

## Emergency Declared

Indira Gandhi's government declared a state of emergency in India on 25 June 1975. Democracy was restored only after nearly two years on 21<sup>st</sup> March 1977. Read on for more insights into why the Emergency was declared and how it ended, as the topic, 'Emergency in India' is important from the IAS exam perspective.

Candidates can read Emergency related articles from the links mentioned below in the table:

## Background of the Emergency

- Indira Gandhi 'advised' the then President of the country Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed to declare a state of internal emergency in India using Article 352.
- The Emergency was declared without warning on the midnight of 25<sup>th</sup> June and the country woke up to the death of democracy.
- A national emergency was being declared in India for the third time, the first two times were during the wars with China and Pakistan in 1962 and 1971 respectively.
- In 1971, Indira Gandhi's won the general elections with a huge majority. She had won popular support with pro-poor and leftist policies like the nationalisation of banks and the abolition of the Privy Purse.
- Gandhi wielded an almost autocratic control over the cabinet. She had absolute control over the government. The 1971 war had reduced the GDP of the country. The country also faced many droughts and an oil crisis. Unemployment rates had also spiked up.
- A railway workers' strike led by George Fernandes in 1974 was severely suppressed by the government.
- There were also attempts by the government to interfere in judicial matters.
- The Allahabad High Court declared that Gandhi's election to the Lok Sabha was void due to electoral malpractice.
- Janata Party leader Jayaprakash Narayan (JP) called for the ouster of the government. He championed a program called *Sampoorna Kranti* (total revolution). He asked members of the police and the military to disobey unconstitutional orders.
- When things were heating up for the government, Gandhi declared democracy and immediately arrested all major opposition leaders including JP, Morarji Desai, Charan Singh, Acharya Kripalani, etc. Even Congress leaders who were opposed to the emergency were arrested.
- During the emergency, civil liberties were severely restrained. The freedom of the press was strictly curtailed and anything published had to pass the Information and Broadcasting ministry.
- Indira Gandhi's son Sanjay Gandhi wielded extra-constitutional powers. He conducted forceful mass sterilisation of people in a bid to control the population of the country.
- Non-Congress state governments were sacked. Many slums in Delhi were destroyed.

- There were many instances of human rights violations in India. Curfews were imposed and the police detained people without trial.
- The government amended the constitution many times (after the emergency was lifted, the new government undid these amendments).
- The emergency is often dubbed the 'darkest hour' of free India.
- In January 1977, Gandhi called for fresh elections not reading the mood of the people of the country. All political prisoners were released.
- Officially, the emergency was lifted on 21 March 1977.
- The people handed Gandhi and her party a very heavy defeat. Both Indira Gandhi and her son were defeated in the election.
- The Janata Party won the election and the new government was headed by Morarji Desai as the Prime Minister. Desai was the first non-Congress PM of India.

Read about the related articles from the links mentioned below:

### **Frequently Asked Questions related to Emergency in India**

How many emergencies are there in India?

There are three kinds - National Emergency, Financial Emergency and President's Rule (Article 356).

What happens when National Emergency is declared?

When an emergency is declared, the central government gets the power over the concurrent subjects and also the power to make laws over subjects mentioned in the state list too. The relationship between the central government and state governments gets modified. There is also an impact on the Fundamental Rights of the citizens.