

# Arrival of Pedro Álvares Cabral: This Day in History

## – Sep 13

On 13 September 1500, Portuguese explorer Pedro Álvares Cabral arrived at Calicut in Kerala and established a factory which was the first European factory in India. Read more on this important event in modern Indian history for the IAS exam.

### Background and Events

- Pedro Álvares Cabral was a Portuguese nobleman, explorer and navigator, who is best remembered as the man who discovered Brazil.
- He was appointed by the king of Portugal, Manuel I to travel to India on the sea route established by Vasco da Gama earlier and establish trade relations with India.
- The lucrative spice trade was till then dominated by Arabs and Turkish merchants.
- Cabral arrived in Calicut with fine gifts and diplomatic letters from the monarch of Portugal himself.
- The Zamorin (Samoothiri ruler) of Calicut welcomed Cabral and the latter managed to secure a commercial treaty which granted the Portuguese the right to trade.
- Cabral also established a factory at Calicut.
- After two months of operation, the factory was attacked by about 500 men. This surprise attack was led by Arabs who were rivals with the Portuguese in trade. The Portuguese also had a traditional rivalry with the Arabs on account of religion. About 50 Portuguese



people were killed in this attack.

- It is believed that Indians also supported the Arabs in this attack. Cabral waited for an explanation from the Zamorin about this incident and when none was obtained, he proceeded to attack a few Arab merchant ships. The crew were killed and the ships set ablaze. The city of Calicut was also bombarded for a whole day.
- The Portuguese wanted to establish their military and artillery superiority and pave the way for future traders from their country since they would always be outnumbered by Indians.
- This reprisal of the Portuguese set the tone for **gunboat diplomacy** that other European powers would follow in their colonial pursuits in the subcontinent.

- After the massacre at Calicut, Cabral proceeded to the Kingdom of Kochi, whose ruler welcomed them. Commercial alliances were established and Cabral and his crew returned to Portugal loaded with spices.
- Vasco da Gama returned to India in 1502 and there were battles with the Zamorin who remained hostile to the Portuguese throughout.
- The Portuguese were the first European country to colonise India although their influence was restricted to a few areas after the British established their dominance. The Portuguese were also the last European power to be ousted from India when Goa was liberated from Portugal in 1961.
- The Portuguese ruled over parts of India for about 450 years.