



**MEGHALAYA BOARD OF SCHOOL EDUCATION**  
**HEADQUARTER:: TURA.**

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**NOTIFICATION NO. 272**

Dated Tura, the 24<sup>th</sup> April, 2025

This is to notify for information of all concerned stakeholders (Educators, Parents, Students, Community Leaders, Government Officials) that a “**Discussion Paper on Introduction of Compulsory Khasi & Garo Languages in Schools**” has been prepared by the Education Department, Government of Meghalaya.

In this regard, all concerned stakeholders are invited to give their valuable views/suggestions/comments on the proposal and send directly to the e-mail [megeeducation@yahoo.com](mailto:megeeducation@yahoo.com) on or before 9<sup>th</sup> May 2025.

**Encl: Discussion Paper vide No. EDN. 60/2025/1 dated Shillong 09/04/2025**

**C.P. Marak, IFS (Rtd.)**  
**Executive Chairman,**

Meghalaya Board of School Education,  
Tura.

No. MBOSE/AW/EDU.DEPTT/164/17/25359-62

Dated Tura, the 24<sup>th</sup> April, 2025.

**Copy to:**

1. The Commissioner & Secretary to the Government of Meghalaya, Education Department, Shillong.
2. The Director (Regional), MBOSE Regional Office, Shillong.
3. The Deputy Director (I.T.E.S.), MBOSE, Tura.
4. All Concerned Stakeholders.

**Executive Chairman,**

Meghalaya Board of School Education,  
Tura.

**Government of Meghalaya  
Education Department**

No.EDN.60/2025/1

Dated Shillong, the 9<sup>th</sup> April 2025

**Discussion Paper**

**Introduction of Compulsory Khasi & Garo Languages in Schools**

*Circulation: Stakeholders (Educators, Parents, Students, Community Leaders, Government Officials)*

**1. Introduction**

The Education Department, Government of Meghalaya proposes

- i. the introduction of compulsory Khasi and Garo languages for students up to Class 4 across the state;
- ii. mandatory sister language exposure: ‘*Khasi/Jaintia students will learn basic Garo, and Garo students will learn basic Khasi*’.

This initiative aligns with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and aims to foster linguistic integration, cognitive development, and cultural unity in Meghalaya.

This discussion paper seeks feedback from stakeholders on the feasibility, challenges, and broader implications of this proposal.

**2. Rationale**

**A. Early Multilingualism and Cognitive Benefits**

National Education Policy 2020 supports early multilingualism stating that children aged 2–8 acquire languages rapidly, enhancing cognitive flexibility and problem-solving skills.

*“4.12. As research clearly shows that children pick up languages extremely quickly between the ages of 2 and 8 and that multilingualism has great cognitive benefits to young students, children will be exposed to different languages early on (but with a particular emphasis on the mother tongue)”*

Policy Document of European Commission (2011). *Early Childhood Education and Care: Providing all our children with the best start for the world of tomorrow*. – Supports early multilingualism in education.

There is great deal of research clearly showing that early multilingualism immensely improves the cognitive ability of children. The following are few Research Papers on Early Multilingualism and Cognitive Benefits:

- i. Bialystok, E. (2001). *Bilingualism in Development: Language, Literacy, and Cognition*. Cambridge University Press.
  - o *Summary*: This book synthesizes research showing that bilingual children exhibit enhanced executive function, problem-solving skills, and cognitive flexibility compared to monolinguals.
- ii. Kovács, Á. M., & Mehler, J. (2009). "Cognitive gains in 7-month-old bilingual infants." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS)*, 106(16), 6556-6560.
  - o *Summary*: Demonstrates that even infants exposed to two languages show improved cognitive control compared to monolingual peers.
- iii. Barac, R., Bialystok, E., Castro, D. C., & Sanchez, M. (2014). "The cognitive development of young dual language learners: A critical review." *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 29(4), 699-714.
  - o *Summary*: A meta-analysis confirming that early bilingualism enhances executive function, attention control, and metalinguistic awareness.
- iv. Hakuta, K., & Diaz, R. M. (1985). "The relationship between degree of bilingualism and cognitive ability: A critical discussion and some new longitudinal data." *Children's Language*, 5, 319-344.
  - o *Summary*: Shows that higher degrees of bilingualism correlate with better cognitive flexibility and problem-solving skills in children.
- v. Petitto, L. A., & Kovelman, I. (2003). "The bilingual paradox: How signing-speaking bilingual children help us resolve it and teach us about the brain's mechanisms underlying all language acquisition." *Learning Languages*, 8(3), 5-18.
  - o *Summary*: Discusses how early bilingual exposure (even in sign language) enhances neural plasticity and cognitive development.
- vi. Adesope, O. O., Lavin, T., Thompson, T., & Ungerleider, C. (2010). "A systematic review and meta-analysis of the cognitive correlates of bilingualism." *Review of Educational Research*, 80(2), 207-245.

- *Summary:* A comprehensive meta-analysis confirming cognitive advantages (e.g., better attention control, working memory) in bilingual children.
- vii. Werker, J. F., & Byers-Heinlein, K. (2008). "Bilingualism in infancy: First steps in perception and comprehension." *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 12(4), 144-151.
  - *Summary:* Explores how infants exposed to multiple languages develop advanced perceptual and cognitive skills early on.
- viii. Genesee, F., & Nicoladis, E. (2006). "Bilingual acquisition." In *Handbook of Child Language* (pp. 324-342). Blackwell.
  - *Summary:* Discusses how young children naturally acquire multiple languages without confusion and how this enhances cognitive flexibility.

**B. Three-Language Formula:** NEP encourages learning at least two Indian languages while allowing flexibility (Para 4.13 of NEP 2020).

