The Royal Indian Navy (RIN) Mutiny of 1946

Prelims: *Current events of national and international importance | History*

Why in News?

The 80th anniversary of the 1946 Royal Indian Navy Mutiny commemorates a major anti-colonial uprising, one of the last significant revolts against British rule before India's independence.

- **RIN Mutiny –** Revolt by Indian sailors of the Royal Indian Navy on February 18, 1946, against British rule, primarily in Mumbai (then Bombay), Maharashtra.
- **Historical Background –** Called the last war of independence, representing a struggle against British imperial forces.
- ***Sailors (ratings) of the Royal Indian Navy (RIN) revolted due to poor treatment, lack of compensation, and racial discrimination.***
- **Causes –** Ratings were deployed in World Wars and other British campaigns without special compensation.
- **Recruitment issues –** False promises of secure jobs, promotion, and a better life.
- **Poor conditions in naval bases –** Inadequate training, overcrowded establishments, shortage of staff, ill-treatment, low-quality food, restricted cultural expression, and limited medical facilities.
- **Racial discrimination –** Appointment of Arthur Frederick King, a racist officer, as Commander of HMIS Talwar.
- **Prior Agitations –** Previous small-scale agitations between 1942 and 1945 in Bombay and Odisha.
- **Nationalist Influences –** Influence of the Quit India Movement and the Indian National Army inspired action.
- **Leadership and Organisation – Planning committee headquarters –** Established at Marine Drive, Mumbai, led by Pran and Kusum Nair
- Support for the mutiny came from,
    - Members of the Ex-Services Association and the Indian People's Theatre Association.
    - Y. K. Menon and Aruna Asaf Ali
- **Key leaders** – Salil Shyam, B. C. Dutt, Madan Singh, Rishi Dev Puri, and M. S. Khan
- The Central Strike Committee was formed to coordinate actions across naval bases.
- **Renaming –** *The Royal Indian Navy was symbolically renamed the Indian National Navy, and the Royal Gate was renamed Azad Gate.*
- **Course of the Mutiny – Feb 1, 1946 –** HMIS Talwar, Mumbai, became the centre of resistance, and

- R. K. Singh resigned symbolically, and B. C. Dutt was arrested for anti-British activities sparked widespread defiance.
- **Feb 18, 1946 – *Around 1,100 Royal Indian Navy ratings of HMIS Talwar went on strike*** under the slogan "No Food, No Work" and with other demands, namely,
    - End racial discrimination
    - Equal pay for Indian and white soldiers.
    - Improve food quality.
    - Stop abuse by superior officers.
    - Release the rating arrested for scrawling "Quit India" on HMIS Talwar.
    - Release those facing trials in the Indian National Army (INA) cases.
    - Withdraw Indian troops deployed in Indonesia.
- Open revolt included raising Congress Party flags, shouting nationalist slogans ("Quit India", "Jai Hind"), distributing pamphlets, and symbolically taking over the base.
- **Spread –** Ratings contacted other naval bases across India, ***spreading the mutiny to Vishakhapatnam, Cochin, Kolkata, and Karachi, indicating widespread unrest nationwide.***
- **IAF Support –** *Personnel from the Royal Indian Air Force showed solidarity* by organising strikes and refusing certain duties, though they did not engage in armed rebellion.
- **Public and Media Support –** The Indian press reported the uprising, and All India Radio broadcast the news.
- Civilians joined in protest, supporting the ratings, closing shops, and challenging British authority.
- **Demands of Ratings –**
- Release of R. K. Singh and other imprisoned leaders.
- Action against Arthur Frederick King.
- Better food, gratuity, and funds upon demobilisation.
- Release of INA prisoners and inquiry into public firing incidents.
- **Outcome – Suppression –** The British attempted to quell the revolt using arrests and military force.
- Leaders like Madan Singh and M. A. Khan faced harsh treatment after the Talwar uprising was subdued.
    - But the revolt continued in other ports like Karachi.
- **Result –** *The revolt was called off after intervention by senior Indian political leaders, including Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel.*
- The RIN revolt was seen as an event marking the end of British rule.

References

1. TH | 1946 Royal Navy revolt
2. INDIAN CULTURE | The Naval Mutiny of 1946

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