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Language Relief Leaves Schools Lost For Words

Apex Court's Exemption Comes Mid-Way In School Session

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New Delhi: The books have been bought, timetables redrawn and teachers assigned. Now, schools that spent months putting CBSE's revised three-language framework into practice are grappling with a fresh question: What does Supreme Court's recent relief for Class VI students mean for arrangements already in place?

Under the revised framework, students were required to study three languages, including at least two Indian languages. Schools accordingly introduced language options, reorganised teaching schedules and, in some cases, arranged for additional teachers. Some also persuaded reluctant parents to accept changes to their children's initial language choices.

The apex court has now directed CBSE to extend to Class VI students exemptions and relaxations available to the current Classes VII–IX batches. These include exemption from the newly mandated third language from Class X board examinations and flexibility for students already studying two non-native languages to retain both while adding a 'Bharatiya Bhasha'.

For educators, the uncertainty lies in how these relaxations translate into classroom practice midway through the session. They are seeking clarity on existing language combinations, third-language classes and assessment. The immediate question is what to do with teaching arrangements already in place.

Rooma Pathak, principal of MM Public School, said schools had restructured timetables and arranged for additional language teachers before the court extended the transitional relief.

"Schools are now in a fix over whether to continue these classes, put them on hold, or roll them back. Clarity is awaited from CBSE on how to proceed for the current session, especially regarding assessment of the third language for Class VI students," she said.

For some schools, implementation had also involved persuading families to accept a different language. At Mamta Modern School, principal Pallavi Sharma said French had been offered until last year, but Sanskrit was introduced this session following CBSE's April directions.

The change was initially met with resistance from many parents, particularly some Sikh families who wanted Punjabi as an option. Sharma said the school explained its inability to appoint additional faculty and eventually persuaded parents to opt for Sanskrit. Several Hindi teachers were then redeployed to teach the language.

Revisiting those choices now will require another adjustment after students and teachers settled into the new arrangement. "I feel it may not be practically feasible to change the subject options again at this stage," Sharma said.

Students had already bought Sanskrit textbooks and studied the language for several months, she explained. Timetables were finalised and teachers assigned, leaving little scope for a significant change in the current session. Divya Bhatia, principal of Amity International School, Saket, said the court's decision has created uncertainty for institutions . "Schools need clarity on the way forward," she said.

There was no response to queries sent to CBSE on whether it plans to issue any clarification to schools.

THREE LANGUAGES, FRESH QUESTIONS

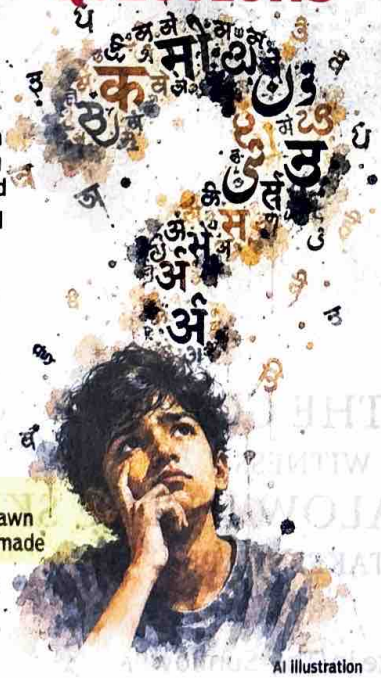
ORIGINAL ROAD MAP

- Three languages, including at least two Bharatiya Bhashas, subject to exemptions and transitional relaxations
- The 2026–27 Class VI batch was originally required to take the third-language board examination upon reaching Class X
- CBSE's June 29 guidelines exempted the 2026–27 Classes VII–IX batches from that examination, providing internal assessment instead
- Those older batches could retain two existing non-native languages and add one Bharatiya Bhasha as a one-time relaxation

SCHOOLS REWORKED THE CLASSROOM

According to some heads of schools

- Third-language classes introduced, timetables redrawn and staffing arrangements made
- At Mamta Modern School, Sanskrit replaced French this session; several Hindi teachers were redeployed to teach Sanskrit
- Some parents initially resisted the change, including Sikh families seeking Punjabi
- Students purchased Sanskrit textbooks and have been studying the language for several months



AI illustration

RELIEF FOR CLASS VI

- On Sept 28, Supreme Court extended to the 2026–27 Class VI batch the relaxation available to Class VII
- Students get exemption from the third-language board examination when they reach Class X
- Court reporting describes internal assessment without a pass/fail consequence linked to board results
- Published reports also say students already studying two non-native languages may retain both and add one Bharatiya Bhasha

WHAT EDUCATORS WANT

- Clear, uniform and timely implementation guidelines
- A phased, flexible transition recognising schools' practical constraints
- Continuity in students' learning, with minimal disruption from further changes

MID-SESSION DILEMMA

Concerns expressed by the principals

- Whether existing third-language classes should continue, pause or be rolled back
- How Class VI third-language assessment should now be conducted
- Whether another change is practical after months of lessons and settled teaching arrangements