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NATIONAL REPORT ON STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL

NAMES IN INDIA

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NATIONAL REPORT ON STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES IN INDIA

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1   The National Report on the subject, in the last Conference, was presented by Brigadier Y.L. Khular (then Colonel) of Survey of India as a delegate representing India.

1.2   Paras 1 to 3 of the said report give background of the problem and steps taken by Govt. of India for standardization of geographical names. These are enclosed as Appendix 'A' to this report for ready reference.

1.3   The present progress on the resolutions passed in the last Conference is given in Appendix 'B'. Other main aspects are covered hereafter and cross references have been given where essential to avoid duplication.

2. STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES

2.1   In pursuance of resolution 12 of the 3rd Conference, system of transliteration of geograhical names and other proposals are still under the active consideration of Govt. of India.

2.2   In view of the following new developments, the proposed transliteration system recommended for adoption may require further examination.

    i)   Use of computer techniques for transliteration

including reversibility aspect i.e. from Devanagari to Roman and vice-versa.

ii)   Use of diagraphical marks will become essential for geographical names rendered into Roman as suggested in Colonel Sharma's transliteration tables, at-least for computer input/output, apart from additional output for normal use on maps etc without diagraphical marks.

iii)   Phonetic guide and keeping record of correct pronunciation in digital form as per code, for which experimentation and research is being done as per details given in para 11 under "Research and Experiments in Assisting Name Pronunciation".

iv)   Some other systems are reported to have been developed for transliteration and phonetic guide for the official languages of the country which require examination.

2.3   Survey of India (National Mapping Organisation) is the only authority for the transliteration of names from one script to another according to the system approved by the Central Govt. The Hunterian system in use by Survey of India will require a change. Surveyor General of India, Head of the Department of Survey of India had appointed a Committee of Officers headed by Brigadier Y.L.

Khular to further standardize the transliteration of names and all connected matters and to re-examine the existing systems, and to submit their recommendations.

2.4 The Committee had held two meetings and distributed the work amongst its members. The aspects mentioned in para 2.2 have been taken into account by the Committee in its task.

2.5 It is felt that the Committee will be able to make suitable suggestions towards 'romanization system' from Devanagari script into Roman writing system including computer application. Also, it will be able to suggest table of transliteration between Devanagari and each of the other 14 official languages of the country, in reversible mode, suitable for use in computer without ambiguity. Thus having rendered the script in each of the 14 official languages into Devanagari, a romanization system, at least for these Indian languages will be possible via Devanagari script.

2.6 Trials have been taken up for trying out the 'transliteration system' recommended by Resolution 12 of Third Conference by taking up transliteration work of one topographical sheet in each region to understand the practical difficulties. The difficulties will be examined and assessed. Remedial measures required, if any, will be suggested by the Committee.

3. MARITIME & UNDERSEA FEATURE NAMES

For the present progress and status, see para 15 of Appendix 'B'.

4. SINGLE ROMANIZATION SYSTEM FOR EACH NON-ROMAN WRITING SYSTEM

In this connection please see para 2.5 of the report.

5. TRAINING COURSES ON TOPONYMY

The proposal is under consideration for starting a training course exclusively in toponymy in Survey Training Institute, CST & MP (for further details see para 7 of Appendix 'B'). In the Advanced Cartography Course, at the said Institute, toponymy is covered by syllabus.

6. TOPONYMIC DATA FILES

6.1 Experimental work is being done in Survey of India and National Hydrographic Office, both using Kongsberg equipment for automated cartography. The names in Roman Script are stored for a standard topographical map sheet with other parameters required for the production of Names Original of a map sheet.

6.2 Gazetteer work by way of collection of geographical names in Devanagari script (of official language of the Union of India) and also in regional languages' scripts (official languages of the states) and thereafter in Roman script is in hand to compile the manuscript. The entire country has been covered on 1:50,000 scale surveys and thus the work of collection of names in the field is over. A National Compendium of Place names

is under preparation.

6.3   The transliteration system when approved by Government of India will need minor changes which can be taken care of in the next edition.

6.4   The 'State Names Authority', one for each state has been appointed for some states and it is hoped remaining states will do the same. These bodies have a crucial role to play in the standardization of geographical names falling within their state/union territory.

