays, with each household eligible for Rs 5 lakh to build two new rooms, up to Rs 3 lakh for renovating existing rooms, and Rs 5 lakh for community needs.
- **Sustainable Livelihood for Forest Right Holders:** The mission places a special focus on 22 lakh Forest Rights Act, 2006 patta holders in forest areas. It aims to expedite the recognition of forest rights, empower tribal communities, and provide sustainable livelihoods through various governmental schemes.
- **Improving infrastructure of Govt residential Schools and Hostels:** The initiative includes improving the infrastructure of tribal residential schools, hostels, and ashram schools to enhance local educational resources, promote enrollment, and retain students in these institutions.
- **Advanced facilities for diagnosis of Sickle Cell Disease:** Centre of Competence (CoC) would be set up in AIIMS and premier Institutes in the States where Sickle cell disease is prevalent.

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Aditya-L1 mission: scientists observe a flareless coronal mass ejection

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Hemanth C.S.
BENGALURU

Scientists from the Indian Institute of Astrophysics (IIA) have reported observations of a flareless coronal mass ejection (CME) from the solar atmosphere with the Visible Emission Line Coronagraph (VELC) instrument onboard Aditya-L1 mission.

The Aditya-L1 mission is India's first scientific mission dedicated to studying the sun and the VELC payload was developed by the Bengaluru-based IIA.

Scientists associated with the IIA said that using the VELC payload, it was possible to observe the corona not only closer to where its base is located in the solar atmosphere, but also obtain data at shorter time intervals compared with other existing coronagraphs in orbit.

The VELC team ob-

served the onset of a CME that erupted from the sun on July 5, 2024, with no association to any flare.

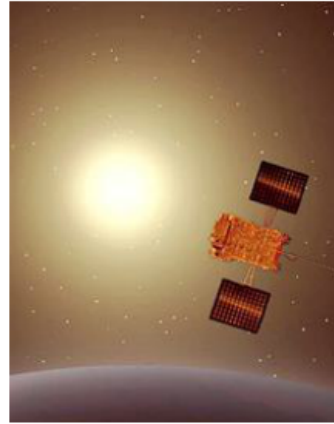
Magnetic instability

They said that the data obtained provide valuable clues to understand and differentiate the magnetic instabilities on the sun that causes the flares and the CMEs.

The results of the study will be appearing soon in the *Astrophysical Journal*, an international peer-reviewed scientific journal.

"Observation of CMEs as and when they originate on the sun and understanding their association with flares is one of the major science goals for VELC, and we are happy that the instrument is doing that," said R. Ramesh, senior professor at the IIA and the principal investigator for the VELC.

Prof. Ramesh added



The Aditya-L1 mission is India's first scientific mission dedicated to studying the sun.

that with the sun approaching the maximum phase of the current solar cycle 25, the CMEs are expected to occur frequently.

Closer monitoring

"Hence, uninterrupted monitoring of the sun with VELC for CMEs is expected to provide valuable data to the Indian and international scientific community. The unique design of VELC

helps to observe the CMEs close to the limb of the solar surface, and their onset time. These advantages facilitate better investigation of the association between CMEs and flares near the solar limb," Prof. Ramesh added.

Flares and CMEs are explosive events in the sun. They are due to magnetic reconnection during which magnetic field lines rearrange.

During a flare, energy is released primarily as electromagnetic radiation from the heated plasma. Compared with flares, the CMEs are massive eruptions of plasma and magnetic field weighing about trillion kilograms that race outwards from the sun through the interplanetary space at speeds up to 3,000 kilometres per second. The association between flares and CMEs is ambiguous till date.

