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Jawaharlal Nehru's 62nd Death Anniversary — Architect of Modern India

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Jawaharlal Nehru's 62nd Death Anniversary — Architect of Modern India

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WHY IN NEWS:

May 27, 2026 marks the **62nd death anniversary** of **Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru** (1889–1964), independent India's first Prime Minister. Tributes were paid at **Shantivan**, his memorial on the banks of the Yamuna in Delhi. Nehru served as Prime Minister from **August 15, 1947 to May 27, 1964** — the longest unbroken PM tenure in Indian history at **16 years, 286 days**.

THE LIFE — A SNAPSHOT

PARAMETER	DETAIL
Born	November 14, 1889 , Allahabad
Died	May 27, 1964 , New Delhi (cardiac arrest)
Father	Motilal Nehru — barrister, Congress president (1919, 1928)
Education	Harrow → Trinity College, Cambridge (Natural Sciences Tripos) → Inner Temple (barrister)
Wife	Kamala Kaul (married 1916)
Daughter	Indira Gandhi
Memorial	Shantivan , Delhi (Yamuna bank)
Bharat Ratna	1955 (while in office)

NEHRU IN THE FREEDOM STRUGGLE

YEAR	MILESTONE
1916	Joined Indian National Congress; Lucknow Pact
1920–22	Non-Cooperation Movement — Nehru’s first jailing
1928	Nehru Report drafted by Motilal Nehru (Jawaharlal involved) — proposed dominion status with adult franchise, fundamental rights chapter
December 1929	Lahore Session of Congress — Nehru president; Purna Swaraj resolution passed
January 26, 1930	First Independence Day declared; pledge read across India
1930–34	Civil Disobedience Movement — multiple jailings
1942	Quit India Movement — imprisoned at Ahmednagar Fort (wrote <i>The Discovery of India</i>)
August 15, 1947	Sworn in as first Prime Minister of India ; “ Tryst with Destiny ” speech

NEHRU’S BOOKS (WRITTEN MOSTLY IN PRISON)

BOOK	YEAR	CONTEXT
Glimpses of World History	1934	Letters to Indira from prison
An Autobiography (Toward Freedom)	1936	Written at Almora jail
The Discovery of India	1946	Ahmednagar Fort, 1944 (basis for Doordarshan’s <i>Bharat Ek Khoj</i>)
Letters from a Father to His Daughter	1929	30 letters to Indira

INSTITUTION-BUILDING LEGACY

Nehru’s most enduring contribution is the institutional architecture of modern India.

Higher Education and Research

INSTITUTION	YEAR	ROLE
IIT Kharagpur	1951 (first IIT)	Nehru articulated the IIT vision
AIIMS Delhi	1956	Health Minister Amrit Kaur, PM Nehru
ISRO predecessor INCOSPAR	1962	Founded with Vikram Sarabhai
CSIR network	1942 → expanded post-1947	Nehru chaired the CSIR Governing Body
Atomic Energy Commission	August 1948	Set up with Homi Bhabha
Atomic Energy Establishment, Trombay	1954	Renamed BARC in 1967
DRDO	1958	Defence research consolidation

Economic and Industrial

INSTITUTION	YEAR
Planning Commission	March 15, 1950
First Five-Year Plan	1951–56 (agriculture focus)
Second Five-Year Plan / Mahalanobis Model	1956–61 (heavy industry)
Bhakra-Nangal, Hirakud, Damodar Valley dams	“Temples of modern India”
PSUs (Steel – Bhilai, Rourkela, Durgapur)	1950s

Foreign Policy

PRINCIPLE/INSTITUTION	YEAR
Panchsheel Agreement with China	April 29, 1954 (Tibet trade agreement preamble)
Bandung Conference	April 1955 (Afro-Asian solidarity)
Non-Aligned Movement (NAM)	Founding member, Belgrade, 1961 (Nehru–Tito–Nasser–Sukarno–Nkrumah)
Recognition of People’s Republic of China	December 1949 (one of the earliest non-communist recognitions)

Constitutional / Political

- Steered the **Constituent Assembly** (December 9, 1946 onwards); moved the **Objectives Resolution** (December 13, 1946) — basis of the **Preamble**.
- **Parliamentary democracy** institutionalised — Lok Sabha, federal structure, secular state.
- **Hindu Code Bills (1955–56)** — Hindu Marriage Act, Hindu Succession Act, Hindu Adoptions and Maintenance Act, Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act — major social reforms.
- **States Reorganisation Act, 1956** — linguistic reorganisation.

