

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF CULTURE
RAJYA SABHA
STARRED QUESTION No. *200
TO BE ANSWERED ON 07.08.2025

Freedom fighters lodged in Kala Pani (Cellular Jail)

*200 Shri Satnam Singh Sandhu:

Will the Minister of CULTURE be pleased to state :

- (a) the details of steps taken to narrate the valourous stories of freedom fighters lodged in Kala Pani (Cellular Jail) in the Andaman Islands;
- (b) the details of restoration, digital archiving, or educational programmes undertaken to preserve its legacy;
- (c) whether international visitors are allowed and whether UNESCO heritage recognition has been pursued; and
- (d) any plan for a permanent museum or digital record of the freedom fighters incarcerated there?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF CULTURE AND TOURISM
SHRI GAJENDRA SINGH SHEKHAWAT

(a) to (d): A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PARTS (A) TO (D) TO RAJYA SABHA STARRED QUESTION NUMBER 200 FOR REPLY ON 07.08.2025 REGARDING FREEDOM FIGHTERS LODGED IN KALA PANI (CELLULAR JAIL) ASKED BY SHRI SATNAM SINGH SANDHU:

(a) To narrate the valorous stories of freedom fighters incarcerated at the Kala Pani (Cellular Jail) in the Andaman Islands, initiative have been undertaken by Ministry of Culture during the Azadi Ka Amrit. One such initiative is the creation of the *Digital District Repository* (DDR) under the *Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav* campaign, which documents stories of India's freedom fighters at the district level, including those imprisoned at Cellular Jail.

Digital District Repository [Annexure-I] is an attempt to discover and document stories of people, events, and places linked to the freedom struggle of India at the micro level of the district has led to the creation of a Digital District Repository. Stories in this section can be broadly classified under - People & Personalities, Events & Happenings, Hidden treasures – Built & Natural Heritage and Living Traditions & Art Forms. The repository has grown to feature approximately 19,000 verified stories sourced through contributions from various ministries, research institutions, scholars, and local administrations. These include the narratives of our great freedom fighters who were incarcerated at the Kala Pani. These digital archives make lesser-known stories widely accessible, fostering collective memory and public awareness.

For the UT of Andaman & Nicobar under South Andaman district (where the Cellular Jail is located), there are a total of 211 stories of which 209 pertain to Cellular Jail [Annexure-II].

In addition to the steps taken under DDR, to make people aware and to connect with such stories, Ministry has also published curated blog posts in the website <https://amritkal.nic.in> (erstwhile <https://amritmahotsav.nic.in/>) dedicated to the valorous stories of freedom fighters lodged in Kala Pani (Cellular Jail) in the Andaman Islands. Some of the posts are like “The Life of Amar Shaheed Shri Mahavir Singh in the Cellular Jail” (contributed by the Office of

District Magistrate, Etah) [Annexure-III] and 'The Making of the Cellular Jail' (contributed by Dr. Pronob Kumar Sircar, an ethno-historian based at Port Blair) [Annexure-IV].

These stories are also being amplified through official social media channels of Ministry of Culture to raise public awareness, such as through posts dedicated to Veer Savarkar in the Cellular Jail, rare picture of Netaji inspecting Cellular Jail in the year 1944, the Cellular Jail Hunger Strike of 1933.

(b) The legacy of the Cellular Jail is being preserved through multiple channels:

- The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) oversees restoration of the remaining three wings and central watchtower in collaboration with Andaman Public Works Department ensuring architectural integrity
- Digitisation efforts have made archival materials accessible to the public through the *Amrit Kaal* portal (formerly the *Amrit Mahotsav* website), ensuring long-term preservation.
- Educational outreach, such as guided visits, commemorative events under *Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav*, and publications, promote historical engagement among youth and citizens.

(c) Yes, the Cellular Jail is open to both domestic and international visitors. It continues to attract a significant number of tourists and history enthusiasts. Furthermore, in recognition of its global historical importance, India submitted the Cellular Jail for inclusion in UNESCO's Tentative List for World Heritage Sites in 2014 under cultural criteria (iv) and (vi) UNESCO Tentative List Entry [Annexure-V]. This process underscores the commitment to attaining international recognition for the site.

(d) Yes, there are permanent and ongoing efforts to document and present the legacy of the freedom fighters imprisoned there. The Cellular Jail complex currently houses:

- A museum, photo gallery, and art gallery, open to the public (from 9:00 AM–12:00 PM and 2:00 PM–5:00 PM) on all days except Monday.
- A Son-et-Lumiere (light and sound) show conducted daily at 6:00 PM (Hindi) and 7:15 PM (English), which vividly recounts the freedom struggle and the sacrifices made by the inmates of Kala Pani.