Aditya-L1 Mission

- **The mission was launched by PLSV-C57 to observe the Sun from a halo orbit.**
- **Objectives: to understand:**
 - **Coronal Heating and Solar Wind Acceleration;**
 - **Initiation of Coronal Mass Ejection (CME), flares and near-earth space weather;**
 - **Solar wind distribution and temperature anisotropy etc.**
- **Placed at Lagrangian point L1: Continuously viewing the Sun without any occultation/eclipses, reduced fuel consumption etc. are the key advantages of L1.**
- **7 payloads: Four payloads directly view the Sun and three payloads carry out in-situ studies of particles and fields at L1, thus providing insights into the propagatory effect of solar dynamics in interplanetary medium.**
- **Lifespan: 5 years**

Lagrange points

- **At Lagrange points, gravitational pull of two large masses (like Sun and Earth) precisely equals the centripetal force required for a small object to move with them.**
- **Thus, objects sent there tend to remain stationary.**
- **Of the five Lagrange points, three (L1, L2, L3) are unstable and two (L4, L5) are stable.**
- **L1 is about 1.5 million km from the Earth and the distance of L1 from Earth is approximately 1% of the Earth-Sun distance.**

Real-money gaming firms flag spike in offshore betting apps

These firms argued that heavy taxation would lead to the proliferation of illegal offshore apps; with the apprehension now materialising, financial strain is leading to industry consolidation

Aroon Deep
NEW DELHI

Real-money gaming (RMG) firms are watching with alarm as illegal offshore gambling sites and apps grow at a rapid rate in India, but have not yet been able to convince the government to reduce taxes on the legal industry as a way to curb illegal players.

Indian RMG firms, which offer games and fantasy sports that allow users to stake money for rewards – with the risk of losses – have largely been given legal status, thanks to successive legal judgments in their favour. Courts have ruled that their activities do not constitute betting and gambling, thus insulating them from State bans.

However, the 28% GST imposed on these firms has increased their costs significantly and given an opening to offshore services with no claim to legality.

The existence of these offshore firms have long been potent fodder in RMG executives' efforts to seek lower taxes from the government. Since these firms operate illegally in India, switching domains



Indian RMG firms are now increasingly worried by the fast growth of foreign competitors doing business in India. GETTY IMAGES

and using “mule” bank accounts to stay online and collect payments from players, they do not pay GST at all and cannot be regulated, unlike Indian firms like Dream11 and PokerBaazi.

Swift growth

Even as that argument has been floated as an effort to reduce the domestic industry's tax burden, Indian RMG firms are now increasingly worried by the fast growth of foreign competitors doing business in India.

One industry executive said that offshore apps have been growing at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 30%, similar to the initial days of the le-

gal RMG industry before GST imposition. The legal industry's growth rate has now plateaued to 10% to 15%, the executive said.

A 2024 industry report by a group called the Think Change Forum estimated the cumulative size of the illegal betting firms at ₹8.2 lakh crore, noting that this is growing rapidly.

Authorities have cracked down on some of these, such as the Mahadev app. But those based on foreign shores, such as 1xBet, are harder to crack down on, since they constantly change their banking providers. The argument – that the government is foregoing tax revenues with the proliferation of such betting sites – has so far

not convinced policymakers to change tack.

Industry consolidation

In the meantime, the RMG industry is consolidating. Head Digital Works, an RMG firm, acquired the parent company of Adda52, one of India's oldest poker platforms, for ₹491 crore last month. Nazara Technologies, which offers both RMG and video games, has acquired a major stake in Moonshine Technology, which runs PokerBaazi. Another firm, OneVerse, has acquired the platform PokerDangal.

Regulations seem to be in pause mode, with the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Amendment Rules, 2023 on standby, as the government is yet to formally recognise any self-regulatory body under the Rules' provisions. The industry has taken a few steps to bur-nish its own legitimacy in light of this inaction, such as assisting a study that positively assessed the effectiveness of playtime limits, and putting out a code of ethics that reaffirmed RMG firms' existing safeguards.

Content.

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Actions by govts, businesses to shape trade resilience for years: UNCTAD

N. Ravi Kumar

HYDERABAD

Global cooperation and balanced policies are critical to preventing economic fragmentation and safeguarding long-term growth

amid growing trade uncertainty, the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) has said.

