World War I Armistice centenary

Why in news?

The centenary of the World War I 1918 armistice treaty was observed on 11th November 2018.

When and how was the armistice signed?

- An armistice is a formal agreement of warring parties to stop fighting.
- The Great War (World War I) drew in some 30 nations and their colonies, and mobilized around 70 million soldiers.
- On October 3, Germany's Emperor, Kaiser Wilhelm II, appointed Chancellor Prince Max of Baden who has long advocated a negotiated peace with Britain, France and the United States.
- The new Chancellor called for the talks with Allied countries.
- The Allies demanded Germany's unconditional surrender and the Kaiser's abdication.
- The pressure was building on Berlin and the German forces were beating a disorderly retreat.
- On November 3, German ally Austria-Hungary capitulated and signed an armistice.
- Tensions mounted in Germany as naval forces mutiny at Kiel and a general strike was called on November 5.
- French officers, meanwhile, received the order to allow safe passage of top German diplomats into Allied territory.
- On November 7, a ceasefire was sounded at La Capelle in northern France, near the Belgium border.
- It was the first in more than 50 months of war and allowed the German delegation, led by Minister of State Matthias Erzberger, to cross into an Allied zone.
- The diplomats took a train to a secluded forest clearing near Compiegne to meet Allied forces commander General Ferdinand Foch.
- Gen. Foch receives the German delegates on November 8 in a train parked in a railway siding in the forest.
- The list of terms fixed by the Allies at Versailles was discussed.
- At the request of the delegation, a messenger is sent to German forces commander Marshal Paul von Hindenburg in Belgium for his authorization to

sign an armistice.

- By the time the envoy arrived, on November 9, the Kaiser has abdicated, with the German Revolution under way.
- With the German Commander's permission and the delegation's deliberation the armistice was signed on November 11.
- The armistice ended a war started four years earlier and was signed in a train carriage in the woods.
- The news reaches the troops quickly, and was received with disbelief.
- On 11th November morning, the ceasefire agreed just hours earlier is sounded by bugles and clarions along the hundreds of kilometers of front line that stretch across Europe.
- The final peace treaty would be signed in Versailles in June 1919.
- Nearly 10 million soldiers died, along with another 10 million civilians.

What was the reaction of Germany?

- In Germany there was relief but also humiliation and anger.
- The Kiel mutiny spreaded and there were deadly revolts across the country.
- The generals blamed politicians for defeat and said that they were "stabbed in the back" on the home front.

Source: The Hindu

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