

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CULTURE (DR. MAHESH SHARMA): (a) to (c) Yes, Sir. A report on the proposal of Maharashtra Government for grant of classical status to Marathi language has been received from Committee of Linguistic Experts. The said Committee recommended the grant of classical status to Marathi language and the said recommendations are under consideration of the Ministry. However, in the light of several Writ Petitions filed by Shri R. Gandhi in the High Court of Judicature at Madras on the subject, it was decided to wait for the outcome of the said Writ Petitions. The Hon'ble High Court of Judicature at Madras has now disposed of the Writ Petitions *vide* common order dated 08.08.2016 declining to interfere in the matter and disposed of all the petitions. Consequently, the proposal for grant of classical status to Marathi language is again under active consideration of this Ministry.

#### **Excavations in Keezhadi in Tamil Nadu**

1474. SHRI T. K. RANGARAJAN: Will the Minister of CULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) what is Government's assessment about the archaeological excavations in Keezhadi in Tamil Nadu;

(b) the reasons for stopping further excavation at the site; and

(c) how Government proposes to deal with the excavation which has rich historical evidence for Tamil Culture?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CULTURE (DR. MAHESH SHARMA): (a) Based on the material evidences accumulated from the two seasons of excavation at Keezhadi (Keeladi) a threefold cultural period is seen. The cultural periods are divided on the basis of the structural remains, Tamil-Brahmi inscribed potsherds, copper coins, non cultural zone pottery like Rouletted ware, indigenous black and red ware along with painted black and red ware, russet coated painted ware and associated artefacts. The broad classification of the cultural periods is tentatively dated from c. 3rd cent. B.C.E. to 10th cent. CE.

(b) The excavations at Keezhadi have not been stopped by ASI but was paused for time being so that whatever archaeological investigations have been carried out at the site may be thoroughly documented and interim report is prepared. Now since the interim report is submitted the permission letter for excavation for the field season 2016-17 has been issued.

(c) The excavations at Keezhadi are being taken up in a systematic manner with the survey of the adjoining area to ascertain the archaeological potential of the region.