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Indira Gandhi

Published On: 31-10-2022

Why is in news? Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, MP Sonia Gandhi & other senior leaders pay tribute to former PM Indira Gandhi on her death anniversary

Known for resoluteness, absolute centralisation of power, imperious personality, and iron will, she has helped India sail through the tensions and turmoils of the post-independence period.

Indira Priyadarshini Gandhi (November 19, 1917 – October 31, 1984) is an Indian Politician and the **first female Prime Minister of India**.

A descendant of Jawaharlal Nehru, she is the **second longest-serving Prime Minister of India** and the only female Prime Minister to date. She became the Prime Minister of India thrice between the years 1960 to 1980.

Political life:

In 1955, Indira Gandhi became a Working Committee member of the Congress party.

After the demise of Jawaharlal Nehru in 1964, Lal Bahadur Shastri became the Prime Minister of India. Indira Gandhi got elected as a member of the Rajya Sabha and the Information and Broadcasting Minister of the Lal Bahadur Shastri government.

After the unexpected demise of Lal Bahadur Shastri, Indira Gandhi was elected the leader of the Congress party.

Amidst continued challenges within the right-wing section of the party, led by Moraji Desai, she defeated him and became the Prime Minister of India.

In the **1967 elections**, Indira was elected from the **Rae Bareli constituency**. However, rising tensions within the party culminated in her removal from the party. She managed to retain the majority of Congress MPs by her side and formed a separate faction called the "New Congress".

On July 19, 1969, Indira Gandhi announced the **Nationalisation of 14 commercial banks** in India. She implemented Nationalisation, based on the **Banking Regulation Act of 1949**.

This crucial economic policy decision was implemented as the **initial step in adopting a socialist pattern** in the Indian Economy.

The **poor fiscal condition of India** after wars with Pakistan and China, droughts, and lack of public investment also lead to the nationalisation of banks.

Abolition of Privy Purse: The rulers of the Princely states received payments of 'privy purse' under **Art.291 and Art.362** of the Indian Constitution.

According to Indira Gandhi, the 'privy purse' **violated equal rights for citizens of India**. According to her, it was also necessary to reduce the revenue deficit of the government. In 1971, the **26th amendment of the Indian Constitution abolished Privy Purse**.

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Garibi Hatao: The political opponents of Indira Gandhi campaigned against her with the slogan “**Indira Hatao**”. She reverted with “**Garibi Hatao**”, or **removal of poverty**.

It was a **part of the Fifth Five-Year Plan**, which stressed poverty alleviation, generation of employment opportunities, and increasing agricultural production.

Bangladesh Liberation War: Indira Gandhi took a firm stand and stood with the people of Bangladesh during the Liberation War. She extended financial aid, diplomatic assistance, and military support to the people of East Pakistan on 27th March 1971.

However, **the war ended with the victory of India over Pakistan** in 1971. Her pivotal role in the formation of Bangladesh as an Independent nation and success in the India-Pakistan war gained huge popularity.

State of Emergency:

In 1975, **Allahabad High Court declared the 1971 elections void on the grounds of dishonest election practices**, including immoderate spending for elections, and illegal usage of Government machinery and officials for election campaigns.

The Supreme Court of India **banned Indira Gandhi from holding any government office for 6 years and took away her parliamentary position**.

The then President of India, on the recommendation of Indira Gandhi and her cabinet, **declared an Emergency** in India.

The **chaos and disorder, following the Allahabad Court Judgement, were quoted as the reason** for the same. Thus, according to article 352 of the Indian Constitution, an Emergency was imposed on June 25, 1975. After a period of 21 months, the government withdrew the Emergency on March 21, 1977.

Operation Blue Star:

Conducted by the Indian Army in June 1984, **Operation Bluestar targeted Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, an orthodox Sikh**, and member of the Akali Dal party.

He **demanding the creation of a sovereign state or ‘Khalistan’ for Sikhs**.

In 1982, Bhindranwale and a few supporters **entered the Guru Nanak Niwas** near the Golden temple.

Twenty-Point Programme: The Twenty Point Programme was launched by Indira Gandhi in 1975, with the **intent to eradicate poverty and improve the quality of life of underprivileged sections** in the country.

The objectives of the programme were **aligned with United Nations Millennium Development Goals and National Common Minimum Programme**. After its launch, the programme was restructured in 1982 and 1986. Finally, it was reintroduced in 2006 with the inclusion of new schemes and programmes.

Indira Gandhi was **assassinated by two of her bodyguards**, namely Satwant Singh and Beant Singh, on October 31, 1984. This place in New Delhi, where she got cremated, is known as ‘**Shakti Sthal**’.

Her son, Rajiv Gandhi, succeeded her as the Prime Minister of India.