**Welcome address by Dr. Rajesh Ranjan, High Commissioner of India to Botswana on the occasion of World Hindi Day on 16th February 2019**

* **Hon. Ms. Botlogile Tshireletso, Assistant Minister of Local Government and Rural Development of the Republic of Botswana**
* **Mr. Shailendra Kumar Singh, MD, Bank of Baroda**
* **Protocol observed**
* **Media personnel**
* **Participants**
* **Ladies and Gentlemen**
* **At the outset, I would like to thank Hon. Ms. Botlogile Tshireletso, Assistant Minister of Local Government and Rural Development for joining us today to celebrate World Hindi Day.**
* Hindi is the official language of India. Most official works are done in this language. It is an ancient language having Devanagari script. India has 122 major languages and 1599 other languages, however, 22 are recognized as official languages of India. In India, most people in India either speak Hindi as their mother tongue or are aware of this language. It shows the importance of Hindi language in India. But with time, English has acquired an equally important status.
* The World Hindi Day or the Vishwa Hindi Diwas is a crucial step to assist in spreading the glory of this sweet language.
* The World Hindi Day or the International Hindi Day was celebrated in India for the first time in the year 2006. The date was chosen to be 10 January due to this historical significance. On 10th January 1975, the first World Hindi Conference was organised in Nagpur.
* Till date, 11 separate World Hindi Conferences have been held in India and abroad including Mauritius, Trinidad-Tobago, London, Suriname, USA, and Johannesburg. **The last or the eleventh conference took place on 18 to 20 August in 2018, at Mauritius**. It was initiated by Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi.
* The Government of India is trying its best to uplift the status of Hindi inside the county and on the international platforms, however, the rapid rate of globalization and westernization has cast its dark shadow. People think that it is mandatory to know English only. A person who talks in Hindi and does not know English is looked down upon. We have to break this stigma.
* Promoting Hindi as a language – As westernization is casting it’s dark shadows on the popularity of Hindi in recent times, the celebration of International Hindi Day will not only make this language popular in India, will also increase its usage both inside the country and abroad.
* Popularizing Hindi on international platforms – The Hon’ble Prime Minister of India has taken the initiative seriously and has given official speeches in Hindi, when he is on an official visit to other nations. He also makes it a point to use Hindi while addressing his countrymen. This is a positive step that will make this language popular on international platforms.
* The celebration of International Hindi Day will also make youngsters aware of this rich language. Once they understand the importance and glorious past of the script, they will also respected and work towards its development.
* If more and more people start using Hindi in their daily lives, the overall admiration for which language is going to increase significantly. The main aim the Government of India is to create an environment where people will love the language they speak.
* Hindi is one of the many elements that impart a unique character to India. A true Indian will love the language just as he/she loves the nation. Hindi is one language that is spoken by almost by 420 million people all over the world. Thus, it is only obvious that you will find someone speaking in Hindi no matter where you go.
* With the growing popularity of India in the international arena, the promotion of Hindi has also reached great heights. Hindi is not only our national language. It is also the pride of India and every Indian should respect it. For those who think that Hindi is not an easy language, they only need to take the first step and start using the language more. Hindi does not need to compete with any other language. All languages are equally important.

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