7. LIST OF COUNTRY NAMES

7.1   Lack of authentic list of country names, of the world in Roman script was badly felt by Survey of India at the time of processing the 'World Map' on Mollweide projection depicting equal area. This map has come upto proof stage.

7.2   Similar necessity has been acutely felt for such a list in Devanagari script. The pronunciation of the name as a phonetic guide for transliteration into Devanagari script will be essential.

8. DEFINITIONS

The definitions of cartographic terms in Hindi (official language of the Union of India) in Devanagari script is under print. The cartographic terms listed in the

"Multilingual Dictionary of Technical Terms in Cartography" (five languages multilingual dictionary) have been taken up for rendering in Hindi. Definition in English is also given. (A sample of proof of few pages is with the delegate).

9. CONTRIBUTION OF INDIA IN THE WORKING OF THE INDIAN DIVISION

The Regional meeting of the Indian Division has not taken place since the last meeting on 30 August 1977 at Athens (first meeting). India is keen that the work on Indian Division is activated with the cooperation of the countries of the Indian Division. Please refer to Para 13 of Appx. 'B'.

10. EXONYMS

10.1   Third list of changes to important names which includes 'exonyms' and other names corrected upto 31.12.83, incorporating about 750 names is under print.

10.2   The methodology followed to bring the change is by way of bringing awareness to the State Govt. concerned. For this purpose, a list of exonyms in each state is being compiled. Once the list is compiled the State Govt. will suggest the name in regional script (official language) from which the geographical name will be rendered into Devanagari script and therefrom into Roman script.

10.3   Survey of India has been adopting, so far, a practice

of depicting the changed name on its map appropriately as the first name and old name (exonym) in parenthesis during the transition period, till such time that the new name become conventional by wide usage for practial reasons. This practice is slightly different from the practice recommended by the Conference but our practice is considered more practical for our conditions, for quicker adoption of new name.

11. RESEARCH AND EXPERIMENTS IN ASSISTING NAME PRONUNCIATION

11.1 Research and experiments on the subject are being done in the following Govt. organisations or institutions where Govt. has sponsored some of the projects.

  i) Universal Digital Communication Research Institute, New Delhi.

  Project on 'Speech sounds in digital form' (part of the project as relevant for transliteration).

  ii) Central Institute of Indian Languages, Mysore.

  Project on, 'Pronunciation Dictionary of Proper Names'.

  iii) Central Hindi Directorate, New Delhi.

  Multilingual Dictionary is under print.

11.2 It is hoped that not only key to pronunciation will emerge, but also the digital computer method of recording the pronunciation along with the geographical name.

11.3   A simple phonetic guide is required for spelling
of a place name in Roman script. Phonetic (pronunciation) record
of a geographical name in a digital form for easy storage will
be useful and if possible on a cassette tape also. In addition
key to pronunciation is also under consideration for printing
on a map for spelling of names in Roman script.

12. GAZETTEER

12.1   "The Gazetteer of India: Indian Union" has 4
volumes as follows :-

     Volume I -   Country and people
                   (published - 15 Aug 1965)

     Volume II - History and Culture (published)

     Volume III - Economic Structure and activities

     Volume IV - Administration and public welfare

     The above gazetteer in 4 volumes is compiled by 'The
Central Gazetteers Unit of Govt. of India'. It is published by
the Publications Division of the Ministry of Information and
Broadcasting.

12.2   The above gazetteer will not meet the require-
ment of the gazetteer of geographical names. (Volume I has few
geographical names). Geographical names, even if standardized,
will not come in wide use unless the gazetteer of geographical

names is brought out. There is an urgent need for not only the standardization of the geographical names but also to bring out the gazetteer of geographical names, so that, various agencies i.e. Railways, Post and Telegraph, Radio, Television, Newspapers, mass communication media and geographers use the gazetteer having standardized geographical names in the country.

12.3   For work being done on gazetteers, please refer to para 6.2 .

13. CONCLUSION

Standardization of the geographical names and the methodology for practical implementation to bring about the usage of the standardized geographical names is important and of urgent necessity. This forum is thus of great international significance to achieve the above aim.

