



# Jallianwala Bagh Massacre

## Why in News

The Prime Minister of India paid tributes to the martyrs of the Jallianwala Bagh massacre of 1919.

- 13<sup>th</sup> April, 2020 marks the 101 years of the incident.

## Key Points

- Jallianwala Bagh Massacre, **also called Massacre of Amritsar** was an incident on April 13, 1919, in which British troops fired on a large crowd of unarmed Indians in an open space known as the Jallianwala Bagh in Amritsar in Punjab.
  - The **Jallianwala Bagh site in Amritsar is now a national monument.**
- It killed several hundred people and wounded many hundreds more. It marked a **turning point in India's modern history**, in that it left a permanent scar on Indo-British relations and was the precursor to Mahatma Gandhi's full commitment to the cause of Indian nationalism and independence from Britain.
- **Events Before the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre**
  - During **World War I (1914-18)** the British government of India enacted a series of **repressive emergency powers** that were intended to combat subversive activities.
  - By the war's end, expectations were high among the Indian populace that those measures would be eased and that India would be given more political autonomy. The **Montagu-Chelmsford Report**, presented to the British Parliament in **1918**, did in fact recommend **limited local self-government**.
  - Further, the then government of India passed what became known as the **Rowlatt Acts** in early 1919, which essentially extended the repressive wartime measures. The acts were met by widespread anger and discontent among Indians, notably in the Punjab region. **Gandhi** in early April called for a one-day **general strike (Rowlatt Satyagraha)** throughout the country.
  - In Amritsar the news that **prominent Indian leaders (Satya Pal and Saifuddin Kitchlew) had been arrested** and banished from that city sparked violent protests on April 10, in which soldiers fired upon civilians and angry mobs killed several foreign nationals.
  - A force of several dozen troops commanded by **Brig. Gen. Reginald Edward Harry Dyer was given the task of restoring order**. Among the measures taken was a ban on public gatherings.
- **On the Date of the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre**
  - On the afternoon April 13, a crowd of at least 10,000 men, women, and children gathered in the Jallianwala Bagh, which was nearly completely enclosed by walls and had only one exit.
  - It is not clear how many people there were protesters who were defying the ban on public meetings and how many had come to the city from the surrounding region to **celebrate Baisakhi, a spring festival**.
  - Dyer and his soldiers arrived and sealed off the exit. Without warning, the troops opened

fire on the crowd, reportedly shooting hundreds of rounds until they ran out of ammunition.

▪ **After the Incident**

- The **Bengali poet and Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore renounced the knighthood** that he had received in 1915. Gandhi soon began organizing his first large-scale and sustained nonviolent protest (satyagraha) campaign, the **Non Cooperation Movement (1920-22)**.
- The then government of India ordered an investigation of the incident (**the Hunter Commission**), which in 1920 censured Dyer for his actions and ordered him to resign from the military.

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