



## Republic Day

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### Why in News?

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- India recently celebrated its **70<sup>th</sup> Republic Day** which is celebrated every year on 26th January.
- The Constitution of India came into effect on 26th January, 1950, thus making it one of the most important date in the political history of India.

### The Term Republic

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- The word republic is derived from the Latin phrase- RES PUBLICA meaning 'public affair' which is the root of the word republic.
- Earliest form of democratic government was seen in the **Roman Republic**; however which cannot be equated with the modern sense of the term.
- Plato's work **The Republic** is a pioneer work on philosophy, political theory concerning justice, the order and character of the just city-state, and the just man.
- India too in a very vague sense witnessed some form of democratic rule during the post-Vedic period with several Mahajanapadas following republican form of government such as Kamboja, Kuru, and Malla etc.

### Timeline

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- The transition of India from a British colony to a sovereign, secular, and democratic nation was a historical journey.
- It started with the conceptualisation of the dream in 1930 to its actual realization in 1950.
- The seeds of a republican nation were sowed at the Lahore session of the Indian National Congress at the midnight of 31<sup>st</sup> December 1929.
- The session was headed by J.L. Nehru where it was decided that January 26, 1930 would be observed as the Purna Swaraj (complete Independence) Day.
- Lahore session also paved way for the Civil Disobedience Movement in the nation.
- After much deliberation between the Indian leaders and members of the **British Cabinet Mission**, Constituent Assembly was constituted which met for the first time on December 9, 1946.

### Cabinet Mission

- Cabinet mission came to India to discuss the transfer of power from British government to the Indian leadership.
- The mission comprised of three cabinet ministers of English government:
  - Sir Pethick Lawrence
  - Sir Stafford Cripps
  - Admiral Alexander
- Objectives of the mission:
  - Devise a machinery to draw up the constitution of Independent India.
  - Make arrangements for interim Government.
- Mission's recommendation:
  - It proposed that Union of India will deal with the defense, foreign affairs and communications.
  - Recommended an undivided India and turned down the Muslim league's demand for a separate Pakistan.
  - It also provided for formation of the constituent assembly on democratic principle of population. It recognized Indian Right to cede from the Commonwealth.

The Objective of the Assembly was to give India a long lasting constitution which would give institutional expression to the fundamental commitments of equality, liberty, democracy, sovereignty and a cosmopolitan identity to its citizen.

## Importance of Republic Day

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- Although India became a free nation on August 15, 1947, it enjoyed the true spirit of Independence on January 26, 1950 when the Constitution of India finally came into force giving India its political freedom.
- On this day India shed the last relic of colonial system and effected a new dawn by becoming a **Sovereign Democratic Republic**.

### Sovereign, Democratic, Republic

- **Sovereign** – The word ‘sovereign’ implies that India is neither a dependency nor a dominion of any other nation, but an independent state. There is no authority above it, and it is free to conduct its own affairs.
- **Democratic** – is based on the doctrine of popular sovereignty, that is, possession of supreme power by the people.
- **Republic** – Preamble indicates that India has an elected head called the president. He is elected indirectly for a fixed period of five years.
- The day is an occasion to commemorate the values of our democracy and Republic, to reaffirm our commitment to liberty, fraternity and equality across our society and among all our citizens.
- The day celebrates the desire of a huge nation that wanted to be governed through one single constitution giving another example of India’s unity in diversity.
- Few provisions of the constitution came into power before 26th January 1950, i.e. on 26th November 1949.
- Provisions related to **citizenship, elections, provisional parliament, temporary and transitional provisions**, and short title contained in Articles 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 60, 324, 366, 367, 379, 380, 388, 391, 392 and 393 came into force on November 26, 1949 itself.

## Threats to Indian Democracy

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- Although India has made a place for itself as one of the fastest growing economies in the world, it loses behind a lot in the name of growth.
- Poverty remains the biggest challenge of present day India, majority of the people continues to live below the poverty line with huge divide between the rich and the poor.
- Gender discrimination remains at all level with skewed female ratio, few economic opportunities, disparities in wages, violence, malnutrition etc.
- Corruption in public life has been a major concern in India. India is ranked 78<sup>th</sup> amongst 180 nations in **Corruption Perception Index (2018) released by Transparency International**. It exists as both covert and overt at all three levels- political, bureaucratic and corporate sector.
- Communalism and religious fundamentalism have acquired a very dangerous form and alarming proportion in India. It is an affront to India’s nationalist identity and a tragic setback to its evolving secular culture.
- Indian democracy also struggles with regionalism which is primarily an outcome of regional disparities and imbalances in development.
- Continued feeling of inequality both among and within state creates a feeling of neglect, deprivation and discrimination.
- Elections which serve as the most evident expression of democracy are affected by money and muscle abuse by politicians and political parties.
- Most of the politicians have pending criminal cases against them; source of funding for elections remains questionable.

## Way Forward

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- Our Republic has come a long way and we must appreciate how far successive generations have brought us. Equally, we must appreciate that our voyage is far from complete.
- There is a need to recalibrate our yardstick of achievement and success - from quantity to quality; from a literate society to a knowledge society in order.

- No conception of India's development can be complete without a salute to our spirit of inclusiveness.
- India's pluralism is its greatest strength and its greatest example to the world.
- The "Indian model" rests on a **tripod of diversity, democracy and development** where we cannot choose one above the other.
- The nation needs to encompass all segments and all communities, so that the nation transforms into a family that invokes, encourages and celebrates the uniqueness and potential in each person.

