

STATEMENT TO INCLUDE ROMAN SCRIPT OF KOKBOROK LANGUAGE IN SCHOOL EXAMINATION

After several decades of advocacy and action to recognise the indigenous Kokborok language as an official language of the state of Tripura in North Eastern India. Two commissions had been set up, under former legislator Shyama Charan Tripura and linguist Pabitra Sarkar. It was official recognised as a State language by the Government of India in 1979. Today it is taught in 22-degree colleges as well as Tripura Central University, using the Bengali and Roman scripts.

However, in recent developments highlighted by the Twipra Students' Federation that despite the relentless struggle to preserve the indigenous Kokborok language, and ensure its holistic inclusion in the curriculums in higher education, steps to include its English language script in the Tripura Board of Secondary Education (TBSE) Examination are yet to be formalized by the State.

As per a survey conducted in the years 2019 and 2020 by the Directorate of Higher Education, Government of Tripura circulated in Government Degree Colleges, it was found that out of 6649 students only 06 students opted for Bengali script of the Kokborok language. In another survey conducted during the period of 2021 and 2022, it was found that out of 9147 students only 04 students opted for Bengali Script.

This accounts for 98% of the students of both English and Bengali medium schools being in favour of the Roman Script. It is imperative therefore that students be given the option to write in Roman script as the overwhelming majority of students have difficulty with reading and writing Kokborok language in the Bengali script.

The New Education Policy-2020 of the Government of India stresses on the importance of education in the mother tongue. But policy needs to be put into practice in order to continue the preservation of indigenous languages in the form and style that is most applicable in current contexts.

Therefore, this statement is an urgent appeal to the Government of Tripura to ensure the protection of the rights of Tripura students by recognising and implementation the demand for inclusion of Kokborok language in the Roman script in board examinations.

Kokborok is the lingua franca among many of Tripura state's tribal groups. The linguistic balance might be disturbed if the Kokborok language is not made accessible in the form it is most widely read and written. We understand the importance of preserving and promoting regional languages, and we believe that providing the English script alongside the Kokborok script will facilitate better comprehension for a wider range of students. Our intention is to create an inclusive and supportive learning environment for all students taking the TBSE Board Examination.

Let this statement also serve as a reminder that we are in the Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022-2032) as declared by the United Nations, the main goal of which is to draw attention to the critical status of many indigenous languages around the world and to promote actions for their revitalization and preservation. Therefore, curriculum integration of the Roman script of the Kokborok will also achieve the aim of literacy through language education. Furthermore, actionable strategies and support for the recognition and protection of indigenous languages must be led by changes in language policies while also allocating government funding for language revitalization programs and initiatives.

Preserving indigenous languages requires a holistic approach involving the collaboration of governments, communities, educators, and various stakeholders. Continuous efforts over the Decade of Indigenous Languages can contribute significantly to the revitalization and preservation of these unique linguistic and cultural heritages.