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Shabdalog, India's First Immersive Language Museum

22 July 2026 ·

HISTORY & CULTURE ·

GS1

CURATED & WRITTEN BY

**Bharat Choudhary**

UPSC Educator & Content Creator

[in linkedin.com/in/epicbharat](https://www.linkedin.com/in/epicbharat)

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Shabdalog, India's First Immersive Language Museum

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✓ Every fact web-verified against primary sources

On July 19, 2026, the Union Home Minister inaugurated Shabdalog, described as India's first immersive "Museum of the Word", at the National Library, Belvedere Estate, Kolkata, under the Ministry of Culture. Built at a Phase-1 cost of over Rs 14 crore, it uses holograms and artificial intelligence across nine galleries to celebrate India's linguistic heritage.

A MUSEUM OF THE WORD

Shabdalog, literally the "world of words", moves beyond the usual museum of objects to a museum of **language itself**. Its **nine galleries** deploy **holograms and AI** to immerse visitors in the sounds, scripts and stories of India's tongues, including the **22 languages of the Eighth Schedule** of the Constitution. Housing it at the **National Library, Kolkata**, India's largest library and a **library of public record** that receives a copy of every book published in the country, gives the project deep symbolic resonance.

THE EIGHTH SCHEDULE

The **Eighth Schedule** lists the languages recognised by the Constitution and is central to the **Official Languages** framework.

ASPECT	DETAIL
Languages at commencement (1950)	14
Languages today	22
Latest additions	Bodo, Dogri, Maithili, Santhali
Amendment that added them	92nd Constitutional Amendment, 2003

Constitutional Anchors

- **Article 344** provides for a Commission and Committee of Parliament on official languages.

- **Article 351** directs the promotion and spread of Hindi so that it serves as a medium for India's composite culture.
- Inclusion in the Schedule brings benefits such as representation on the Official Language Commission and eligibility for development support.

The Demand for Inclusion

Numerous languages, including **Bhojpuri, Rajasthani, Tulu, Garhwali and others**, seek inclusion in the Eighth Schedule. The government has, at various points, referred the question of objective criteria for inclusion to expert committees, reflecting the tension between finite recognition and India's vast linguistic reality.

LANGUAGE, HERITAGE AND SOFT POWER

India records **hundreds of languages and thousands of mother tongues** in its Census, making it one of the most linguistically diverse nations on earth. A museum devoted to language performs three roles at once.

Preservation

By archiving endangered tongues, scripts and oral traditions through digital and immersive media, Shabdalok acts as an instrument of **cultural preservation**, guarding intangible heritage against language loss.

Soft Power

Language is a pillar of India's **soft power** and civilisational identity. Showcasing linguistic plurality projects the idea of "**unity in diversity**" to citizens and the world alike.

The Classical Languages Link

Shabdalok complements India's **classical-languages framework**. The country now recognises several classical languages, including **Tamil, Sanskrit, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, Odia**, and the more recently notified **Marathi, Pali, Prakrit, Assamese and Bengali**, honouring their antiquity and literary heritage.

UPSC RELEVANCE

GS Paper 1: Indian culture covering salient aspects of art forms, literature and architecture; and salient features of Indian society and its diversity.

- **Prelims pointers:** The Eighth Schedule now lists 22 languages; it began with 14; Bodo, Dogri, Maithili and Santhali were added by the 92nd Amendment, 2003; the National Library, Kolkata, is India's largest library and a library of public record; Article 351 concerns the promotion of Hindi.

- **Mains question:** “India’s linguistic diversity is both a civilisational strength and a governance challenge.” Discuss with reference to the Eighth Schedule and initiatives for language preservation. (GS1, 250 words)

★ FACTS CORNER, KNOWLEDGE PEDIA

Eighth Schedule languages (22): Assamese, Bengali, Bodo, Dogri, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Kashmiri, Konkani, Maithili, Malayalam, Manipuri, Marathi, Nepali, Odia, Punjabi, Sanskrit, Santhali, Sindhi, Tamil, Telugu and Urdu.

Sindhi was added by the 21st Amendment (1967); Konkani, Manipuri, Nepali by the 71st Amendment (1992).

National Library, Kolkata: Located at Belvedere Estate; India’s largest library by volume and a repository under the Delivery of Books and Newspapers (Public Libraries) Act.

Classical language status: Grants a dedicated research and promotion framework; Tamil was the first to be so recognised, in 2004.

Ministry of Culture: The nodal ministry for museums, libraries, archaeology and intangible heritage.

Sources: Ministry of Culture, National Library, Kolkata, Eighth Schedule, Constitution of India

Source: Shabdlok, India's First Immersive Language Museum — [Ujjayari.com](https://ujjayari.com) | Free UPSC & State PCS Current Affairs

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