

Chauri Chaura Centenary Celebrations

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In news

The Prime Minister will inaugurate the Chauri Chaura Centenary Celebrations at Chauri Chaura, Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh, on 4th February 2021

The day marks 100 years of the 'Chauri Chaura' incident, a landmark event in the country's fight for independence.

A brief note on Chauri Chaura incident

- The Chauri Chaura incident took place on 4 February 1922 at Chauri Chaura in the Gorakhpur district of the United Province in British India, when a large group of protesters participating in the Non-cooperation movement, clashed with police who opened fire
- In retaliation the demonstrators attacked and set fire to a police station, killing all of its occupants.
- The incident led to the deaths of three civilians and 23 policemen.
- The incident dealt a blow to the nonviolent noncooperation movement led by Mahatma Gandhi, who denounced the violence in Chauri Chaura and called off a campaign of civil disobedience that he had been about to launch in Bardoli, Gujarat state.

What had happened at Chauri Chaura?

- Two days before the incident, on 2 February 1922, volunteers participating in the Non-cooperation Movement led by a retired Army soldier named Bhagwan Ahir, protested against high food prices and liquor sale in the marketplace.

- The demonstrators were beaten back by the local police. Several of the leaders were arrested and put in the lock-up at the Chauri Chaura police station.
- In response to this, a protest against the police was called on 4 February, to be held at the local marketplace.
- On 4 February, approximately 2,000 to 2,500 protesters assembled and began marching towards the market at Chauri Chaura.
- They had gathered to picket a liquor shop in the marketplace. Their leader was arrested, beaten and put in jail. Part of the crowd gathered in front of the local police station shouting slogans demanding the release of their leader.
- Armed police were dispatched to control the situation while the crowd marched towards the market and started shouting anti-government slogans.
- In an attempt to frighten and disperse the crowd, the police fired warning shots into the air. This only agitated the crowd who began to throw stones at the police.
- With the situation getting out of control, the Indian sub-inspector in charge ordered the police to open fire on the advancing crowd, killing three and wounding several others.
- Reports vary on the reason for the police retreat, with some suggesting that the constables ran out of ammunition while others claimed that the crowd's unexpectedly assertive reaction to the gunfire was the cause.
- In the ensuing chaos, the heavily outnumbered police fell back to the shelter of the police chowki while the angry mob advanced.
- Infuriated by the gunfire into their ranks, the crowd set the chowki ablaze, killing all of the Indian policemen and chaprassis (official messengers) trapped inside.

- Most were burned to death though several appear to have been killed by the crowd at the entrance to the chowki and their bodies thrown back into the fire.
- The death count is reported in the literature as either 22 or 23 policemen killed, possibly due to the subsequent death of an additional burn victim

Non-cooperation movement

The Non-cooperation movement was launched on 4th September, 1920 by Mahatma Gandhi with the aim of self-governance and obtaining full independence (Purna Swaraj) as the Indian National Congress (INC) withdrew its support for British reforms following the Rowlatt Act of 21 March 1919, and the Jallianwala Bagh massacre Massacre of 13th April 1919