The Simon Commission (1927) – 'Simon Go Back' and the road to the 1935 Act

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Why in news: 8 November 2026 marks 99 years since the British Government announced, on 8 November 1927, the Indian Statutory Commission under Sir John Simon – a body with no Indian member, whose boycott brought Indian parties together.

Key points

- Why it was set up: the Government of India Act, 1919 provided for a commission to review the working of the reforms (dyarchy) after ten years; the Conservative government of Stanley Baldwin, with Lord Birkenhead as Secretary of State for India, appointed it two years early, in November 1927.
- Members: seven British MPs under Sir John Simon, including Clement Attlee (later British Prime Minister, 1945–51). No Indian was included – the main reason Indians opposed it.
- Boycott: the Madras session of the Congress (December 1927, president Dr M.A. Ansari) resolved to boycott it 'at every stage and in every form'; a section of the Muslim League under M.A. Jinnah and the Hindu Mahasabha also stayed away. When the Commission landed at Bombay on 3 February 1928, it was met by an all-India hartal and black-flag protests with the slogan 'Simon Go Back'.
- Repression and response: in a police lathi charge on a protest march at Lahore on 30 October 1928 Lala Lajpat Rai was badly injured, and he died on 17 November 1928; Jawaharlal Nehru and G.B. Pant were beaten at Lucknow. Birkenhead's challenge to Indians to produce an agreed constitution led to the Nehru Report (August 1928).
- Outcome: the Simon Report (1930) proposed the abolition of dyarchy, provincial autonomy and a federation, kept separate electorates and did not mention dominion status; it was taken up at the Round Table Conferences (1930–32) and fed into the Government of India Act, 1935. Tamil Nadu link – the boycott decision was taken at the Madras session, which also passed a resolution declaring complete independence the goal of the Congress.

In the exam: TNPSC – date of announcement, chairman, 'no Indian member', the Madras session's boycott decision, Lala Lajpat Rai's death and the order Simon Commission → Nehru Report → Lahore session; UPSC Prelims – chronology and statement questions on the 1919 Act's ten-year review and the Simon Report's recommendations.

Questions

1. The Congress decided in December 1927 to boycott the Simon Commission at its session held at

A. Calcutta
B. Madras
C. Lahore
D. Gauhati

2. Consider the following statements about the Simon Commission:
1. It was appointed before the ten-year review provided for in the Government of India Act, 1919 fell due.
2. Its report recommended the abolition of dyarchy in the provinces.
3. It was announced after the Nehru Report had been published.
Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

A. 1 and 2 only
B. 2 and 3 only
C. 1 and 3 only
D. 1, 2 and 3

Answers with explanations

1. **B) Madras** – The Madras session (December 1927, president Dr M.A. Ansari) resolved to boycott the Commission. Gauhati was the 1926 session, Calcutta 1928 and Lahore 1929.

2. **A) 1 and 2 only** – Statement 3 is wrong: the Commission was announced on 8 November 1927; the Nehru Report came later, in August 1928, as the answer to Birkenhead's challenge.

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