Parliamentary Committee on Official Language

Why in news?

Chief Ministers of Tamil Nadu and Kerala have voiced their concerns over the recommendations of the Committee of Parliament on Official Language.

What is this language panel?

> *Section 4 of the Official Languages Act, 1963 says that a Committee on Official language shall be constituted on a resolution to that effect being moved in either House of Parliament with the previous sanction of the President and passed by both Houses.*

- The Parliamentary Committee of Official Language was set up in 1976 under Section 4 of The Official Languages Act, 1963.
- The Committee is chaired by the Union Home Minister, and has, in accordance with the provisions of the 1963 Act, 30 members - 20 MPs from Lok Sabha and 10 MPs from Rajya Sabha.
- The purpose of the Committee is
    1. To review the progress made in the use of Hindi for official purposes, and
    2. To make recommendations to increase the use of Hindi in official communications.
- Under the provisions of the 1963 Act, the panel submits its report to the President, who "shall [then] cause the report to be laid before each House of Parliament, and sent to all the State Governments".

What did the Committee recommend?

- The Committee has recommended to replace English as a medium of instruction in all technical and non-technical institutions with Hindi.
- While IITs, IIMs and All India Institute of Medical Sciences are considered technical institutions, Kendriya Vidyalayas and Navodaya Vidyalayas fall under the other category.
- Also, the committee has recommended the removal of English as one of the languages in examinations held for recruitment to the Central services.
- It has stated that the requisite knowledge of Hindi among candidates should also be ensured.
- These recommendations has made many states to claim that it is an attempt to impose Hindi on non-Hindi speaking people.

What is the backdrop to the Hindi imposition row?

- The origin of the linguistic row goes back to the debate on official languages.
- In the Constituent Assembly, Hindi was voted as the official language by a single vote.
- However, it added that English would continue to be used as an associate official language for 15 years.

- The Official Languages Act came into effect on the expiry of this 15-year period in 1965.
- This was the background in which the anti-Hindi agitation took place.
- However, as early as in 1959, Jawaharlal Nehru had given an assurance in Parliament that English would continue to be in use as long as non-Hindi speaking people wanted it.

What is the alternative suggested to the proposal?

- The essence of the Official Languages Act, 1963, is to provide something to each of the differing groups to meet its objections and safeguard its position.
- Also, there is a call for equal treatment to all the languages specified under the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution.

Reference

1. The Hindu | Hindi imposition and its discontents
2. Indian Express | Languages panel recommendations

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