While China's stimulus and lower inflation in some regions are likely to support trade, protectionism

and shifting policies in major economies are key risks, UNCTAD said in an update on global trade covering data through early March. The challenge in 2025 will be to prevent global fragmentation – where

nations form isolated trade blocs – while managing policy shifts without undermining long-term growth. Actions taken now by governments and businesses will shape trade resilience for years to come.

UNCTAD

- **United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) is a permanent intergovernmental body of the United Nations.**
- **It was established in 1964 and is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland.**
- **It aims to promote sustainable development, particularly in developing countries, through international trade, investment, finance, and technology transfer.**
- **UNCTAD's work focuses on four main areas:**
 - **Trade and development,**
 - **Investment and enterprise**
 - **Technology and innovation**
 - **Macroeconomics and development policies.**

Trump hails 'productive' truce talks; urges Putin to spare Kyiv's soldiers

Page No. 12, GS 2

Special envoy Steve Witkoff met with Putin to present the plan, but no immediate agreement was reached; The Kremlin expressed cautious optimism about ceasefire but emphasised the need for direct conversation between Putin and Trump

Agence France-Presse
WASHINGTON

U.S. President Donald Trump said on Friday his administration had "productive" talks with Russia about a ceasefire in Ukraine, urging counterpart Vladimir Putin to spare Ukrainian soldiers on the front line.

Mr. Trump envoy Steve Witkoff met Mr. Putin late Thursday to lay out the details of a joint U.S.-Ukrainian plan, which envisages a 30-day pause in hostilities between Moscow and Kyiv after three years of war. "We had very good and productive discussions with President Vladimir



The truce plan presented by Special envoy Steve Witkoff envisages a 30-day pause in hostilities between Moscow and Kyiv. AP

Putin of Russia yesterday, and there is a very good chance that this horrible, bloody war can finally come to an end," Mr. Trump said in a post on his

Truth Social platform.

White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt clarified to reporters that Mr. Trump had not spoken to Mr. Putin himself on

Thursday. The Kremlin said earlier it was "cautiously optimistic" a deal could be reached, but that Mr. Trump and Mr. Putin needed to speak directly before talks could progress.

In Kyiv, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy accused Mr. Putin of trying to "sabotage diplomacy" after the Russian leader said he had "serious questions" over how a ceasefire would work.

"He is now doing everything he can to sabotage diplomacy by setting extremely difficult and unacceptable conditions right from the start even before a ceasefire," Mr. Zelenskyy

said in a post on X.

Mr. Trump also appealed to Mr. Putin over what he said were "thousands" of Ukrainian troops who were "completely surrounded by the Russian military, and in a very bad and vulnerable position".

"I have strongly requested to President Putin that their lives be spared. This would be a horrible massacre, one not seen since World War II," he said.

Kyiv quickly denied Mr. Trump's claim, saying there was "no threat" of its troops being encircled.

Russia has in the past week been driving much of Ukraine's forces out of its Kursk region.

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Identities and symbols

Cultural markers need not be seen as a challenge to nationalism

Even as the ruling DMK government in Tamil Nadu engages in a political discourse with the BJP-led regime at the Centre over the delimitation of parliamentary and Assembly constituencies and the implementation of the National Education Policy (NEP), its use of the Tamil letter 'Roo' (ரூ) instead of the Indian currency symbol '₹' in the promotional logo for the State budget has drawn nationwide attention. The logo, which was unveiled by Chief Minister M.K. Stalin, has been seen by political opponents as an attempt to place regional identity in opposition to national identity. However, the use of 'Roo' is more a symbolic representation of Tamil – one of India's many languages – than an outright rejection of the currency symbol '₹'. The Tamil Nadu government, like many others, continues to be flexible in adopting different symbols – '₹', 'Rs', and 'ரூ' – in its official documents. In fact, the widespread use of '₹' in the State's first Economic Survey reinforces the idea that cultural and linguistic diversity, rather than political intent, governs such choices.

