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# Marathi to be must till Class 10 in all Maharashtra schools

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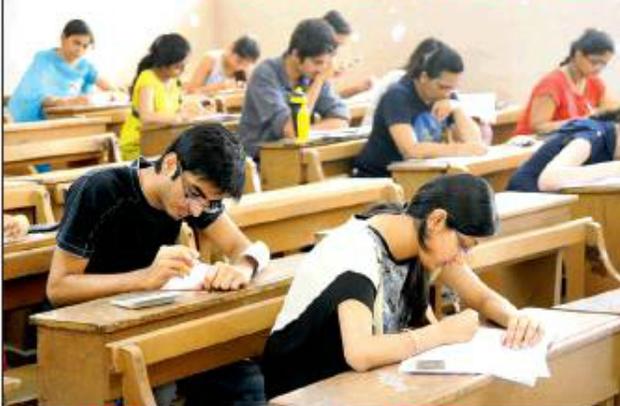


MUMBAI: The state government plans to make Marathi a compulsory subject in all schools across boards, including ICSE, CBSE, IB and Cambridge, from the forthcoming academic year. A bill on the subject, with a penalty provision for non-compliance, was unanimously passed in Maharashtra's legislative council on Wednesday and will be tabled in the assembly on Thursday. The bill allows the government to exempt a student or any class of students from any or all of its provisions.

## MARATHI'S CHANGING STATUS IN SCHOOLS

**2009** State under Congress-NCP regime issues GR telling schools to teach Marathi in Classes 1-4 after then chief minister Vilasrao Deshmukh says the language is to be made a compulsory subject

**2012** GR states Marathi will be taught up to Class 8 in schools affiliated with ICSE, CBSE, IGCSE, IB or any other board. Another circular puts it as a condition to be fulfilled by non-state board schools while seeking NOCs from government



**Nov 2018** Education minister Vinod Tawde (BJP) says in legislative council that Marathi would be made compulsory till Class 10 in all schools

**Aug 2019** BJP-Sena govt forms Marathi literary committee for educationists and ministers to prepare a draft law to make Marathi mandatory across boards

**“** This can't be forced upon CBSE schools as NCERT designs their syllabus as mandated by RTE Act. Similar is the case for ICSE. They have uniform syllabi across India and it will become difficult to learn a regional language in a higher class for those moving into the state late in school years

**Anubha Sahai** | MEMBER, INDIAN PARENTS ASSOCIATION

**CURRENT STATUS**  
Schools teach Marathi till Class 8 as an optional subject

The plan is to cover all classes in five years: in 2020-21, Marathi will be compulsory for Class 1 in the primary and for Class 6 in the secondary section. It will be extended to the other grades progressively till it becomes compulsory up to Class 10 by 2024-25. In 2012, the state asked schools to teach Marathi up to Class 8, but there was choice in the matter.

The bill, introduced on the eve of Marathi Bhasha Divas, says schools will need to follow a Marathi subject curriculum set by the government.

National and international boards with affiliated schools in the state support the government's plan to make Marathi a compulsory subject, but principals and parents seem unhappy.

The ICSE council's CEO Gerry Arathoon said, "We already offer Marathi as a second language and if made compulsory, students can opt for it and appear for board exams." An IB representative said, "The board encourages students to learn languages. We have had initial talks with the government and they will provide us assistance to offer the subject to our

students.”

Principals are more circumspect, saying that while it was a welcome decision to teach students the local language, testing them during board exams might make things difficult. As for parents, they seem unhappy with the move, saying no regional language should be made mandatory as a student might change states during school years.

The compulsory teaching of Marathi will also be a condition for a school to register or obtain an NOC from the government according to the Maharashtra Compulsory Teaching and Learning of Marathi Language in Schools Bill, 2020. If the bill, introduced by minister for Marathi Subhash Desai, is passed, a school that doesn't comply would be fined up to Rs 1 lakh. In states with bicameral legislatures, a bill is usually introduced in the assembly before going to the council, but the Maharashtra council chairman made an exception for the Marathi bill.

As per the bill's statement of objects and reasons, students in Maharashtra of central and international board schools aren't learning Marathi, and so there's a need for a language law on the lines of Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Karnataka.

Chief minister Uddhav Thackeray said, “I don't think Marathi is sakti (compulsion) but it is the language of shakti (power) and bhakti (devotion). Who are these people who ask for evidence of how old the language is? Were they even born then? Marathi can even bring English to task. To conserve Marathi, it is we who need to work. We (the Thackerays) were criticised because my children studied in English medium but my parents never taught me to despise another language. My children speak Marathi properly. Shiv Sena was formed for the very identity of Marathi and I am fortunate this is happening under my government.”

Leader of opposition in the council Pravin Darekar (BJP) said, “This will reemphasize the glory of Marathi. Even now, cars are penalised for having Marathi number plates. This law penalises schools who do not implement it by Rs 1 lakh but that amount may be nothing for big schools. The law needs to be implemented strictly.”

