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Dandi March to Mark 75 Years of Independence

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Why in News

The Prime Minister has flagged off a commemorative '**Dandi March**' (on 12th March) to launch the **celebrations of the 75th year of Independence - 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav'**.

Key Points

- **About the 2021 Dandi March:**

- The padyatra is being undertaken by 81 marchers from **Sabarmati Ashram in Ahmedabad to Dandi in Navsari**, a journey of 386 km. The march will **end after 25 days**, on 5th April 2021.
- **Descendants** of those **who walked the Salt March** (in 1930) **will be honoured**.
- Marchers will traverse the route **in memory of the 78 who accompanied Mahatma Gandhi in 1930** from Ahmedabad to Dandi and **two others** who had joined mid-route.
- Big events will be organised at **six places** associated with Gandhi. These include **MK Gandhi's birthplace Porbandar**, along with **Rajkot, Vadodara, Bardoli (Surat), Mandvi (Kutch) and Dandi (Navsari)**.
- Cultural programmes are planned at **21 spots** on the route **at the nightly stops for the walkers**.

- **About the 1930 Dandi March:**

- The Dandi March, also known as the **Salt March** and the **Dandi Satyagraha** was an act of **nonviolent civil disobedience** led by **Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi**.
- The march lasted from **12th March, 1930 to 6th April, 1930** as a direct action campaign of tax resistance and nonviolent protest **against the British salt monopoly**.
- On **12th March**, Gandhiji set out from Sabarmati with **78 followers on a 241-mile** march to the coastal town of **Dandi on the Arabian Sea**. There, Gandhi and his supporters were to defy British policy by making salt from seawater.
- At Dandi, thousands more followed his lead, and in the coastal cities of Bombay and Karachi, Indian nationalists led crowds of citizens in making salt.
- **Civil disobedience broke out all across India**, soon involving millions of Indians, and British authorities arrested more than 60,000 people. Gandhiji himself was arrested on 5th May, but the satyagraha continued without him.
- On **21st May**, the poet **Sarojini Naidu** led 2,500 marchers on the **Dharasana Salt Works**, some 150 miles north of Bombay. The incident, recorded by American journalist Webb Miller, prompted an international outcry against British policy in India.
- In January 1931, Gandhiji was released from prison. He later met with Lord Irwin, the viceroy of India, and **agreed to call off the satyagraha in exchange for an equal negotiating role at a London conference** on India's future.

In August 1931, **Gandhiji traveled to the conference as the sole representative of the nationalist Indian National Congress**. The meeting was a disappointment, but British leaders had acknowledged him as a force they could not suppress or ignore.

- **1930 Dandi March (Background):**

- The **Lahore Congress of 1929** had authorized the **Congress Working Committee (CWC) to launch a programme of civil disobedience** including non-payment of taxes.
- On **26th January 1930**, "**Independence Day**" was observed, with the national flag being hoisted in different venues, and patriotic songs being sung.
- In February 1930, CWC meeting at Sabarmati Ashram, invested Gandhiji with full powers to launch the Civil Disobedience Movement at a time and place of his choice.
- Gandhiji's ultimatum to **Lord Irwin, the Viceroy of India (1926-31)**, stating the minimum demands had been ignored and there was only one way out-civil disobedience.

- **Effect of the Movement:**

- Civil Disobedience in different forms continued in different provinces. Special stress was laid on the boycott of foreign goods.
- In eastern India, **payment of chowkidari tax was refused**. This **no-tax campaign became very popular in Bihar**.
- In Bengal, **J.N. Sengupta defied Government laws** by reading openly the books banned by the government.
- **Defiance of forest laws** assumed a mass character in Maharashtra.
- The movement had taken a firm hold in provinces of U.P., Orissa, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Assam.

- **Significance:**

- **Imports from Britain had fallen considerably**. For example, imports of cloth from Britain had fallen by half.
- The movement was **more widespread than the previous one**. Mass participation including **women, peasants, workers, students, urban elements like merchants, shopkeepers** provided the Congress a new all-India status.
- The support that the movement had garnered from the **poor and the illiterate both in the town and countryside** was remarkable.
- For **Indian women**, the movement was the most liberating experience to date and can truly be said to have marked their entry into the public space.
- Although the **Congress withdrew the Civil Disobedience in 1934**, the movement received global attention and marked a critically important stage in the progress of the anti-imperialist struggle.

Source: IE