

Bill Summary

The Kannada Language Comprehensive Development Bill, 2022

- The Kannada Language Comprehensive Development Bill, 2022, was introduced in the Karnataka Assembly on September 22, 2022. It repeals the Karnataka Official Language Act, 1963, and the Karnataka Local Authorities (Official Language) Act, 1981. The Bill makes Kannada the official language in the state and creates an enforcement mechanism to implement the use of the language. Key provisions of the Bill are:
 - **Kannada to be official language:** Kannada language must be used in all legislation (Bills and Acts), orders, rules, or regulations. These may be issued by the state government, local bodies, non-statutory bodies, or registered co-operative societies. Existing legislation in English must be translated to Kannada, which will be deemed to be the authoritative text. District Courts, Trial Courts, and Tribunals shall also conduct proceedings and pronounce judgements in Kannada.
 - English may be used to communicate with: (i) the central government and other state governments, (ii) foreign governments, (iii) the Supreme Court and High Courts. It may also be used in cases where the language may not be dispensed with due to administrative reasons, or where the communication is purely technical or scientific in nature. Linguistic minorities may also use English to correspond with the state government.
 - **Reservation in education:** Certain seats in higher, technical and professional education will be reserved for students who have studied in Kannada medium from the 1st standard to the 10th standard. The state government will notify the percentage of reservation.
 - Students will be taught functional Kannada relevant to their course of study in higher, technical and professional education. University students who have not studied Kannada as a language at the Secondary School Leaving Certificate (SSLC) level will also be taught basic Kannada.
 - **Reservation in employment:** Private industries or institutions must reserve a percentage of seats for Kannadigas to avail land concessions, or tax rebates, or grants. Such reservation will be prescribed in the industrial policy notified by the state. Kannadigas are those who: (i) have resided in Karnataka (or whose parents/guardians have) for at least 15 years, and (ii) can read and write Kannada, and possess related documents as prescribed. Industries governed under the Apprentice Act, 1961 must give preference to Kannadigas for apprenticeship training.
 - Those seeking public employment at the state or local level, or in registered co-operative societies, or non-statutory bodies, will be required to pass a Kannada language examination conducted by the Karnataka Public Service Commission. A person who has passed SSLC or equivalent examination in Kannada as first or second language will be exempt from the exam.
 - **Business compliance requirements:** As far as possible, industrial and consumer products manufactured and sold within the state must provide the product name and direction for use in Kannada (in addition to any other language). Public sector undertakings, all state and central government owned industries, banks and private industries with more than 100 employees must establish cells and teaching units to promote the language within the organisation. Further, all employees of banks and financial institutions in Karnataka must also use Kannada in all their communication with the public. Violation of these provisions will be subject to a fine on those who are in charge of such establishments. For the first offence, the fine may extend up to Rs 5,000.
 - **Measures for promoting Kannada:** Boards of certain government and private institutions, signboards indicating names of roads, tender notifications, advertisements, bills, or notices must primarily be in Kannada. All boards that display advertisements and notices issued in public interest must have a percentage of the content in Kannada. The state government will prescribe the classification of advertisements and the percentage of the content to be in Kannada.
 - **Enforcement mechanism:** Committees will be set up at the state, district and taluka level to implement the provisions of the Bill. Each Committee must submit a report to the higher-level Committee on the development and implementation of Kannada. A Group A officer of the state government, or a Group B officer from the Department of Kannada Culture will be appointed as the Enforcement Officer to ensure compliance with the provisions in the Bill.

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