

## LANGUAGES IN PAKISTAN

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Pakistan's Constituent Assembly has come to grips with the complex language problem in the country and has approved a resolution authorizing the use of Bengali as one of the official languages. This means that for the next twenty years at least there will be three such official languages, since Urdu and English will continue, and there may be still others.

This language question has been one of the chief issues in dispute between East Pakistan, where Bengali is spoken, and West Pakistan where much the most widely used language is Urdu. That dispute, in turn, was one of the reasons for the recent election defeat of the Moslem League in East Pakistan. It was therefore felt that some concession simply had to be made to the Bengali speakers, since they are more numerous than any language group in the West.

Since Urdu and Bengali are not closely related languages, as are some of the subsidiary tongues in the West, the language cleavage is very real. Moreover, while English has provided a useful *lingua franca*, it is not in the emotional sense a "mother tongue." There is a close affinity between the pride in nationhood and the pride in a local language. It is by no means peculiar to Pakistan. The formation of lingual states, for example, has become a major political problem in India.

From the abstract point of view the multi-lingual state is not desirable. It raises many problems. But nations are made up of human beings whose deep feelings on a question such as that of language are vitally important. Pakistan's Assembly has recognized this fact, and it would have been unwise not to do so.

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