

# Indian Sign Language (ISL)

January 26, 2021

**In news:** The Tableau of Indian Sign Language Research and Training Centre (ISLRTC), Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD), Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment at the this year's Republic Day Parade showcased the theme 'Bhartiya Sanketik Bhasha– Ek Rashtra, Ek Sanketik Bhasha'.

**Aim of the Tableau: Bhartiya Sanketik Bhasha– Ek Rashtra, Ek Sanketik Bhasha'.**

- It will highlight the unifying nature of Indian Sign Language (ISL) in a nation, where there is a great diversity in spoken languages.
- The aim of the Tableau is to raise awareness and highlight the commitment of the Government towards creating a barrier-free environment for persons with hearing disabilities by promoting ISL.

**What is a sign language?**

- Sign language is a visual language that uses hands, facial and body movements as a means of communication for persons with hearing disabilities.
- It is a unique and unifying language that connects all persons with hearing disabilities in the country.

**Indian Sign Language**

- There are many spoken languages in the country, but there is **only one Indian Sign Language**.
- Indian Sign Language (ISL) is used in the deaf community all over India. But ISL is not used in deaf schools to teach deaf children.
- Teacher training programs do not orient teachers towards teaching methods that use ISL.

- There is no teaching material that incorporates sign language. Parents of deaf children are not aware about sign language and its ability to remove communication barriers.
- ISL interpreters are an urgent requirement at institutes and places where communication between deaf and hearing people takes place but India has only less than 300 certified interpreters.
- With a view to enhancing accessibility for the hearing impaired, a need was felt to set up an Institute focusing on the development and furtherance of Indian Sign Language.

### **Background: Indian Sign Language Research and Training Centre (ISLRTC)**

- The Finance Minister announced the setting up of ISLRTC in the Union Budget speech of 2010-11.
- Accordingly, Indian Sign Language Research and Training Centre (ISLRTC), New Delhi was set up on 28th September, 2015, **as an autonomous body under the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan), Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.**
- The main objective of the Centre is to develop manpower for using, teaching and conducting research in Indian Sign Language.

### **Objectives of ISLRTC**

- To develop manpower for using Indian Sign Language (ISL) and teaching and conducting research in ISL, including bilingualism.
- To promote the use of Indian Sign Language as educational mode for deaf students at primary, secondary and higher education levels.
- To carry out research through collaboration with universities and other educational institution in India and abroad and create linguistic records/ analyses of

the Indian Sign Language, including creation of Indian Sign Language corpus (Vocabulary).

- To orient and train various groups, i.e. Govt. officials, teachers, professionals, community leaders and the public at large for understanding and using Indian Sign Language.
- To collaborate with organizations of the deaf and other institutions in the field of disability to promote and propagate Indian Sign Language.
- To collect information relating to Sign Language used in other parts of the world so that this input can be used to upgrade the Indian Sign Language.

### **More about the Indian Sign Language Research and Training Centre (ISLRTC)**

- ISLRTC conducts courses for developing Indian Sign Language (ISL) Interpreters and teachers and provides interpretation services to organizations for various programs & events.
- It has developed a dictionary of ISL containing 6000 Academic, Medical, Legal and Agricultural terms in addition to terms of everyday use.
- The Centre also provides Short Term Training Programmes on basic ISL communication skills.
- To make educational materials accessible for children with hearing disabilities, ISLRTC has signed an MoU with National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT).
- As part of this MoU, educational print materials such as school text books of Classes I to XII of all subjects (both Hindi and English medium) are being converted into ISL.