



AUGUST 5, JAN 22, MAY 28, DEC 25...

...and more. There are new special days on India's calendar, with varying degrees of acceptance

ARCHIS MOHAN
New Delhi, 5 January

Over the past decade, the government has celebrated India's Independence Day and Republic Day with customary zeal. Alongside, the country's leadership has introduced other 'annual festivals' since 2019, with varying degrees of acceptance. August 5 is one such day, and January 22 could soon become another.

August 5 has come to mark the fulfilment of two of the *Sangh Parivar's* core agenda: Repeal of Article 370, which the Rajya Sabha did in 2019 by revoking the special status to Jammu and Kashmir, and the Prime Minister Narendra Modi laying the foundation stone for the Ram temple in Ayodhya a year later. January 22, the proposed day for the consecration of the Ram temple in Ayodhya, is set to acquire similar importance. The Prime Minister has urged the people to celebrate it with the same fervour as Diwali.

After laying the foundation stone of the Ram temple in Ayodhya on August 5, 2020, the PM tweeted: "A blessed day in Ayodhya. This day will remain etched in the memory of every Indian."

A year later, on August 5, 2021, addressing the beneficiaries of Pradhan Mantri Gareeb Kalyan Anna Yojna in Uttar Pradesh through video conferencing, the PM said the day was one of achievements. "It was August 5 when, two years ago, the country strengthened the feeling of One India-Better India by removing Article 370 from Jammu and Kashmir. It was the same August 5 when last year we took our first step towards a grand Ram

'Temple,' Modi said, adding that the Indian men's hockey team won an Olympic medal on the day after four decades.

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, for his part, has termed August 5 "Ayodhya Diwas".

Sovereignty and ideology

"August 15 and January 26 symbolise India regaining its sovereignty, while August 5 and January 22 are emblematic of its cultural renaissance, of a historical renewal of a civilisation denied its rightful place for a thousand years, a re-igniting of its spirit," R Balashankar, convener of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Intellectual Cell, told *Business Standard*.

Balashankar is a former editor of *Organiser*, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS)-backed weekly.

August 5 falls a few days short of India's Independence Day on August 15 and the marking of the anniversary of the Quit India Movement on August 9. January 22 is four days before the Republic Day. The Independence and Republic Days and the anniversary of the Quit India Movement are linked to India's freedom struggle and the Congress's role in it.

For example, India's Constitution came into effect on January 26, 1950. The date was picked as a reminder of the resolution passed in the Lahore session of the Congress in 1929, which resolved to mark January 26 as Poorna Swaraj Day, or to demand complete independence from the British. "These

dates unite all Indians across religions and castes," says writer Jyoti Punwani.

Balashankar, who has authored "Narendra Modi: Creative Disruptor — The Maker of New India", argues that August 15, 1947, was "one phase of a long history". Quoting from an editorial of *The Guardian*, published on May 18, 2014, two days after Modi led the BJP to a majority in the Lok Sabha, he contends that India finally said goodbye to the British a decade back and not in 1947.

"The Guardian editorial said May 16 'may well go down in history as the day when Britain finally left India' as structures of power before Modi were similar to those through which Britain ruled the subcontinent," Balashankar says.

Other dates have been introduced into the country's political and administrative lexicon since 2014. On May 28, 2023, the PM installed the 'Sengol' in Parliament to inaugurate the new building on the birth anniversary of Hindutva ideologue V D Savarkar. Last week, the BJP governments at the Centre and in states, as they have since 2014, marked December 25, celebrated as Christmas in several parts of the world, as 'Good Governance Day'. It is also the birth anniversary of former prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and of Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya.

However, Modi has been posting his Christmas greetings on social media. On December 25, 2023, he posted pictures and videos of him hosting the Christmas community at his official residence. According to the PM's website, narendramodhi.in, "Bishop Simon John expressed immense happiness that for the first time, a prime minister had invited the Christian Community to celebrate Christmas at his residence."

Gandhi, Patel, Bose

In the last nine years, the BJP government at the Centre has marked some anniversaries and events with more zeal than the previous Congress-led governments. Within months of coming to power, the PM celebrated Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel's birth anniversary on October 31 as National Unity Day. The Congress governments celebrated November 19, Indira Gandhi's birthday, as National Integration Day. Indira Gandhi was assassinated on October 31, 1984. Modi inaugurated the Statue of Unity in Gujarat on Patel's birth anniversary in 2018.

At least since 2021, the Republic Day celebrations have begun on January 23 to mark Subhas Chandra Bose's birth anniversary. In January 2021, the BJP government at the Centre announced that the nation will henceforth celebrate Bose's birth anniversary as Parakram Diwas. A year later, the PM unveiled a hologram statue of Bose near India Gate on January 23 and a granite statue on September 8.

