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Mains Practice Questions

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Q. The speedy events under Mountbatten caused anomalies in arranging the details of partition and failed to prevent the partition massacre. Critically analyse. (150 Words).

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Approach

- Start the answer with the events that took place under Mountbatten just before the independence of India.
- Discuss how the anomalies in arranging the details of partition failed to prevent partition massacre.
- Conclude suitably.

Introduction

Mountbatten proved more firm and quick in taking decisions than his predecessors because he was informally given more powers to decide things on the spot. He also had the advantage of the firm decision of the British government to quit at the earliest.

His task was to explore the options of unity and division till October 1947 and then advise the British government on the form of transfer of power.

Body

On July 5, 1947 the British Parliament passed the Indian Independence Act which was based on the Mountbatten Plan, and the Act got royal assent on July 18, 1947. The Act was implemented on August 15, 1947.

- The Act provided for the creation of two independent dominions of India and Pakistan with effect from August 15, 1947.
- Each dominion was to have a governor-general to be responsible for the effective operation of the Act.
- The constituent assembly of each new dominion was to exercise the powers of the legislature of that dominion, and the existing Central Legislative Assembly and the Council of States were to be automatically dissolved.

However, the breakneck speed of events under Mountbatten caused anomalies in arranging the details of partition and totally failed to prevent the Punjab massacre, because

- There were no transitional institutional structures within which partition problems could be tackled;
- Mountbatten had hoped to be the common Governor- General of India and Pakistan, thus providing the necessary link, but Jinnah wanted the position for himself in Pakistan;
- There was a delay in announcing the Boundary Commission Award (under Radcliffe); though the award was ready by August 12, 1947. Mountbatten decided to make it public after August 15 so that the British could escape all responsibility for disturbances.

Need For Immediate Partition

- Only an immediate transfer of power could forestall the spread of 'direct action' and communal violence. The virtual collapse of the Interim Government also made the notion of Pakistan appear unavoidable.
- The partition plan ruled out independence for the princely states which could have been a greater danger to Indian unity as it would have meant Balkanisation of the country.
- Acceptance of partition was only a final act of the process of step-by-step concessions to the League's championing of a separate Muslim state.

Conclusion

The partition horrors was one of the black chapters in Indian history. The peaceful transfer of power was attempted but partition horror still remains that could have been avoided. India recently announced 14 August to be celebrated as Partition Horror Remembrance Day.