

Indo-Canadians want official status for Punjabi

The Indo-Canadian community in Canada has decided to approach the federal government to accord Punjabi the status of being a Canadian language.

A formal resolution to this effect was passed Sunday at the sixth Mother Language Day organised by the Punjabi Language Education Association (PLEA) at Haveli in Surrey here.

Indo-Canadians constitute about eight percent of the population of British Columbia where Punjabi is the fourth most spoken language after English, French and Chinese.

In fact, in the Vancouver suburb of Surrey - also known as the Southall of Canada - it is the second most spoken language after English.

PLEA president Balwant Sanghera, who was one of the movers of the resolution at the annual gathering, told IANS: 'The whole Indo-Canadian community has extended its support to us to approach the federal government to recognise Punjabi as one of the Canadian languages.'

He said representatives of various political parties also assured them that they would take up the issue with the federal government in Ottawa.

'We have now to work with law makers and legal experts on the issue. It may take some time, but we are now committed to getting the deserving status for Punjabi,' Sanghera said.

Sadhu Binning, who is vice president of PLEA and teaches Punjabi at the University of British Columbia, said Punjabi has been used in Canada for 110 years but it was still not recognised as one of the Canadian languages.

It was high time it was given an official status like English and French, he said.

For the first time, leading Indo-Canadian business people joined Mother Language Day, promising to raise funds for promotion of Punjabi.

Speaking fluently in Punjabi, Ann Murphy of the University of British Columbia said the language would flourish in Canada.

During her visits to Punjab, she said she found life there much like her native Ireland.

Punjabi is currently the sixth most spoken language in Canada. And it is set to take the fourth position, beating Italian and German in the next three years.

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