While Tamil Nadu has taken longer than other southern States to release an Economic Survey, the document is a valuable addition to literature on the State's economy. Forecasting a growth rate of over 8% in 2024-25, the Survey contextualises the State's economy within global and national economic trends. As a major exporter of automobiles, textiles, leather and IT services, Tamil Nadu is more sensitive than many other States to global market fluctuations, making its growth trajectory more volatile. The Survey's observations on demographic trends are particularly relevant, given that Tamil Nadu's population growth is slowing. The challenge lies in consolidating and building upon industrial gains for long-term sustainable growth. Additionally, the Survey underscores the vulnerability of certain coastal districts in terms of climate change/natural disasters. The Survey also has a strong focus on sustainable water management practices – a subject that has historically received insufficient attention. However, the Survey could have had a more detailed analysis of the State's finances and the socio-economic challenges faced by Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, who make up over one-fifth of the population. As more States publish their own Economic Surveys – the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir tabled its Survey recently – there is an opportunity now for economists, public policy experts and academics to conduct comparative analyses. Such studies, shared in public forums, could encourage other States that have yet to attempt similar reports to undertake their own economic assessments, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of India's diverse economic landscape.

Page No. 6, GS 2

Content.

- Even as the ruling DMK government in Tamil Nadu engages in a political discourse with the BJP-led regime at the Centre over the delimitation of parliamentary and Assembly constituencies and the implementation of the National Education Policy (NEP), its use of the Tamil letter 'Roo' ('ரூ') instead of the Indian currency symbol '₹' in the promotional logo for the State budget has drawn nationwide attention.
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A school closure that must be called out

Page No. 6, GS 2

The order to close down the only Gondi-medium school in a village of Maharashtra raises important questions. The school was started in Mohgaon village in the Fifth Schedule area of the Gadchiroli district, in 2019, as a result of a resolution by the gram panchayat, for tribal students to achieve better learning outcomes by imparting primary education in their mother tongue. This initiative was in consonance with Article 29 of the Constitution, which provides minorities the right to preserve distinct languages, scripts and cultures, and Article 350(a) which mandates that the state should make adequate provisions so that children of minority groups may receive instruction in their mother tongue.

However, the local administration has argued that as the school is not registered under the Right to Education Act, 2009, its standards cannot be monitored. Non-recognition would also jeopardise the future of students when they transition to higher classes. However, an education officer has said that in case of closure, the students will be 'absorbed' in other schools.

Subordination by bias

While the objection of the administration is couched in bureaucratic language, it must be emphasised that the question of recognition is fundamentally a question of power, and only derivatively that of procedure. Non-recognition of the school is linked to the structural and socio-political subordination of the Adivasi communities owing to the normative bias of the state against their language and culture. Therefore, spotlighting the moral and political context of this 'bureaucratic' refusal by the local administration becomes important.

Jawaharlal Nehru was of the firm view that the Adivasi communities must grow according to



Anshul Trivedi

is a member of the
Indian National
Congress

The order to close down Maharashtra's only Gondi-medium school is also an affront to the Constitution

their own genius. His view was informed by the historical experience of the past two centuries which saw many tribal communities being driven to the verge of extinction as a result of the vicious violence unleashed by the colonial state across the world.

Therefore, the Constitution has provisions to preserve and protect the tribal way of life – rights over land, language, culture and customs. These provisions are intended to enable tribal communities to participate in the process of nation-building while guarding against the loss of their identity.

Forces of absorption

However, the forces of absorption, which operate in the secular and religious realms, have had an immensely deleterious impact on the tribal communities since Independence. In the secular realm, absorption is carried out by the state and the market, while in the religious realm, absorption is carried out through the denigration, distortion and erasure of tribal religious beliefs. Both these forces of absorption complement each other.

This particular case, of the school's possible closure, is one of absorption through the state which is operationalised through the non-recognition of the elements of tribal culture. This is reflected most clearly in the current status of Adivasi languages in the Constitution. Out of the 22 languages included in the Eighth Schedule, major tribal languages such as Gondi and Bhili are absent.

Gondi, which according to the 2011 Census, is spoken by more than 29 lakh people primarily across six States, is not included within the Eighth Schedule. Therefore, the state has no obligation to promote it at the national level.

