

Important Vocab For the Editorial

1. **divisive** (adjective) – alienating/isolating, disharmonious, discordant.
2. **homogenization** (noun) – the process of making things uniform/similar.
3. **customary** (adjective) – usual, normal, ordinary.
4. **make a pitch** (phrase) – make a bid for, try to get.
5. **raise one's hackles** (phrase) – make someone very angry, upset, irritate, annoy.
6. **pushback** (noun) – a negative reaction/response.
7. **pitch** (noun) – an attempt to convince/persuade someone to accept something.
8. **sweeping** (adjective) – unconditional/unrestricted, complete, total.
9. **embedded** (adjective) – ingrained, established.
10. **resentment** (noun) – bitterness, indignation, enmity, hatred/hate.
11. **absurd** (noun) – illogical, unreasonable; ridiculous/laughable.
12. **impose on** (verb) – force, thrust, foist.
13. **transcend** (verb) – surpass, outstrip, overstep.
14. **linguistic** (adjective) – relating to language; lingual.
15. **obviate** (verb) – avoid, prevent, eliminate.
16. **allegedly** (adverb) – supposedly, purportedly, reportedly.
17. **foster** (verb) – encourage, promote, develop.
18. **utilitarian** (adjective) – functional, realistic, practical.
19. **creeping** (adjective) – (of a negative manner) occurring, developing gradually.
20. **imposition** (noun) – imposing, forcing, pressing.
21. **defuse** (verb) – reduce, lessen/diminish, ease/mitigate.
22. **unbridled** (adjective) – unrestrained, unconstrained, uncontrolled.
23. **disastrous** (adjective) – devastating, ravaging, ruinous.
24. **detractor** (noun) – critic, fault-finder, censurer.
25. **sugar-coat** (verb) – make seemingly/artificially attractive or acceptable.
26. **sideline** (verb) – remove from the centre of activity/attention.
27. **hegemonic** (adjective) – dominant in a context.
28. **diverse** (adjective) – various, manifold/variety, very different.
29. **ethos** (noun) – ethics/beliefs, principles, standards.
30. **cauldron** (noun) – unstable situation, uncertainty (with emotions).

Undesirable and divisive: on Amit Shah's push for Hindi

Promoting greater use of Hindi is fine, but the language of homogenisation is best avoided

It may be customary for the Union Home Minister, who is also in charge of the Department of Official Language, to make a **pitch for greater use of Hindi in official work** on the occasion of 'Hindi Diwas', observed every year on September 14. However, Home Minister Amit Shah's remarks this year have **raised the hackles of political leaders in**

some States that do not speak Hindi. The possible reason for the pushback from south Indian leaders to his pitch is that he went beyond the usual general remarks on promoting Hindi, and made sweeping claims that Hindi alone could unite the country, and it was the language which should become India's "identity" globally. Embedded in his tweets as well as a speech on the occasion was a note of resentment against the continuing influence of English. The Kerala Chief Minister dismissed as absurd the claim that Hindi was a unifying force, and even saw in Mr. Shah's remarks an attempt to trigger a controversy and to divert attention from real issues. Former Karnataka Chief Ministers Siddaramaiah and H.D. Kumaraswamy and DMK president M.K. Stalin questioned Mr. Shah's remarks and saw in them an attempt to impose Hindi on their States. Few would disagree that imposing a language on the unwilling is hardly unifying, but could turn out to be divisive. Further, national identity cannot be linked to any one language, as it is, by definition, something that transcends linguistic and regional differences.

It is time the Centre realised that the creation of linguistic States has obviated the need for a campaign against a "foreign language" allegedly fostering a slave mentality. Regional languages have become the official languages of the States, and the continued use of English has a strong utilitarian value. While the development of Hindi is undoubtedly a constitutional command the Union government cannot ignore, the manner in which it is done should not give the impression to the States that there is creeping imposition of Hindi. It was only a few months ago that the Centre defused a controversy when it got a paragraph removed from the draft New Education Policy that indicated the mandatory teaching of Hindi. The fact that the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party is seen as a 'Hindi-Hindu' party that encourages unbridled homogenisation also works against it whenever such controversies emerge. It would be disastrous for the country's famed diversity if the promotion of Hindi is considered a step towards a 'one nation, one language' kind of unity. Mr. Shah has spoken simultaneously about the increased use of the mother tongue, but detractors would only see it as an attempt to sugar-coat Hindi imposition and the sidelining of English. According a hegemonic role to the "most-spoken" **language** in the country may promote cultural homogenisation, but that is hardly desirable in a country with a diverse population, a plural ethos and is a cauldron of many languages and cultures.