Parliament passes Jallianwala Bagh National Memorial (Amendment) Bill 2019

Syllabus subtopic: Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

News: Jallianwala Bagh National Memorial (Amendment) Bill, 2019 which seeks the removal of the Congress president as a trustee of the memorial was passed by the Parliament.

Prelims and Mains focus: key features of the bill, about Jallianwala Bagh Massacre

About the Jallianwala Bagh National Memorial (Amendment) Bill

- The Bill amends the Jallianwala Bagh National Memorial Act, 1951.
- The Act provides for the erection of a National Memorial in memory of those killed on April 13, 1919, in Jallianwala Bagh, Amritsar. In addition, the act creates a Trust to manage the National Memorial.

Key Features of the Bill

- **Composition of Trustees:** Under the 1951 Act, the Trustees of the Memorial include: (i) the Prime Minister as Chairperson, (ii) President of the Indian National Congress, (iii) Minister in-charge of Culture, (iv) Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha, (v) Governor of Punjab, (vi) Chief Minister of Punjab, and (vii) three eminent persons nominated by the central government.
- The Bill amends this provision to remove the President of the Indian National Congress as a Trustee. Further, it clarifies that when there is no Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha, then the leader of the single largest opposition party will be the Trustee.
- Trustees nominated by the central government
- The Act provides that the three trustees nominated by the central government will be trustees for a period of five years and will be eligible for renomination. The Bill allows the central government to terminate the term of a nominated trustee before the expiry of his term without assigning any reason.

Changes made in the Bill

- The 2019 amendment bill removes the President of the Indian National Congress as a Trustee.
- It clarifies that when there is no Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha, the leader of the single largest opposition party in the Lok Sabha will be the Trustee.
- The 1951 act provided that the three eminent persons nominated by the central government will have a term of five years and will be eligible for re-nomination. The 2019 bill added a clause to allow the central government to terminate the term of a nominated trustee before the expiry of his term without assigning any reason.
Turning Point in Indian Freedom Struggle

**JALLIANWALA MASSACRE**

**April 13, 1919**

1919: ■ Resentment was high in Punjab after the ruthless British drive to recruit soldiers for World War-I and forced contribution for the war fund

**MARCH 30 AND APRIL 6:** ■ Gandhiji’s call for a country-wide ‘hartal’ to protest against the Rowlatt Act of 1919 received a tremendous response from Punjab

**APRIL 9:** ■ Ram Navami day, the Hindu-Muslim solidarity in the celebrations and the unity during the ‘hartal’ days made Punjab Lt Governor Michael O’Dwyer’s administration panickey ■ Gandhiji’s entry into Punjab was banned ■ Two popular leaders of Amritsar, Saifuddin Kitchlew and Satya Pal arrested

**APRIL 11:** ■ Continuing provocations by Britishers led to mass demonstrations in Lahore, Kasur and Gujranwala. Police action in Amritsar led to violence and the city’s law & order was handed over to Brigadier-General Reginald Dyer

**APRIL 13:** ■ Baisakhi day, a meeting was called in Jallianwala Bagh. Suddenly Dyer appeared there with troops, blocked the exits and without any warning to the people, ordered firing on the completely peaceful and defenceless crowd. The fusillade continued till Dyer’s ammunition ran out. Over a thousand people were reported killed and many more injured

**MAY 31:** ■ Rabindranath Tagore renounced his Knighthood in protest. The country was now getting charged up to fight British rule

**OCT 14:** ■ British government forms a committee of inquiry into the events in Punjab

**NOV 19:** ■ Appearing before the Hunter Committee set up to investigate the ghastly act, Dyer admitted that he acted so to strike terror not only in the city of Amritsar, but throughout Punjab

*Source: Excerpts from Recollections and Reflections by Chimnai H. Sethavd*