On the contrary, Sanskrit, which is considered

the *Devbhasha* or the language of the gods, is spoken by less than 25,000 people across the country, is listed in the Eighth Schedule. The contrast between Sanskrit and Gondi is necessary in this context because both are minority languages. Both are unlikely to be amplified by the market nor can they be considered necessary in getting employment. However, both these minority languages have contrasting fates due to the socio-political power wielded by the community which seeks to promote them – one is recognised by the state while the other is neglected.

Specificity of Adivasi languages

The need to confer state recognition becomes all the more important in the case of Adivasi communities because their culture has an oral tradition which includes their originary myths, religious beliefs and tales of the past. In the present context, given the rapid erosion of the Adivasi identity due to the clearing of forests, increasing urbanisation and rampant marketisation of society, the primary site of the construction of the Adivasi identity (historical memory which is transmitted orally) may face danger. The extinction of an Adivasi language might cause irreparable loss to that identity. Therefore, Adivasi languages must be accorded special status to ensure their protection.

It is ironic that those who claim to follow the Constitution, which derives its legitimacy from 'we, the people', recognise and promote the *Devbhasha* but neglect the *Janbhasha* (language of the people) of the Adivasi people. This gross moral failure must be addressed. It can be remedied, with the first step being the recognition of the Gondi-speaking school in focus and then expanding such schools. This would be in line with the spirit of the Constitution as well.

Content.

- **The order to close down the only Gondi-medium school in a village of Maharashtra raises important questions.**
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Gond Tribe

- **The Gond or Gondi (Gōndi) or Koitur are a Dravidian ethno-linguistic group.**
- **They are one of the largest tribal groups in India. According to the 2001 census, their population was nearly 11 million.**
- **Distribution:**
- **The states of Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, and Odisha are home to the largest Gond populations.**
- **Gond tribes also live in the states of Uttar Pradesh, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Karnataka, Jharkhand, West Bengal, and Gujarat.**
- **Gonds are mainly divided into four tribes, namely Raj Gonds, Madia Gonds, Dhurve Gonds, and Khatulwar Gonds.**
- **The majority of Gond people speak dialects of Gondi, an unwritten language of the Dravidian language family.**
- **Some Gond have lost their own language and speak Hindi, Marathi, or Telugu, depending on which is dominant in their area.**

Fact

- **The objectives of the Sixth Schedule of the Indian constitution are:**
- **To provide for the administration of tribal areas in the northeastern states of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Mizoram.**
- **To protect tribal land and resources and prohibits the transfer of such resources to non-tribal individuals or communities.**
- **To ensure the tribal communities are not exploited or marginalized by non-tribal populations and that their cultural and social identities are preserved and promoted.**
- **The provisions of the Fifth Schedule shall apply to the administration and control of the Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes in any State other than the States of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Mizoram.**

Eighth Schedule:

- **It lists the official languages of the republic of India. Part XVII of the Indian constitution deals with the official languages in Articles 343 to 351.**
- **The Constitutional provisions related to the Eighth Schedule are:**
- **Article 344: Article 344(1) provides for the constitution of a Commission by the President on expiration of five years from the commencement of the Constitution.**
- **Article 351: It provides for 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.**
- **However, It can be noted that there is no fixed criteria for any language to be considered for inclusion in the Eighth Schedule.**

Official Languages:

- **The Eighth Schedule to the Constitution consists of the following 22 languages:**
- **Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Kashmiri, Konkani, Malayalam, Manipuri, Marathi, Nepali, Oriya, Punjabi, Sanskrit, Sindhi, Tamil, Telugu, Urdu, Bodo, Santhali, Maithili and Dogri.**
- **Of these languages, 14 were initially included in the Constitution.**
- **Sindhi language was added by the 21st Amendment Act of 1967.**
- **Konkani, Manipuri, and Nepali were included by the 71st Amendment Act of 1992.**
- **Bodo, Dogri, Maithili, and Santhali were added by the 92nd Amendment Act of 2003 which came into force in 2004.**



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