

Constitutional Development of India

These notes are your ultimate revision weapon to revise Constitutional Development of India history. We've distilled years of previous exam questions (PYQs) into one powerful, concise resource. Everything you need to know, nothing you don't.

- **PYQs, Decoded:** All key concepts from past exams, organized and simplified.
- **Revise in Record Time:** Short, precise, and designed for last-minute review.
- **Focus on What Matters:** Master high-probability topics and boost your confidence.

Constitutional Development of India: Key Acts & Reforms

I. Early Regulatory Acts (1773-1786)

Act	Year	Key Objectives & Provisions
The Regulating Act	1773	Primary Objective: To control and regulate the affairs of the British East India Company (EIC) in Bengal. Governance: - Created the position of Governor-General of Fort William in Bengal (Warren Hastings was the first). - Established a Council of four members to assist the Governor-General (no initial veto power). Judicial Reform: - Established the first Supreme Court in India at Calcutta (1774). - Sir Elijah Impey was the first Chief Justice. Other: A Provincial Assembly for Bihar was set

		up in 1774.
The Act of 1786	1786	Key Provision: Granted the Governor-General the power to override the majority decision of his Council for reasons of peace, defense, or general welfare. Context: Passed to persuade Lord Cornwallis to accept the post of Governor-General.
Pitt's India Act	1784	Governance: Established a Board of Control in Britain to regulate the EIC's affairs.

II. Charter Acts (1813-1853)

Act	Year	Key Provisions
Charter Act of 1813	1813	Trade: Abolished the EIC's trade monopoly in India (retained monopoly on tea and trade with China). Sovereignty: Asserted the ultimate sovereignty of the British Crown over EIC territories. Social: - Made a financial provision (₹1 lakh/year) for the promotion of education. - Allowed Christian missionaries to propagate their religion in India.
Charter Act of 1833	1833	Trade: Ended the EIC's commercial activities entirely, making it a purely administrative body. Centralization: Designated the Governor-General of Bengal as the Governor-General of India (Lord William Bentinck was the first). Law Making: - Centralized all law-making power with the Governor-General-in-Council. - Added a fourth, Law Member (Lord Macaulay was the first) to the Council.

Charter Act of 1853	1853	Civil Services: Introduced an open competitive examination system for recruitment to the Indian Civil Service (ICS) with no discrimination based on race, religion, or birth. Legislature: Created the first functioning Legislative Council in India, a significant step in separating legislative and executive powers. Committee: The Macaulay Committee was formed in 1854 to implement the competitive exam system.
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III. Indian Councils Acts (1861-1909)

Act	Year	Key Provisions
Indian Councils Act of 1861	1861	Governance: - Introduced the 'portfolio' or departmental system. - Empowered the Governor-General to issue Ordinances (valid for 6 months). Judiciary: Led to the establishment of High Courts in Bombay, Madras, and Calcutta (1862).
Indian Councils Act of 1892	1892	Elections: Introduced the system of indirect elections in India for the first time. Legislature: Empowered the legislative assembly to discuss the budget and ask questions.
Indian Councils Act of 1909 (Morley-Minto Reforms)	1909	Representation: Introduced a separate electorate system for Muslims (communal representation). Nature: Considered a failed and temporary compromise; the most short-lived constitutional experiment.

IV. Major Government of India Acts (1919-1935)

Act	Year	Basis & Key Features
Government of India Act, 1919 (Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms)	1919	Basis: Preceded by the Montagu Declaration (1917) and based on the Montagu-Chelmsford Report. Dyarchy: Introduced the Dyarchy system in provincial governments: - Reserved Subjects: Controlled by the Governor (e.g., Finance, Law & Order). - Transferred Subjects: Controlled by Indian ministers (e.g., Health, Education). Other: - Defined jurisdiction between Central and Provincial Governments. - Created the post of the Indian High Commissioner. - Overall governance remained unitary and centralised.
Government of India Act, 1935	1935	Sources: Simon Commission Report, Round Table Conferences (1930-32), and a 1933 White Paper. Provincial Autonomy: Introduced Provincial Autonomy, abolishing Dyarchy at the provincial level. Central Dyarchy: Introduced Dyarchy at the Centre (Reserved & Transferred subjects). All-India Federation: Proposed an All-India Federation (including Princely States), which never materialized. Institutions: Provided for a Bicameral Legislature, a Federal Court, and abolished the India Council. Constitutional Importance: A major source of the

		Indian Constitution. Its "Instrument of Instructions" was incorporated as the Directive Principles of State Policy. Criticism: - Jawaharlal Nehru called it a "Charter of Slavery". - The Indian National Congress rejected it in its 1936 Lucknow Session.
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V. Administrative and Civil Services Reforms

Reform/Code	Year	Key Provisions
The Cornwallis Code	1793	Separation of Powers: Separated revenue administration from the judiciary. District Administration: - Deprived the District Collector of judicial powers, making them solely responsible for revenue. - Transferred judicial powers to a new post, the District Judge.
Bengal Tenancy Act	1885	Land Rights: Recognized and defined the rights of tenants on land in Bengal and Bihar.
Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms	1919	ICS: Recommended that the ICS examination be held simultaneously in India and England (implemented from 1922).
Aitchison Commission		View: Did not support the idea of holding simultaneous examinations in England and India.
Lee Commission	1924	Recommendation: Recommended the establishment of an impartial Public Service Commission, leading to the creation of the Union Public Service Commission in 1926.

VI. Provincial Reorganization

Event	Year	Description
Formation of Bihar and Orissa	1912	Bihar (along with Orissa) was separated from the Bengal Presidency to form a new province (March 22, 1912).
Bihar Separated from Orissa	1936	Bihar was declared a separate province from Orissa (April 1, 1936), a day celebrated as Bihar Divas.

VII. Press and Media Laws

A series of acts were passed to control the media:

- **1835:** Press Censorship law.
- **1867:** Registration Press and Books Act.
- **1878:** Vernacular Press Act (to curb seditious writing).
- **1908:** Newspapers (Incitement to Offences) Act (allowed seizure of anti-government publications).

VIII. Indian National Congress (Relevant Resolutions)

- **1920 (Nagpur Session):** Provincial Congress Committees were constituted on a **linguistic basis**.
- **1936 (Lucknow Session):** **Rejected** the Government of India Act, 1935.
- **1948:** **Rejected** the demand for the formation of provinces on a linguistic basis.

IX. Historical Matching of Acts & Features

Feature	Act
Establishment of the Supreme Court	Regulating Act, 1773
Introduction of Communal Electorates	Indian Councils Act, 1909 (Morley-Minto Reforms)
Introduction of Dyarchy in Provinces	Government of India Act, 1919
Provision for Autonomy of Provinces	Government of India Act, 1935
Not a British-era act:	Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955 (Post-independence law)

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- [Constitutional Development of India – Old Year Questions and Answers](#)
- [Constitutional Development of India One Liner Questions & Answers](#)