Language Policy

What are the issues?

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- The Parliamentary Committee on Official Language recommended to the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) to make Hindi compulsory in all CBSE-affiliated schools till Class X.
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- A case is gaining momentum in favour of revisiting Part XVII of the Constitution which envisages the replacement of English language with Hindi at the national level and with other languages in the Eight Schedule in their respective states.
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- Andhra Pradesh announced that a department will coin new Telugu words to replace English words in vogue now.
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- Kerala declared that from May, Malayalam would be the sole language of the administration.
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- If left unresolved, the language muddle is bound to affect both the efficacy of our educational system and the integrity of our judiciary.
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What is the constitutional mandate?

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- Article 348(1) stipulates the use of English in the Supreme Court and High Courts as well as for drafting Bills, Acts and Orders.
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- Article 348(2) read with Section (7) of the Official Languages Act 1963 provides for Hindi or other official languages to be used in High Courts “in addition to English”.
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- Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh have already been granted the right to use Hindi in their High Courts.

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- The same right has been withheld from Tamil Nadu and Gujarat and Chhattisgarh which sought permission to use Tamil, Gujarati and Hindi respectively.
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- With regard to the functioning of High Courts, all Indian official languages enjoy equal status.
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- Therefore, demands for permission to use these languages in High Courts are bound to increase.
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What is the Court’s stand?

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- A Constitution Bench in Karnataka Vs Recognised-Unaided Schools held that -
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- Even for linguistic minorities, it is the fundamental right of parents to determine what their mother tongue is;
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- A child, and on his behalf his parent or guardian, has the right to choose the medium of instruction at the primary school stage under Article 19(1)(a), and;
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- The imposition of mother tongue at the primary school stage (by the State) affects the fundamental rights under Articles 19(1)(a) and (g) of the Constitution.
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- So CBSE’s move will face the danger of being struck down as unconstitutional.
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What should be done?

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- It is time for India to relook its language policy under Part XVII which became obsolete more than 50 years ago.
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- The nation must adopt mother tongue plus English, with Hindi accorded a

pride of place for ceremonial occasions at national and international levels.
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Source: The Hindu

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