*“4.13. The three-language formula will continue to be implemented while keeping in mind the Constitutional provisions, aspirations of the people, regions, and the Union, and the need to promote multilingualism as well as promote national unity. However, there will be a greater flexibility in the three-language formula, and no language will be imposed on any State. The three languages learned by children will be the choices of States, regions, and of course the students themselves, so long as at least two of the three languages are native to India. In particular, students who wish to change one or more of the three languages they are studying may do so in Grade 6 or 7, as long as they are able to demonstrate basic proficiency in three languages (including one language of India at the literature level) by the end of secondary school.”*

#### Key Guidelines on Language Learning (NEP 2020)

- a) Foundation Stage (Age 3–8, Grades Pre-K to 2):
  - Focus: Strong emphasis on mother tongue/regional language as the medium of instruction.
  - Second language (e.g., English/Hindi/Khasi/Garo): Introduced orally in a fun, interactive way.
- b) Preparatory Stage (Age 8–11, Grades 3–5):

- Formal introduction of three languages:
  - First language: Mother tongue/regional language (core focus).
  - Second language: English (for literacy and communication).
  - Third language: Another Indian language (e.g., Hindi, Sanskrit, or a neighboring state's language).
- c) Middle Stage (Age 11–14, Grades 6–8):
  - Continuation of three languages:
    - All three languages are studied with greater proficiency, including reading, writing, and speaking.
    - Example for Meghalaya: Khasi/Garo (L1), English (L2), Hindi/Assamese (L3).
- d) Secondary Stage (Age 14–18, Grades 9–12):
  - Flexibility: Students can choose to continue or drop one language, but at least two languages must be studied.
  - Ideal Practice: Schools are encouraged to offer options so students can retain three languages till Class 10 if desired.

The NEP 2020's three-language policy strongly recommends learning three languages till Class 8, with flexibility to continue till Class 10. The goal is multilingual proficiency without rigidity, respecting India's linguistic diversity.

### **C. Cultural Preservation and State Integration**

- Mother Tongue Emphasis: Khasi and Garo are vital to regional identity; formal education ensures their preservation.
- Promoting Mutual Understanding:
  - Inter-Regional Harmony: Basic knowledge of each other's language bridges cultural gaps between Khasi and Garo communities.
  - State Unity: Encourages a shared identity as "Meghalayans" while respecting linguistic diversity.
  - Practical Benefits: Prepares students for interactions in governance, trade, and social settings across the state.

### 3. Proposal

The Education Department, Government of Meghalaya proposes

- i. introduction of compulsory mother tongue for students up to Class 4. For students whose mother tongue is Hindi, Assamese, Bengali, or Nepali, an additional subject of either Basic Khasi or Basic Garo based on the region will be introduced.
- ii. mandatory sister language exposure: '*students with Khasi/Jaintia as their mother tongue will be introduced to Basic Garo, and students with Garo as their mother tongue will be introduced to Basic Khasi*'.

This proposal will make the following changes to existing languages prescribed by MBOSE:

<b>Present language policy</b>	<b>Proposed language policy</b>
<p><b><u>Class 1-4 (English Medium)</u></b> 1. English</p> <p><b><u>Class 1-4 (Garo/Khasi/Assamese/Bengali/Hindi/Nepali Medium)</u></b> 1. Mother Tongue (Khasi/Garo/Assamese/Bengali/Hindi/Nepali) 2. English</p>	<p><b><u>Class 1-4 (English Medium)</u></b> 1. English 2. Basic Khasi 3. Basic Garo</p> <p><b><u>Class 1-4 (Garo/Khasi/Assamese/Bengali/Hindi/Nepali Medium)</u></b> 1. Mother Tongue (Khasi/Garo/Assamese/Bengali/Hindi/Nepali Language) 2. English 3. Basic Khasi or Basic Garo (Students with Khasi mother tongue shall take Garo and vice versa. Others have to choose based on the location of school)</p>
<p><b><u>Class 5-8 (Only English Medium)</u></b> 1. Mother Tongue (Khasi/Garo/Assamese/Bengali/Hindi/Nepali) 2. English 3. Hindi/ Khasi/ Garo</p>	No Change
<p><b><u>Class 9-10 (Only English Medium)</u></b> 1. Khasi/Garo,/Hindi/Bengali/Nepali/Assamese/Mizo/Urdu/Additional English 2. English</p>	Only one change, i.e. Additional English will not be offered so that students will learn at least one Indian Language

In view of addition of new languages, the other subjects will be rationalised accordingly in order not to increase the burden on the student.

#### **4. Challenges and Suggestions**

- **Teacher Shortages:** The recruitment of trained Khasi and Garo teachers is a significant challenge, given the 9,665 primary schools across the state. To address this, it is suggested to introduce Bilingual Textbooks for Basic Khasi and Basic Garo. Since both languages share the same script, a teacher proficient in either Khasi or Garo can effectively teach the basics of the other language using these textbooks.
- **Resistance from stakeholders:** There may be concerns from parents and students regarding additional workload or the perceived relevance of learning multiple languages. However, extensive research supports the cognitive, cultural, and social benefits of early multilingualism. Additionally, learning a sister language fosters state unity and inter-regional harmony, strengthening cultural ties across Meghalaya.

#### **5. Invitation for Feedback**

The Department seeks views/suggestions/opinions/comments on the proposal.

Submission Deadline: 9<sup>th</sup> May 2025


Contact: [megeeducation@yahoo.com](mailto:megeeducation@yahoo.com)

After receipt of feedback, the Department will conduct consultations with the stakeholder in different groups as well.

#### **Conclusion**

This proposal balances cultural preservation, educational excellence, and state integration. Your participation will ensure its success.

Khublei | Mitela



(Vijay Kumar Mantri, IAS)

Commissioner & Secretary to Government of Meghalaya

Education Department