

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.
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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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