

The Bihar Chief Minister recently announced that the state of Bihar will mark February 15th as "Shahid Diwas," paying tribute to 34 freedom fighters who lost their lives in the Tarapur massacre about 90 years ago. The incident, considered the largest atrocity committed by British police after the Jallianwala Bagh massacre in Amritsar in 1919, took place in Tarapur, a town (now a subdivision) in Munger district, Bihar.

### **The Tarapur Incident Detailed**

On February 15th, 1932, a group of young Indian freedom fighters embarked on a mission to hoist the Indian national flag at Thana Bhawan in Tarapur. Unbeknownst to them, the police had already received wind of their plans. Consequently, several officers were waiting for them at the designated spot. When a crowd of 4000 people gathered and started throwing stones at the police, injuring a civil administration officer, the police retaliated with indiscriminate firing.

The brutality lasted until 75 rounds of gunfire were exhausted. In the aftermath, the corpses of 34 individuals were discovered, marking the tragic end of what was meant to be an act of patriotic symbolism. Despite assertions of higher death tolls, just 13 of the deceased could be positively identified.

### **The Catalyst behind the Tarapur Resistance**

The execution of India's renowned freedom fighters - Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev, and Rajguru in Lahore on March 23rd, 1931, triggered a surge of grief and fury across the country. This widespread public sentiment of rebellion was further inflamed when the Gandhi-Irwin Pact fell apart, leading to Mahatma Gandhi's subsequent arrest in early 1932.

Under the terms of the pact, Gandhi had agreed to participate in a Round Table Conference in London, and in return, the British government had committed to releasing political prisoners. However, the agreement's failure resulted in the Indian National Congress being labeled as an illegal entity. Leading Congress figures, such as Jawaharlal Nehru, Vallabhbhai Patel, and Rajendra Prasad, found themselves behind bars.

In Munger, the arrest of freedom fighters including Srikrishna Singh, Nemdhari Singh, Nirapad Mukherjee, Pandit Dasrath Jha, Basukinath Rai, Dinanath Sahay, and Jaymangal Shastri further fuelled the fire of rebellion among the locals. The call of Congress leader Sardar Shardul Singh Kavishwar to hoist the tricolor over government buildings echoed deeply within the hearts of the people in Tarapur, leading to the tragic events of February 15th, 1932.

### **Legacy of the Tarapur Freedom Fighters**

The sacrifice of the Tarapur freedom fighters is now a significant part of Bihar's history. The brave and inspired individuals who risked their lives for the freedom of their country exemplify the strength of India's resistance against British colonial rule. Today, their sacrifice is honoured through the commemoration of Shahid

Diwas, serving as a reminder of their bravery and determination for generations to come.