Violence against women – the UN day of 25 November and India's laws

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Why in news: 25 November is the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, designated by the UN General Assembly in resolution 54/134 of 17 December 1999. It opens the 16 Days of Activism that end on 10 December, Human Rights Day.

Key points

- Origin: the date recalls the assassination in 1960 of the three Mirabal sisters, political activists in the Dominican Republic under the dictatorship of Rafael Trujillo. The first Feminist Encuentro for Latin America and the Caribbean, held at Bogotá in July 1981, first marked 25 November as a day against violence against women.
- UN framework: the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW, 1979) – ratified by India in 1993; and the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (General Assembly resolution 48/104, 1993), which defined violence against women as physical, sexual or psychological harm, in public or private life.
- Scale: the World Health Organization estimates that about one in three women worldwide experiences physical or sexual violence in her lifetime, most often from an intimate partner.
- India's laws: the Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961; the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 (civil remedies such as protection and residence orders); the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013; and Chapter V of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 – "Of offences against woman and child".
- Help on the ground: One Stop Centres (Sakhi) under the Nirbhaya Fund bring police, medical, legal and counselling help under one roof; the Women Helpline 181 and the Emergency Response Support System 112 answer calls round the clock.

In the exam: TNPSC – social issues: women's safety laws (Dowry Prohibition Act, Domestic Violence Act, POSH Act, BNS) and days of importance (25 November). UPSC – GS-I (role of women, social empowerment) and GS-II (CEDAW, vulnerable sections, welfare schemes).

Questions

1. In which year did the UN General Assembly adopt the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women – the first international instrument explicitly addressing violence against women?

A. 1999

B. 1993

C. 1979

D. 2008

2. India ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in:

A. 1979

B. 1985

C. 2005

D. 1993

Answers with explanations

1. **B) 1993** – The Declaration (resolution 48/104) was adopted on 20 December 1993. 1979 is the year of CEDAW, 1999 the year 25 November was designated as the International Day (resolution 54/134), and 2008 the launch of the UN Secretary-General's UNiTE campaign.

2. **D) 1993** – CEDAW was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1979; India signed it in 1980 and ratified it in 1993. It is often called the international bill of rights for women.

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