CRITIQUE — HONEST APPRAISAL

AREA	CRITIQUE
1962 China War	Defeat exposed strategic naïveté; “Hindi-Chini bhai-bhai” framework collapsed
Kashmir	UN reference (1948); ceasefire line; Article 370; outcomes still contested
Economy	Licence-Permit Raj origins; slow private-sector growth
Internal challenges	Naga insurgency, food shortages
Heavy industry over agriculture	Imbalanced 2nd FYP; Bengal famine memory not adequately addressed in policy

A balanced UPSC answer acknowledges both the institution-building genius and the strategic blind spots.

WIDER SIGNIFICANCE

- **Constitutional secularism, parliamentary democracy, federalism, scientific temper, planned development, non-alignment** – five pillars of the “**Nehruvian Consensus**” that defined India for decades.
- **Scientific temper** – phrase coined by Nehru in *The Discovery of India*; later inserted as a **Fundamental Duty (Article 51A(h))** by the **42nd Amendment, 1976**.
- Comparative anchors: contemporary leaders he stood with – **Atatürk’s Turkey, Sukarno’s Indonesia, Nasser’s Egypt, Tito’s Yugoslavia** – most experiments dissolved; Nehru’s democratic-constitutional framework largely survived.

NEHRU IN THE INDIAN CALENDAR

DATE	SIGNIFICANCE
November 14	Children’s Day (Bal Diwas) – Nehru’s birthday
May 27	Death anniversary

UPSC RELEVANCE

GS Paper 1 – Modern Indian History:

- The Freedom Struggle – its various stages and important contributors/contributions from different parts of the country.
- Post-independence consolidation and reorganization within the country.

GS Paper 2 – Polity & Governance:

- Indian Constitution – historical underpinnings, evolution, features.
- Comparison of the Indian constitutional scheme with that of other countries (for NAM-era external influences).

Analytical hooks for Mains:

- Nehru’s institution-building legacy – assess its endurance.
- Non-Alignment – relevance from 1961 to multi-alignment 2026.
- Scientific temper as a fundamental duty – practice vs principle.

FACTS CORNER

Born: November 14, 1889, Allahabad. Died: May 27, 1964, New Delhi.

PM tenure: August 15, 1947 – May 27, 1964 (16 years, 286 days – longest unbroken).

Memorial: Shantivan, on the Yamuna, Delhi.

Bharat Ratna: 1955 (while in office).

Books: *Glimpses of World History* (1934), *An Autobiography* (1936), *The Discovery of India* (1946).

Lahore Session 1929: Nehru president; Purna Swaraj resolution.

First Independence Day: January 26, 1930.

“Tryst with Destiny” speech: August 14–15, 1947, Constituent Assembly.

Panchsheel Agreement with China: April 29, 1954.

Non-Aligned Movement (NAM): First Summit, Belgrade, 1961 – Nehru, Nasser, Tito, Sukarno, Nkrumah.

Planning Commission established: March 15, 1950.

First IIT (Kharagpur): 1951.

Atomic Energy Commission: August 1948 (with Homi Bhabha).

Hindu Code Bills: 1955–56.

Scientific temper: Article 51A(h) – Fundamental Duty (added by 42nd Amendment, 1976).

Sources: *PIB*, *The Hindu*, *Nehru Memorial Museum & Library*

Source: Jawaharlal Nehru's 62nd Death Anniversary – Architect of Modern India – Ujyari.com | Free UPSC & State PCS Current Affairs

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