

UPSC Civil Services Examination

UPSC Notes [GS-I]

Topic: First Round Table Conference 1930 [Modern Indian History Notes for UPSC]

The Round Table Conferences were a series of three conferences conducted by the Labour Party-led British government to deliberate upon and bring about constitutional reforms in British India during 1930 – 32. There were three such conferences. The First Round Table Conference was held between November 1930 and January 1931 at London.

Background

- There were increasing demands of granting dominion status to India among a certain section of the British polity.
- In India, the freedom movement was in full swing with its demand for swaraj or self-rule spearheaded by the charismatic Gandhi.
- The conferences were based on the recommendation of Muhammad Ali Jinnah to Lord Irwin, the then Viceroy of India and James Ramsay MacDonald, the then British Prime Minister, and the Simon Commission report.
- It was for the first time that the Indians and the British were meeting as 'equals'. The first conference started on November 12th, 1930.

Participants

Participants in the First Round Table Conference

- 58 political leaders from British India.
- 16 delegates from the native princely states.
- 16 delegates from the three British political parties.
- The Indian National Congress decided not to participate in the conference. Many of the INC leaders were imprisoned due to their involvement in the civil disobedience movement.
- Among the British-Indians, the following representatives attended the conference: Muslim League, Hindus, Justice Party, Sikhs, liberals, Parsis, Christians, Anglo-Indians, Europeans, landlords, labour, women, universities, Sindh, Burma, other provinces, and the representatives from the Government of India.

Issues discussed

Issues discussed in the First Round Table Conference

- Federal structure
- Provincial constitution
- Provinces of Sindh and NWFP
- Minorities
- Defence services
- Franchise
- Executive responsibility to the legislature
- Dr B R Ambedkar demanded separate electorates for the 'untouchables'.
- Tej Bahadur Sapru moved the idea of an All-India Federation. This was supported by the Muslim League. The princely states also supported this on the condition that their internal sovereignty is maintained.

Effects

Effects of the First Round Table Conference

- The First Round Table Conference lasted till 19th January 1931.
- Although many principles on reforms were agreed upon, not much was implemented and the Congress Party carried on its civil disobedience. The Conference was regarded as a failure.
- The British government understood the importance and the need for the Congress Party to make any decision on India's political future.