



The Tamil Nadu Official Language Act, 1956

Act 39 of 1956

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¹[TAMIL NADU] ACT No. XXXIX OF 1956.²[THE ¹(TAMIL NADU) OFFICIAL LANGUAGE ACT, 1956.]*(Received the assent of the Governor on the 19th January 1957, first published in the Fort St. George Gazette on the 23rd January 1957.)***An Act to provide for the adoption of Tamil as the language to be used for the official purposes of the ³[State of Tamil Nadu].**

WHEREAS the Constitution enables the Legislature of a State by law to adopt any one or more of the languages in use in the State as the language to be used for all or any of the official purposes of the State and to prescribe any language other than the English language for use in Bills, Acts, Ordinances, Orders, rules, regulations and bye-laws;

Be it enacted in the Seventh Year of the Republic of India as follows:—

Short title and extent. 1. (1) This Act may be called the ¹[Tamil Nadu] Official Language Act, 1956.

(2) It extends to the whole of the ³ [State of Tamil Nadu].

Tamil to be the official language of the state. 2. The official language of the ³ [State of Tamil Nadu] shall be Tamil.

¹ These words were substituted for the word "Madras" by the Tamil Nadu Adaptation of Laws Order, 1969, as amended by the Tamil Nadu Adaptation of Laws (Second Amendment) Order, 1969.

² For Statement of Objects and Reasons, see *Fort St. George Gazette*, Part IV-A, Extraordinary, dated the 21st December 1956, pages 280-281.

This Act was extended to the added territories by section 3 of, and the first Schedule to, the Tamil Nadu (Added Territories) Extension of Laws Act, 1962 (Tamil Nadu Act 14 of 1962), repealing the corresponding law in force in those territories.

³ This expression was substituted for the expression "State of Madras" by the Tamil Nadu Adaptation of Laws Order, 1969, as amended by the Tamil Nadu Adaptation of Laws (Second Amendment) Order, 1969.

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3. Notwithstanding anything in section 2 and without prejudice to the provisions of Articles 346 and 347 of the Constitution, the English language shall continue to be used for all the official purposes of the State for which it was being used before the commencement of this Act until the State Government, by notification under section 4, otherwise direct in respect of any official purpose specified in such notification.

English to be continued to be used for official purposes until the Government otherwise direct.

4. The State Government may, by notification issued from time to time, direct that Tamil shall be used in respect of such official purposes as may be specified in the notification.

Government's power to notify the official purposes for which Tamil to be used.

4-A. Notwithstanding anything contained in sections 2, 3 and 4 of this Act or in the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908 (Central Act V of 1908) or in the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 (Central Act 2 of 1974), Tamil shall be the language of all—

Declaration of Tamil as the language of courts for recording evidence in all proceedings.

(i) civil and criminal courts subordinate to the High Court ;

(ii) tribunals ; and

(iii) rent courts and revenue courts,

for the purpose of recording evidence in all proceedings :

Provided that the Presiding Officer of any such court or tribunal may, in recording evidence in Tamil, employ English words and phrases, wherever he feels necessary, to bring out the exact purport and meaning :

Provided further that the High Court may, by general or special order, permit—

(i) any class of Presiding Officers of civil or criminal courts, or tribunals, or

¹This section was inserted by section 2 of the Tamil Nadu Official Language (Amendment) Act, 1976 (Tamil Nadu Act 41 of 1976).

(ii) any Presiding Officer of any such court or tribunal, to record evidence in English in such circumstances and for such period as may be specified in such order :

Provided also that the Board of Revenue may, by general or special order, permit—

(i) any class of Presiding Officers of rent courts or revenue courts, or

(ii) any Presiding Officer of any such court,

to record evidence in English in such circumstances and for such period as may be specified in such order.

Explanation.—In this section and in section 4-B, “rent court” or “revenue court” shall mean any court presided over by an officer of the Revenue Department.]

Declaration of Tamil as the language of courts for writing judgments, decrees and orders.

[4-B. (1) Notwithstanding anything contained in sections 2, 3 and 4 of this Act or in the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908 (Central Act V of 1908) or in the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 (Central Act 2 of 1974), and subject to the provisions of sub-section (2), Tamil shall be the language of all—

- (i) civil courts subordinate to the High Court ;
- (ii) criminal courts subordinate to the High Court ;
- (iii) tribunals ; and
- (iv) rent courts and revenue courts,

for the purpose of writing judgments, decrees and orders :

Provided that the Presiding Officer of any such court or tribunal may, in writing judgments, decrees and orders in Tamil, employ English words and phrases, wherever he feels necessary, to bring out the exact purport and meaning :

Provided further that the High Court may, by general or special order, permit—

(i) any class of Presiding Officers of civil or criminal courts, or tribunals, or

¹This section was inserted by section 3 of the Tamil Nadu Official Language (Amendment) Act, 1976 (Tamil Nadu Act 41 of 1976).

(ii) any Presiding Officer of any such court or tribunal,

to write judgments, decrees and orders in English in such circumstances and for such period as may be specified in such order :

Provided also that the Board of Revenue may, by general or special order, permit—

(i) any class of Presiding Officers of rent courts or revenue courts, or

(ii) any Presiding Officer of any such court, to write judgments and orders in English in such circumstances and for such period as may be specified in such order.

(2) The provisions of sub-section (1) shall come into force on such date as the State Government may, by notification, appoint and different dates may be appointed in respect of—

- (i) civil courts subordinate to the High Court ;
- (ii) criminal courts subordinate to the High Court ;
- (iii) tribunals ; and
- (iv) rent courts and revenue Courts.]

5. The language to be used—

(i) in Bills introduced in, or amendments thereto to be moved in, or Acts passed by, the Legislature of the ^{Language to be used in Bills, etc.} [State of Tamil Nadu],

(ii) in Ordinances promulgated under Article 213 of the Constitution,

(iii) in orders, rules, regulations and bye-laws issued by the State Government under the Constitution or under

¹ This expression was substituted for the expression "State of Madras" by the Tamil Nadu Adaptation of Laws Order, 1969, as amended by the Tamil Nadu Adaptation of Laws (Second Amendment) Order, 1969.

any law made by Parliament or the Legislature of the State, shall be Tamil on and from such date as the State Government may, by notification, specify :

Provided that the State Government may appoint different dates in respect of the different items referred to in clauses (i) to (iii).

Notifications
issued under
sections 4 and
5 to be
placed
before the
Legislature.

6. All notifications issued under sections 4 and 5 shall, as soon as possible after they are issued, be placed on the table of both the Houses of the State Legislature and shall be subject to such modifications by way of amendments or repeal as the Legislative Assembly may make within fourteen days on which the House actually sits either in the same session or in more than one session.