

# A LINGUISTIC CONUNDRUM

India's lack of a central language has historically proven to be a political, economic and social problem

## Mapping the languages

The sixteen most commonly spoken languages of India, Bangladesh and Nepal

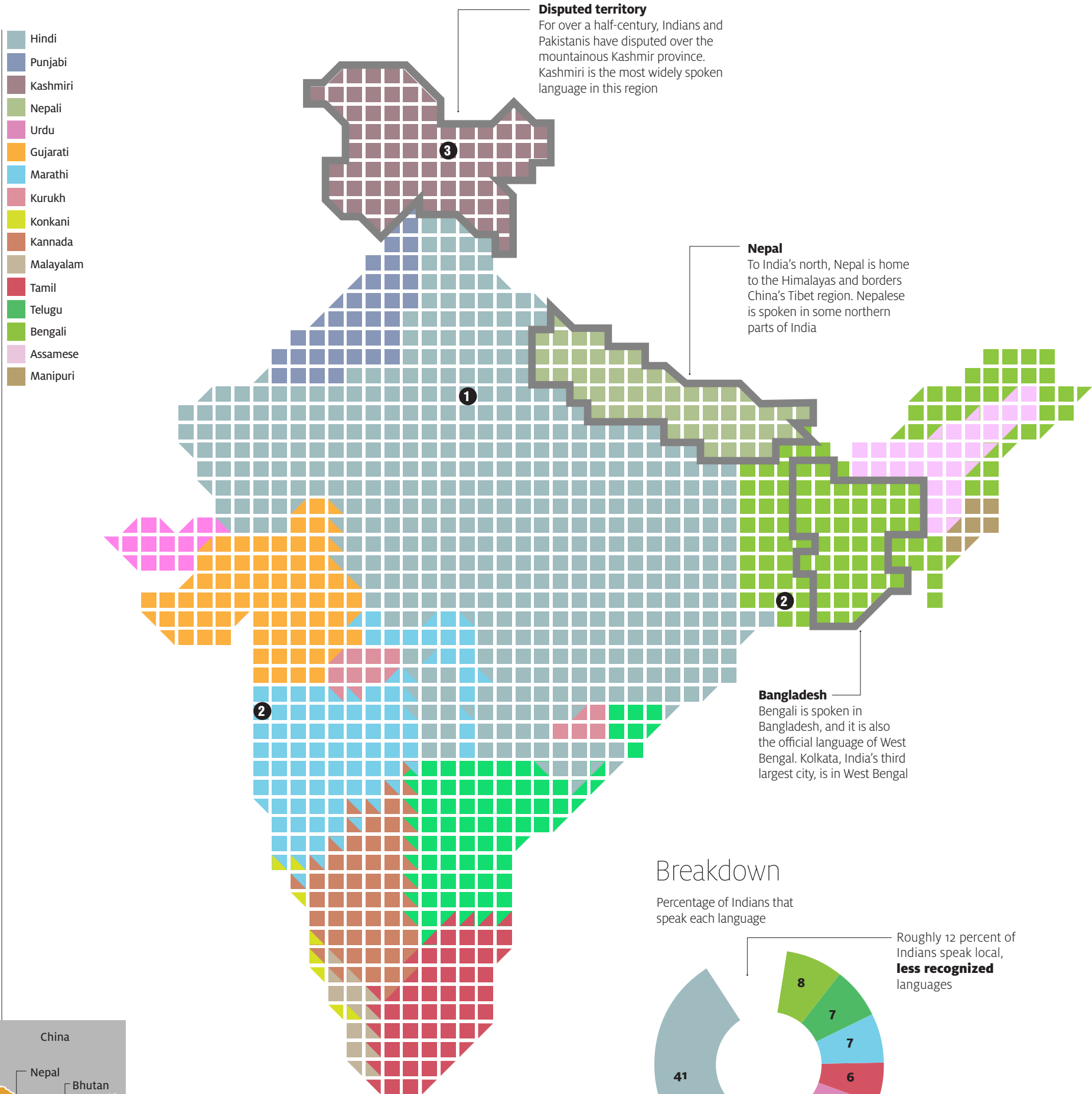
□ 2,600 square km

**1** India's government and corporations function mostly in **English** or **Hindi**, which has led to headaches for much of the rest of India, particularly for the poor and uneducated

**2** The country's two main business cities outside Delhi are **Kolkata** and **Mumbai**. In Kolkata, the most widely spoken language is Bengali, while in Mumbai it is Marathi

**3** The regions bordering Pakistan are some of India's least stable. **Kashmir**, which borders Pakistan to the east and is disputed territory, speaks a mix of Urdu, Hindi, Punjabi and Kashmiri

### Area of detail



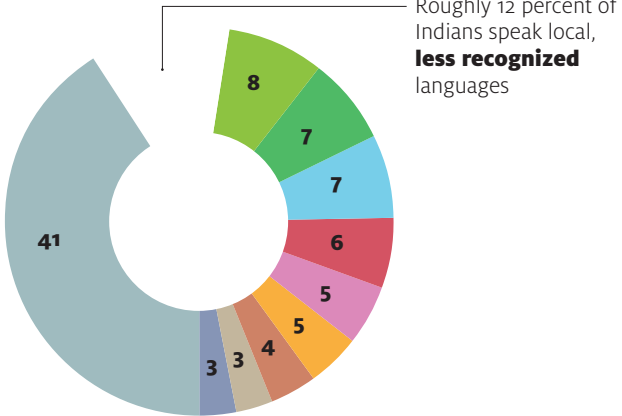
**Disputed territory**  
For over a half-century, Indians and Pakistanis have disputed over the mountainous Kashmir province. Kashmiri is the most widely spoken language in this region

**Nepal**  
To India's north, Nepal is home to the Himalayas and borders China's Tibet region. Nepalese is spoken in some northern parts of India

**Bangladesh**  
Bengali is spoken in Bangladesh, and it is also the official language of West Bengal. Kolkata, India's third largest city, is in West Bengal

## Breakdown

Percentage of Indians that speak each language



Roughly 12 percent of Indians speak local, **less recognized** languages

## The power of English

India's government, which operates exclusively in Hindi or English, is just one example of how India's usage of the **English language is growing**. English usage, both spoken and written, has helped to bring the Indian business community together

Infographic by Liam Zanyk McLean  
infographicsbyliam.tumblr.com  
sources: CIA World Factbook, mapsofindia.com, 'Languages of India' by Jost Gippert