The paragraphs 1 to 3 of the National Report on Standardization of Geographical Names in India presented at the 4th U.N. Conference, 1982 explaining the background of the problem of the Standardization of Geographical Names in India is reproduced below for ready reference.

1. INTRODUCTION

India is a vast country with Hindi as the national language. English is a link language and is to continue for quite sometime. Many regional languages are prevalent in the country but only fifteen of them have officially been recognised in our Constitution. Some more languages are, however, likely to be added in the near future. Sanskrit has either given birth to or influenced other Indian languages.

Any system of transliteration of names cannot satisfy fully the needs of all the languages of the country but can achieve substantial amount of results in standardisation of geographical names. All the Indian languages are phonetic in character and their names are also picked up in the field by the Surveyors in phonetic terms which are later transliterated into Devanagari or Roman. With the improved standard of education, particularly in English and Hindi, better awareness and under-

standing in picking up of names and transliteration of names is possible. Quality of picking up of names can be considerably improved by providing continuous and persistent guidance to the supervisors involved in field and office treatment in transliteration viz. standardization of grographical names, Names falling in the multi-lingual belts can be picked as phonetically decipherable, in both the languages and thereafter transliterated. In the course of office treatment the difference between the two transliteration can be reconciled to accept the most suitable transliterated names keeping in view the background of language, history, usage, names appearing in the State or National Gazetteer and other revenue records.

2 HISTORY OF PLACE NAMES

Place names in India as they stand today, have undergone a good deal of change as a result of impact of historical events. Tribal languages, Dravidian influence in the South, influence of Sanskrit, Islamic influence etc, were the factors in the evolution of place names which were named after hills, wild animals, types of forests, rivers, local deities, local heroic persons etc. These names were subsequently subjected to anglicised accent.

3. STANDARDISATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES

As per resolutions passed earlier in U.N. Conferences for standardisation of Geographical names, the Govt. of India initiated the matter and issued the undermentioned guidelines to achieve the desired objectives:

(a) Authority to determine the spelling of any name in the script ϩed as the official language of the Centre will ϲst in the Central Government.

(b) All Ministries of Central Government and subordinate offices will observe the spelling approved by the Central Government.

(c) The Survey of India(National Mapping Organisation) will be the only authority for the transliteration of names from one script to another according to the system approved by the Central Government. In the event of disagreement between the Survey of India and a State Government, the decision of the Government of India will be final.

(d) Where a State Government uses a script (other than the

Devanagari script) which differs from that used by the
Central Government or where a local script of the State
differs from the script used by the Central Government,
the State Government will be the authority for deciding
the spelling of Geographical names of places or features
in the State in local script. Survey of India will be
responsible for transliterating these names into
Devanagari or Roman script in accordance with the
approved system of transliteration and in consul-
tation, where necessary, with the State Government
and other appropriate authorities.

(e) State Government will have full authority, where
they adopt Hindi in the Devanagari script as the
official language or even where Hindi is only a local
language of the State Government, to give names to
places and natural features within their areas hitherto
unnamed. Such names will be communicated to the Survey
of India in the Devanagari script for transliteration
to the Roman script. Should it be necessary to alter
the existing spellings in Devanagari script of a name
in use by the Survey of India, the State Government
will ask the Survey of India to adopt the new spelling.

If the Survey of India is unable to agree, the State Government may refer the matter to the Central Government for a decision. This procedure will apply also to changes in the spellings of names that appear in the Gazetteer of India.

3.2   Standardisation of geographical name is the process of giving a standard spelling in the official languages out of various alternatives. In a multilingual country like India where there are fifteen recognised official languages, this process would consist of first deciding the name in the official language of the State and then transliterating into Devanagari, English and other languages in accordance with the approved system of transliteration. The system of transliteration should thus be a reversible one so that no distortion occurs in original spelling during transliteration.

Our present system of transliteration i.e. Hunterian system, does not meet the present day requirements of India and suffers from certain drawbacks. In pursuance of resolution 12 of the 3rd Conference, system of transliteration of geographical names and other similar proposals are under the active consideration of Government of India and decision in this regard is expected to be taken in the near future.

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1. RESOLUTION 1.- SYSTEMATIZATION AND CENTRALISATION OF EXPERIENCE IN THE SHAPE OF THE STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES

We will await with interest the completion of the handbook of general, technical and methodological principles for the standardization of geographical names.

