

Short Answer Questions

Q.1. What were the causes of the student agitation in Bihar in 1974 and what role did Jai Prakash Narayan play in it?

Ans. The main causes for the student agitation in Bihar were rise of food prices, growing corruption at administrative level, non-implementation of developmental policies, lacks of jobs and social mobility of oppressed classes. The students rallied around Jai Prakash Narayan to lead the agitation. Jai Prakash Narayan had although given up active politics by then but he asserted the various conditions to lead the movement that the movement should remain non-violent and that the movement will not limit itself to Bihar but spread in the whole country. He called for the total revolution of Indian politics. Jai Prakash Narayan held several protests and bandhs. He conducted one of the largest protests against the government and received support from the opposition parties.

Q.2. What were the reasons behind the rail strike in 1974? Explain.

Ans. The National Coordination Committee for Railwaymen's Struggle led by George Fernandes gave a call for nationwide strike by all employees of the Railways to pressurise the government for their demands regarding bonus and service conditions. The government was opposed to these demands and the employees went on strike in May, 1974. The government declared the strike illegal and arrested many of the workers and deployed the Territorial Army to protect railway tracks. The strike had to be called off after twenty days without any settlement.

Q.3. Shah Commission was appointed in 1977 by the Janata Party government. Why it appointed and what were its findings?

Ans. The Shah Commission was appointed in May 1977 by the Janata Party government and was headed by J.C. Shah, a retired chief justice of Supreme Court of India to look into the matters of allegations of abuse of authority, excesses and malpractices as well actions taken in the name of Emergency proclaimed on 15th June, 1975. The commission examined various evidences and testimonies. The findings of the Shah Commission were that it found many 'excesses' committed during Emergency. Under preventive detention laws, nearly one lakh eleven thousand people were arrested. Press censorship took place without any proper legal sanctions.

Q.4. Write a short note on the Janata Party Government.

Ans. The Janata Party government that came to power after the 1977 elections under the Prime Minister Morarji Desai. Janata Party was based on anti-congressism and had multiple coalition parties. There was a quarrel among the parties and leaders with regards to forward policies of the government, position of Prime Minister, among others.

The Janata Party split and the government lost its majority in less than 18 months. Another government headed by Charan Singh was formed but this government fell after four months. Fresh Lok Sabha elections were held in January 1980, in which the Janata Party suffered a huge defeat.

Q.5. Explain the role of the judiciary during the Emergency.

Ans. During the Emergency, the right of citizens to move the Court for restoring their Fundamental Rights. Many cases were filed in the High Courts and the Supreme Court with regard to arrested persons and Several High Courts gave judgments that even during Emergency, the courts could entertain a writ of habeas corpus filed by a person challenging his/her detention but the Supreme Court over-ruled the High Courts. It meant that during Emergency, the government could take away the citizen's right to life and liberty. This judgment closed the doors of judiciary for the citizens and arrested political workers could not challenge their arrest through habeas corpus petitions.

Q.6. Examine the legacy of Emergency of 1975 in India.

Ans. The Congress became woven around Indira Gandhi and changed into socialist and a pro-poor party. The concept of non-congressism was created among opposition parties and the first non-congress government came to power in India. There was a rise in defections and coalition politics in India. The issues of welfare of backward classes began to dominate politics in India. Emergency led to greater friction between executive and judiciary and move to further place checks and balances such as the Basic Structure doctrine. Mass protests by people became a common place in Indian politics and the people became aware of the value of their civil liberties.