Children's Day – Nehru at 137 and the rights of the child

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Why in news: 14 November, the birth anniversary of Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first Prime Minister, is observed in India as Children's Day (Bal Diwas); 14 November 2026 is his 137th birth anniversary. The world observes World Children's Day on 20 November.

Key points

- Life: born on 14 November 1889 at Allahabad (now Prayagraj); educated at Harrow and Trinity College, Cambridge (Natural Sciences), and called to the Bar from the Inner Temple. He was imprisoned nine times during the freedom struggle and was Prime Minister from 15 August 1947 until his death on 27 May 1964 – India's longest-serving Prime Minister. He received the Bharat Ratna in 1955.
- Freedom struggle: as President of the Lahore Session of the Indian National Congress (December 1929) he presided over the resolution for Purna Swaraj (complete independence); 26 January 1930 was then observed as Independence Day. On 13 December 1946 he moved the Objectives Resolution in the Constituent Assembly (adopted on 22 January 1947) – the basis of the Preamble – and on the night of 14–15 August 1947 he delivered the 'Tryst with Destiny' speech.
- Writings: 'Glimpses of World History' (letters from prison to his daughter Indira), 'An Autobiography' (completed in Almora Jail on 14 February 1935) and 'The Discovery of India' (written in Ahmednagar Fort prison in 1944, published in 1946). Foreign policy: Panchsheel (India–China agreement of 29 April 1954) and the Non-Aligned Movement (first summit, Belgrade, 1961).
- Child rights in the Constitution: Article 21A – free and compulsory education for children aged 6 to 14 (86th Amendment Act, 2002; Right to Education Act, 2009, in force from 1 April 2010); Article 24 – no child below 14 in factories, mines or other hazardous employment; Article 45 – early childhood care and education until the age of six; Article 51A(k) – duty of parents to provide opportunities for education between 6 and 14; Article 39(f) – opportunities for children to develop in a healthy manner.
- Global and Tamil Nadu link: the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted on 20 November 1989 (hence World Children's Day) and India acceded to it on 11 December 1992. Tamil Nadu's school breakfast scheme, now named the Perunthalaivar Kamarajar Breakfast Scheme (from 15 July 2026), carries forward the State's tradition of feeding children in school.

In the exam: TNPSC – Children's Day (14 November), Nehru's life, Lahore Session 1929 and Purna Swaraj, Objectives Resolution, his books, Panchsheel and NAM; child-rights Articles 21A, 24, 45, 51A(k). UPSC Prelims – 86th Amendment and RTE Act, UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989; India 1992), statement-type questions on Nehru-era events.

Questions

1. The Lahore Session of the Indian National Congress (December 1929), which adopted Purna Swaraj (complete independence) as the goal, was presided over by

A. Motilal Nehru

B. Jawaharlal Nehru

C. Subhas Chandra Bose

D. Vallabhbhai Patel

2. Consider the following statements:

1. Article 21A, which provides free and compulsory education to children aged 6 to 14, was inserted by the 86th Amendment Act, 2002.

2. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted on 20 November 1989.

3. Article 24 prohibits the employment of children below 14 years in every kind of work.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

A. 1 only

B. 1 and 2 only

C. 2 and 3 only

D. 1, 2 and 3

Answers with explanations

1. **B) Jawaharlal Nehru** – Jawaharlal Nehru presided over the Lahore Session of 1929, which passed the Purna Swaraj resolution; 26 January 1930 was then observed as Independence Day. Motilal Nehru presided over the Calcutta Session of 1928 and Vallabhbhai Patel over the Karachi Session of 1931.

2. **B) 1 and 2 only** – Statement 3 is wrong: Article 24 bars children below 14 only from factories, mines or other hazardous employment, not from every kind of work. Article 21A came with the 86th Amendment (2002) and is given effect by the RTE Act, 2009; the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted on 20 November 1989, and India acceded to it in 1992.

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