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**DAILY EDITORIAL
ANALYSIS**

TOPIC

**MOUNTBATTEN PLAN (JUNE 3
DECLARATION): BLUEPRINT FOR THE
PARTITION OF BRITISH INDIA**

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MOUNTBATTEN PLAN (JUNE 3 DECLARATION): BLUEPRINT FOR THE PARTITION OF BRITISH INDIA

Context

- The **Mountbatten Plan** was announced on **June 3, 1947 (June 3 Declaration)** and became the blueprint for the **Partition of British India** into the independent dominions of **India and Pakistan**.

Background

- **Lord Louis Mountbatten** was tasked by British Prime Minister **Clement Attlee** with **transferring power to Indian hands** by **June 1948**, as he assumed office as the last Viceroy of India on **March 22, 1947**.
- However, the situation on the ground was rapidly deteriorating. Communal violence had spread across the country following:
 - ♦ The **Great Calcutta Killings (August 1946)**
 - ♦ Riots in **Noakhali** and **Bihar**
 - ♦ Disturbances in **Bombay**
 - ♦ Escalating violence in **Punjab**, particularly in Amritsar, Rawalpindi, and Taxila
- **Lord Mountbatten** soon concluded that a united India was no longer politically feasible and that the **demand for Pakistan could not be ignored**.

Key Provisions of June 3 Plan

- The plan laid down the framework for Partition announced through a historic radio broadcast by **Lord Mountbatten, Jawaharlal Nehru, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, and Baldev Singh**. It includes:
 - ♦ **Acceptance of Partition:** The British Government accepted the principle that **British India could be divided into two dominions i.e. India and Pakistan**.
 - ♦ **Decision by Provincial Assemblies:** The Legislative Assemblies of **Punjab** and **Bengal** were to vote on whether their provinces should remain united or be partitioned.
 - ♦ **Referendums:** Referendums were to be held in **North-West Frontier Province (NWFP), and Sylhet district of Assam** to determine whether they would join India or Pakistan.
 - ♦ **Sindh's Choice:** The **Sindh Legislative Assembly** would decide whether Sindh would join India or Pakistan.
 - ♦ **Boundary Commission:** A **Boundary Commission** under **Sir Cyril Radcliffe** would demarcate the borders if Punjab and Bengal were partitioned.
 - ♦ **Creation of Two Dominions:** The plan envisaged the formation of **Dominion of India, and Dominion of Pakistan** each with its own Constituent Assembly.
 - ♦ **Princely States:** Princely States were advised to accede to either India or Pakistan, considering geographical and administrative realities.
 - ♦ **Advanced Date of Transfer of Power:** The transfer of power was advanced from June 1948 to **August 15, 1947**, reflecting the urgency of the situation.

Why Did Congress Accept the Plan?

- **To Stop Communal Violence:** Congress leaders believed that only a swift transfer of power could prevent the country from descending further into chaos and bloodshed.
- **Preference for a Strong Central Government:** Leaders such as **Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel** and **Jawaharlal Nehru** increasingly felt that a smaller but politically stable India was preferable to a united India paralysed by communal deadlock.
 - ♦ In *India Wins Freedom* (by **Maulana Abul Kalam Azad**), Mountbatten convinced Congress leaders that sacrificing some territories would help create a stronger and more cohesive Indian Union.

- **Failure of Congress-League Cooperation:** The experience of working with the Muslim League in the Interim Government had convinced many Congress leaders that effective governance in a united India would be extremely difficult.
- **Avoiding the 'Plan Balkan':** Congress was particularly opposed to Mountbatten's earlier proposal, popularly called **Plan Balkan** which could have allowed provinces to become independent entities.
 - ♦ Congress feared that this would fragment India into multiple sovereign units.

Why Did the Muslim League Accept the Plan?

- **Realisation of Pakistan:** The plan formally accepted the creation of **Pakistan**, which had been the League's central demand since the Lahore Resolution of 1940.
- **Fear of Political Marginalisation:** The League argued that Muslims would become politically subordinate in a Hindu-majority India; Muhammad Ali Jinnah therefore pressed for a separate state of Pakistan.
 - ♦ Partition appeared to offer a guarantee of political self-determination.
- **Strategic Compromise:** Although Jinnah opposed the partition of **Punjab** and **Bengal**, he accepted the plan because it provided a definite path to statehood.
 - ♦ Jinnah considered the division of Punjab and Bengal a mistake but accepted the arrangement in the larger interest of securing Pakistan.

Immediate Challenges After the Announcement

- **Uncertain Borders:** The exact boundaries of India and Pakistan had not been determined.
- **Population Questions:** There was no clarity regarding whether people would be expected to migrate across borders.
 - ♦ Mountbatten publicly stated that he did not foresee a mass movement of populations.
- **Administrative Division:** Assets, military establishments, civil services, and financial resources still had to be divided.

Consequences of the Plan

- The implementation of the June 3 Plan culminated in **Indian Independence Act, 1947**, creation of **Pakistan on 14 August 1947 and India on 15 August 1947**, one of the largest mass migrations in human history, and widespread communal violence and humanitarian tragedy.
- Historians such as **Yasmin Khan** have argued that there was 'no firm line between winners and losers', as Partition brought displacement, uncertainty, and suffering across communities.

Conclusion

- The June 3 Plan marked the decisive turning point in the end of British rule in India.
- The Muslim League viewed it as the fulfilment of its demand for Pakistan while Congress accepted it as a painful necessity to preserve political stability and prevent further fragmentation.

Daily Mains Practice Question

[Q] The Mountbatten Plan represented both a political compromise and a constitutional blueprint for the transfer of power in British India. Discuss its immediate and long-term consequences for the Indian subcontinent.

[Source: IE](#)