2. RESOLUTION 2.- 'MANUAL' OF NATIONAL NAMES STANDARDIZATION

The report of UNGEN is awaited for further necessary action.

3. RESOLUTION 3 & 4.- COMBINED TREATMENT OF TOPONYMIC DATA EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION IN AUTOMATED DATA PROCESSING

'National Compendium of Place Names' is under preparation. This data would be available for exchange in due course.

4. RESOLUTION 5.- PUBLICATION OF TOPONYMIC GUIDELINES

The job of toponymic guidelines has been taken up in the 15 official languages and English.

5. RESOLUTION 6.- STANDARDIZATION OF PHYSIOGEOGRAPHIC NAMES

Govt. of India has already initiated action in 1979 for setting up "State Names Authority" in each state and the function proposed to be entrusted to such a body.

Named physiogeographic regions would be listed in

surveys and other documents alongwith the locations and dimensions of the features.

6. RESOLUTION 7.- EDUCATION IN CARTOGRAPHIC TOPONOMY

A training course in Toponomy in Survey Training Institute is under consideration. Toponomy is also included in the syllabus of Advance Cartographic Course at the Institute.

7. RESOLUTION 8.- TERMINOLOGY GLOSSARY

Supply of approved 'Terminology Glossary' in English is required. We intend to bring out Hindi version in Devanagari script along with English.

8. RESOLUTION 9.-

If funds are made available by the appropriate agency of United Nations then suitable seminars and courses can be arranged in India for countries of the India Division, on the lines of the course conducted vide document No. E/CONF.74/L 76.

9. RESOLUTION 10 & 11.- ACCELERATION OF WORK ON STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES

India agrees with Resolution 10 and would like to be kept informed of the work of the Group of Experts for standardization of geographical names at the national and international level as the work progresses and reports are brought out.

The urgent need for expediting the work on standardization of geographical names in the country has been felt more

acutely and steps have been taken to expedite the process in keeping with Resolution No. 11.

10. RESOLUTION 12 TO 14.- CONVERSION INTO NON-ROMAN WRITING SYSTEM

India will like to know the progress on Resolution 12 and 13.

As regards Resolution 14, it is felt that names in regional languages (official languages of states) could be transliterated into Devanagari script in which script, the transliteration(better will be phonetic transcription) could be done rather than through the medium of Roman alphabet.

11. RESOLUTION 15.- ROMANIZATION OF ARABIC CHARACTERS

Adoption of Resolution No. 15 is under consideration and will be pursued.

12. RESOLUTION NO. 16 & 17.- GUIDELINES FOR THE CONSIDERATION OF ROMANIZATION SYSTEMS

The Resolution No. 16 is under consideration of the Committee constituted by Survey of India for the standardization of geographical names in India. However, slight modification of the table is under consideration.

13. RESOLUTION 18.- TRANSLITERATION INTO ROMAN AND DEVANAGARI SCRIPT OF THE INDIAN DIVISION

Please refer to para 2 of this report as regards progress in India.

It has not been possible to hold a meeting of the India Division (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka) to consider the transliteration tables, which were recommended vide Resolution No. 12 of the Third Conference. How to pursue the matter could be considered in this Conference so that progress could be achieved.

14. RESOLUTION 19 & 20.- LIST OF COUNTRY NAMES-MAINTENANCE OF LIST OF COUNTRY NAMES

In this connection kindly see para 7 of the report.

15. RESOLUTION 21.- MARITIME AND UNDERSEA FEATURE NAMES

Reference may continue to be made to Survey of India in respect of maritime areas of her interest.

16. RESOLUTION 22.- EXTRA-TERRESTRIAL FEATURES NAMES

A list of renowned Indian Scientists could be compiled, so that, for extra-terrestrial features, names would be readily available with UNGEN/International Astronomical Union/NASA etc. to enable naming of such features with names representing all countries, so that the same find easy ready acceptance by all nations.

17. RESOLUTION 23 & 24.- REDUCTION OF EXONYMS REDUCTION OF EXONYMS IN TEXTBOOKS AND ATLASES

In this connection, kindly see para 10 of the Report.