

PIB SUMMARY 13 APRIL 2019

Jallianwala Bagh massacre

Context:

13th April 2019 marks the Jallianwala Bagh massacre's 100th anniversary, which is one of the goriest episodes in human history and the darkest chapter of the British rule in India.

What happened?

On 13 April 1919, British troops fired at a gathering of unarmed Indians at the Jallianwala Bagh in Amritsar leading to the deaths of at least a thousand people

Background:

- In Punjab there were riots and protests against **the Rowlatt Act**.
- And therefore Punjab was put under martial law which meant that it became unlawful for more than 4 people to assemble at a place.
- The Lieutenant-Governor of Punjab at that time was Michael O'Dwyer. Lord Chelmsford was India's Viceroy.
- On the day of the festival of Baisakhi on 13th April 1919 in Jallianwala Bagh, a public garden in Amritsar, a crowd of **non-violent protestors had gathered**. Also among the crowd were pilgrims who had come to celebrate Baisakhi.
- General Dyer came there with his troops and blocked the only narrow entrance to the garden.
- Then, without warning, he ordered his troops to fire at the unarmed crowd which included children as well.
- The indiscriminate firing went on for about 10 minutes which resulted in the deaths of at least 1000 people and injured more than 1500 people.

Post incident developments?

- This tragedy came as a rude shock to Indians and totally destroyed their faith in the British system of justice.
- National leaders condemned the act and Dyer unequivocally.
- However, Dyer was appreciated by many in Britain and the British in India although some people in the British government were quick to criticise it.
- The government set up the **Hunter Commission** to inquire into the massacre. Although the commission condemned the act by Dyer, it did not impose any disciplinary action against him.
- He was relieved of his duties in the army in 1920.
- In protest against the massacre and the British failure to give due justice to the victims, **Rabindranath Tagore** gave up his **knighthood** and **Gandhiji** relinquished his title '**Kaiser-e-hind**' bestowed on him by the British for his services during the Boer War in South Africa.
- Michael O'Dwyer, the then Lieutenant-Governor of Punjab, who had approved the actions of Brigadier General Dyer, was assassinated by **Udham Singh** in London in 1940 as revenge against the massacre. Udham Singh is believed to have witnessed the massacre as a child.