

National Education Day (November 11) - Honouring Maulana Abul Kalam Azad

1. Introduction

- **National Education Day** is celebrated annually on **November 11** across India.
- The day commemorates the **birth anniversary of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad (1888-1958)** — India's **first Minister of Education** and a key architect of the modern Indian education system.
- The celebration recognises his **lifelong contributions** toward nation-building through education and his belief that **knowledge must be universally accessible**.

2. Historical Background

- **Maulana Abul Kalam Azad** was born on **11 November 1888** in Mecca, Saudi Arabia.
- He was a **freedom fighter, journalist, theologian, scholar, and reformer** who played a crucial role in the **Indian independence movement**.
- After Independence, he served as **India's first Education Minister (1947-1958)** in **Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru's Cabinet**.
- Under his leadership, India began laying the **foundation of its modern education system**.

3. Vision and Philosophy of Maulana Azad

- Believed that **education is the foundation of nation-building**.
- Advocated for **universal primary education** and **free, compulsory schooling for all children up to the age of 14**.
- Emphasised **scientific and technical education** to modernise India.
- Stressed the role of education in promoting:
 - **Critical thinking**
 - **Confidence and character building**

- **Civic responsibility and moral values**
- **National integration and communal harmony**
- His approach aimed to make education not just academic but **transformative and socially meaningful**.

4. Major Institutional Contributions

Maulana Azad laid the groundwork for several premier educational and research institutions in post-independence India:

- **Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs)** – Promoted world-class technical education.
- **University Grants Commission (UGC)** – For coordination and quality standards in higher education.
- **Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR)** – To strengthen scientific research and innovation.
- **Indian Institute of Science (IISc) and Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR)** also received strong institutional support under his vision.
- He also prioritised **adult education, women's education, and vocational training**.

5. Declaration of National Education Day

- In **2008**, the **Ministry of Human Resource Development (now Ministry of Education)** officially declared **November 11** as **National Education Day**.
- The day is observed **annually** to commemorate Maulana Azad's legacy and to **raise awareness about the importance of education** in national development.

6. Objectives of National Education Day

- To **honour Maulana Azad's contribution** to education and nation-building.
- To **promote awareness** among people about the role of education in progress and equality.
- To encourage **inclusive, equitable, and quality education** for all sections of society.

- To emphasise that **education extends beyond classrooms** and includes civic responsibility and moral values.

7. Observance and Activities

Educational institutions and organisations across India celebrate the day through:

- **Seminars, webinars, and workshops** on education and nation-building.
- **Essay writing, quiz, and poster-making competitions** on themes related to education and Maulana Azad's ideals.
- **Public awareness campaigns**, such as by **Punjab Police** this year, integrating social themes like **traffic safety, discipline, and civic awareness**.
- **Community outreach** highlighting that education must foster **responsible citizenship and social consciousness**.

8. Maulana Azad's Legacy and Continuing Relevance

- His ideas continue to inspire India's **education policy framework**, including:
 - **Right to Education (RTE) Act, 2009**
 - **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020** – which also emphasises inclusivity, flexibility, and holistic learning.
- His emphasis on **scientific temper, cultural understanding, and moral development** remains highly relevant for a 21st-century knowledge-based society.
- Institutions like **Maulana Azad National Urdu University (MANUU)** and **Maulana Azad Education Foundation (MAEF)** carry forward his mission for inclusive education.

9. Exam-Oriented Key Facts

Aspect	Details
Event	National Education Day
Date	November 11
Honours	Birth anniversary of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad
First Observed	2008
Declared By	Ministry of Human Resource Development (now Ministry of Education)
Position Held by Azad	India's first Minister of Education (1947-1958)

Aspect	Details
Major Institutions Established	IITs, UGC, CSIR
Vision	Universal access to education, scientific learning, and social responsibility

10. Relevance for UPSC

- **Static GK:** National days, education policy, and institutions (IITs, UGC).
- **Modern History:** Freedom movement and Azad's contribution to nation-building.
- **Governance & Polity:** Educational reforms, NEP 2020, and public institutions.
- **Essay/GS Paper II:** Role of education in social transformation and inclusive growth.

11. Conclusion

National Education Day is not merely a commemoration of Maulana Azad's birth but a **reminder of the transformative power of education**. His legacy encourages India to pursue a path where **learning is inclusive, accessible, and empowering**, enabling every citizen to contribute to a **progressive and enlightened nation**.

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