Indira Gandhi's 109th birth anniversary: offices, tenures and institutional history

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Exam relevance: Prelims, post-Independence India; GS-I/II, political history and institutions



Portrait: Prime Minister's Office

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Why in the news

19 November marks former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's birth anniversary. Her official PMO biography records her birth on 19 November 1917, making 2026 her 109th anniversary. PIB's list of Prime Minister-related releases also records a tribute entry dated 19 November 2026.

Milestones in public life

Indira Gandhi was the daughter of Jawaharlal Nehru. The PMO biography records her studies at several institutions, including Vishwa Bharati, Shantiniketan, and Somerville College, Oxford. Attendance at an institution and completion of a particular degree are different claims; the latter should not be inferred from the former.

The official account records membership of the Congress Working Committee in 1955, her presidency of the Indian National Congress in 1959-60, and service as Minister for Information and Broadcasting in 1964-66. Her two periods as Prime Minister ran from January 1966 to March 1977 and from January 1980 to October 1984.

Distinguish the office from the institution

A party presidency and a Union ministerial office are not the same. One belongs to a political party's organisation; the other to the executive structure of government. Likewise, a Prime Minister's additional ministerial responsibilities should be read separately from the office of Prime Minister. The biography records her additional responsibilities relating to atomic energy, external affairs, home affairs and space at different times.

This provides a way to study political history through institutions rather than only personalities. In an exam, distinguish the dates of a leader's tenure, the policy being discussed and the relevant legislation. Treating every event during a government as the work of one individual weakens analysis.

A direction for study

This anniversary note is a sourced introduction to offices and chronology, not an assessment of an entire period in government. A fuller study of post-Independence India should examine institutional accountability, civil liberties and federal relations alongside policy achievements. Separate a policy's objectives, legal basis, implementation and outcomes when assessing it.

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Prelims practice

Question 1

Choose the correct chronological order:

1. Indira Gandhi becomes Minister for Information and Broadcasting
2. Her first term as Prime Minister begins
3. Her second term as Prime Minister begins

(a) 2-1-3
(b) 1-3-2
(c) 1-2-3
(d) 3-1-2

▼ Answer and Explanation

Correct answer: (c)

Information and Broadcasting: 1964-66; first prime-ministerial term from January 1966; second from January 1980. Source: official PMO biography.

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Question 2

Consider the following statements:

Statement 1: Indira Gandhi's first term as Prime Minister ended in March 1977.

Statement 2: Her presidency of the Congress in 1959-60 was automatically equivalent to a Union ministerial office.

Which statement or statements are correct?

(a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2
(d) Neither 1 nor 2

▼ **Answer and Explanation**

Correct answer: (a)

The first statement matches the official tenure list. An organisational office within a political party is not a Union government ministerial office.

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Sources

- PMO biography: https://www.pmindia.gov.in/en/former_pm/smt-indira-gandhi/
- PMO former-prime-minister tenure list: https://www.pmindia.gov.in/en/former-prime-ministers/
- PIB Prime Minister-related releases, entry dated 19 November 2026: https://www.pib.gov.in/pmcontents/pmcontents.aspx?lang=1&menuid=1&reg=3&regionid=1

Frequently asked questions

Which birth anniversary of Indira Gandhi falls in 2026?

19 November 2026 marks her 109th birth anniversary. She was born on 19 November 1917.

Which Union ministry did she lead before becoming Prime Minister?

She was Minister for Information and Broadcasting in 1964-66. Her first term as Prime Minister began in January 1966.