Both Patel and as well as Bose spent years in the Congress. The PM flagged off the *Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav* to celebrate 75 years of India's Independence on March 12, 2021, the anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi's Dandi March, and it ended on Patel's birth anniversary on October 31, 2023.

"The Sangh Parivar did not participate in the freedom struggle but has shown ideological expediency to appropriate historical icons integral to the history of India's freedom struggle and that of the Congress," says Rama Shankar Singh, a former socialist activist and founder-chancellor of Gwalior-based IMT University.

In August 2021, the PM urged the people to mark August 14, the Independence Day of Pakistan, as the Partition Horrors Remembrance Day, but it has not been mentioned since.

While the birth anniversary of Jawaharlal Nehru on November 14 is celebrated as Children's Day, the PM marked December 26 as Veer Bal Diwas, in the memory of the sacrifice of the younger sons of the 10th Sikh guru, Guru Gobind Singh. Since 2021, the Centre marks November 15, the birth anniversary of freedom fighter and tribal hero Birsu Munda, as Janjatiya Gaurav Diwas.

On March 26, 2021, Prime Minister Modi and Bangladesh's Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina declared that India and Bangladesh would mark the 50th anniversary of their friendship by commemorating December 6 as Maitri Diwas, or Friendship Day. India had recognised Bangladesh as an independent country on December 6, 1971.

The razing of the Babri Mosque on December 6, 1992, led to communal riots in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. In subsequent years, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad celebrated the day as Shaurya Diwas, or victory day. Followers of Dalit icon and architect of India's Constitution, B R Ambedkar, continue to mark his death



PHOTO: VEENU SANDHU

(Above) Ram Path, the road leading to the Ram temple in Ayodhya; (right) Statue of Unity in Gujarat which was inaugurated on Patel's birth anniversary in 2018; (below) On May 28, 2023, the PM installed the 'Sengol' in Parliament to inaugurate the new building on the birth anniversary of V D Savarkar



PHOTO: PTI

anniversary that day as Mahaparinirvan Diwas.

On October 2, 2014, the birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, the PM launched his government's Clean India campaign, which Gandhians saw

as an attempt to restrict the Mahatma's political legacy to the idea of cleanliness. The RSS will mark its centenary on Vijayadashami day in 2025, which incidentally falls on October 2.

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The sale will be done by the undersigned through the e-auction platform <https://www.eauctions.co.in>

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Company	Company as a whole includes all the movable and as a whole	1	384.75	38.48
Office Space - 1	Office space on 1st Floor measuring about 536 sq. ft. BUA corresponding to 843 Sq. ft. SBA owned by the company at northern side at premises no. 711/A, presently known and numbered as Municipal premises no. 857/20 Mina Para Road, Bijyogh, PO- Jaisaypur, under KMC ward no. 95, Kolkata- 700032, Dist.: South 24 Parganas.	2	26.51	2.65
Office Space - 2	Office space on 2nd Floor measuring about 554 sq. ft. BUA corresponding to 665 Sq. ft. SBA owned by the company at northern side at premises no. 711/A, presently known and numbered as Municipal premises no. 857/20 Mina Para Road, Bijyogh, PO- Jaisaypur, under KMC ward no. 95, Kolkata- 700032, Dist.: South 24 Parganas.	3	27.79	2.78
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MARKING CALENDAR

■ **August 5** is celebrated for the repeal of Article 370 in 2019 and as 'Ayodhya Diwas' for laying of the foundation stone for the Ram temple in 2020

■ **January 22** will be the consecration of the temple with demands that it be declared a public holiday and the PM has urged people to celebrate it as Diwali

■ **On May 28**, the PM inaugurated the new parliament building on the birth anniversary of V D Savarkar

■ Since 2014, the Centre marks December 25, or Christmas, also as

'good governance day' on the occasion of the birth anniversary of former PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee

■ **January 23**: In 2021, the government announced celebrating Subhas Chandra Bose's birth anniversary as *Parakram Diwas*

■ **October 31**: Since 2014, Sardar Patel's birth anniversary is celebrated as National Unity Day, while earlier Indira Gandhi's birth anniversary on November 19 was marked as National Integration Day

■ **March 12**: In

2021, the PM launched the *Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav* on the day Mahatma Gandhi began the Dandi salt satyagraha in 1930, and it concluded on October 31, 2023

■ **August 14**: In 2021, the PM urged people to mark it as the Partition Horrors Remembrance Day; it is Pakistan's Independence Day

■ **December 26** is now celebrated as Veer Bal Diwas, where Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar are announced instead of November 14, Jawahar Lal Nehru's birth anniversary

IN AUGUST 2021, THE PM URGED THE PEOPLE TO MARK AUGUST 14, THE INDEPENDENCE DAY OF PAKISTAN, AS THE PARTITION HORRORS REMEMBRANCE DAY

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