

Mother Tongue Survey of India (MTSI)

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In news– The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has completed the Mother Tongue Survey of India (MTSI) with field videography of the country's 576 languages.

What is the MTSI?

- It is a project that surveys the mother tongues, which are returned consistently across two and more Census decades.
- It also documents the linguistic features of the selected languages.
- In order to preserve and analyse the original flavour of each indigenous Mother Tongue, it has been planned to set up a web-archive at the National Informatics Centre (NIC).
- The report states that the NIC and the National Film Development Corporation (NFDC) will be documenting and preserving the linguistic data of the surveyed mother tongues in audio-video files.
- Video-graphed speech data of Mother Tongues will also be uploaded on the NIC survey for archiving purposes.

How many “mother tongues” does India have, and what is spoken the most?

- As per an analysis of 2011 linguistic census data in 2018, more than 19,500 languages or dialects are spoken in India as mother tongues.
- The category “mother tongue” is a designation provided by the respondent, but it need not be identical with the actual linguistic medium.
- After subjecting the 19,569 returns to linguistic scrutiny, edit and rationalisation, they were grouped

into 121 mother tongues.

- According to the 2011 linguistic census, **Hindi is the most widely spoken mother tongue**, with 52.8 crore people or 43.6 per cent of the population declaring it as the mother tongue.
- **The next highest is Bengali, mother tongue for 9.7 crore individuals**, and accounting for 8 per cent of the population.
- The new National Curriculum Framework (NCF) for the foundational stages of education, launched by Education Minister in October 2022, has recommended that **mother tongue should be the primary medium of instruction in schools for children up to eight years of age.**
- The new NCF, which deals with pre-school and classes I-II, emphasises the virtues of the mother tongue as the primary medium of instruction, saying that by the time children join pre-school, they acquire significant competence in the “home language”.

Note:

- The **forthcoming decennial population census will be the 16th since the first exercise was conducted in 1872.** It will be the **eighth census since independence.**
- The census was supposed to take place in 2021, but was postponed due to the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- To ensure efficient processing and quick release of data, the Home Ministry has said that it has adopted some new initiatives, which include digital data processing and the use of geospatial technology.