Together, these efforts constitute a comprehensive approach to honouring the martyrs of the Indian freedom movement and educating present and future generations about this pivotal chapter in India's history.

DIGITAL DISTRICT REPOSITORY (DDR)

District-wise narratives of our splendid heritage

The big stories/narratives often make the headlines of our historical narratives, but history is not only about the landmark events – it finds shape and character in the myriad events that led up to a flashpoint of change. An attempt to discover and document stories of people, events, and places linked to the freedom struggle of India at the micro-level of the district has led to the creation of a Digital District Repository.

Stories in this section have been broadly classified under the following four categories:

1. People & Personalities,
2. Events & Happenings,
3. Hidden treasures – Built & Natural Heritage, and
4. Living Traditions & Art Forms.

Multiple meetings (via the medium of Video Conferencing [VC]) were conducted by the Secretary (Culture) with the District Collectors/District Magistrates (DC/DM) wherein they were encouraged to share DDR narratives. Consequently, 3-member District-Level Committee were formed, mostly comprising of:

1. Member from District Archives/Academicians of the District
2. District information Officer (Art, Culture, Tourism, Public Relations)
3. District Informatics Officer

Furthermore, nominations were made of the Nodal officers by the DC/DM for their respective States/UTs. Focus has been made on spotlighting lesser-known local stories of our freedom struggle across districts. The state officers have been motivated. Creation of original content was highly encouraged. Suggestions were made for the formation of State-level Committees to be headed by the Principal Secretary, with the mandate of requisite monthly reviews.

The journey to collect information and compile stories from every district began with only a single resource person and initially the first 75 stories were uploaded, that was a challenge in itself. Later expanding the team the target of nearly 19,000 stories from across the length and breadth of the subcontinent has been achieved.

Workshops were organized for the batches of the Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration (LBSNAA), whence the mandate of DDR was elaborated and discussed, and the officers were requested to contribute towards this cause. Remarkable response was received from their end. Once the stories were received, the team verified the content and later they were uploaded to the website.


A collaboration was made with the Centre for Cultural Resources and Training (CCRT) whence several workshops were organized to explain the mandate and scope of DDR to the CCRT trainees and teachers who could go to the field and collect narratives belonging to the Indian Freedom Struggle. Workshops have also been continuously organized by the team in collaboration with CCRT. In the month of June 2022, a DDR workshop was organized with around 500 resource persons as participants therein.

In addition to this one-of-its-kind effort, several events have been organized by the Ministry of Culture (MoC) to spread awareness about the contribution of almost every district in the nation for the cause of independence. For instance, one such effort has been development of content and curation of an exhibition – comprising static and digital panels – was originally organized at LBSNAA, Mussoorie, on 27 June 2022 (later with tweaked content the exhibition formed part of AMRITPEX at Pragati Maiden, New Delhi, and the Inaugural Ceremony of Meri Maati Mera Desh: Mitti Ko Naman, Veeron Ka Vandan at Rang Bhavan, All India Radio, Sansad Marg, Delhi).

Digital District Repository | A


amritkaal.nic.in/digital-district-repository.htm

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Displaying Item 1 to 12 of 18962

Previous


1


2


3


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Annexure-II

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Displaying Item **13** to **24** of **211**


Previous

1


2

3


Next

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The Life of Amar Shaheed Shri Mahavir Singh in the Cellular Jail



The freedom with which we are living in the nation today, the foundation of this very freedom was laid by the stalwarts such as Shri Mahavir Singh. Many sung and unsung heroes of our freedom struggle sacrificed their lives for the cause of the nation. Their memories are a source of our rich cultural heritage.

The atrocities done in the Cellular Jail on Shri Mahavir Singh can be seen in the inset picture.



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सूखे नारियलों से तेल निकालवाना



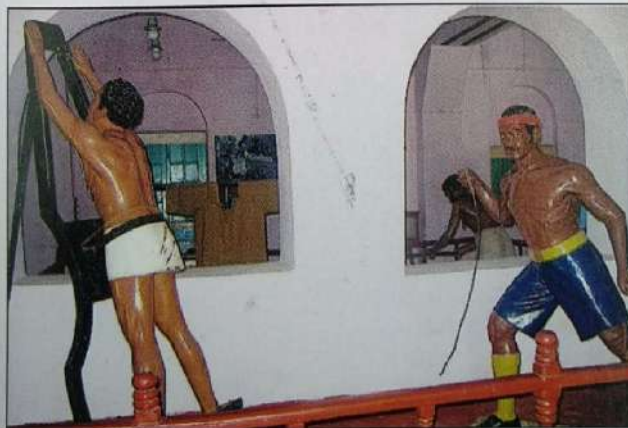
सजा वाले कपड़े



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Mahavir Singh was tried in the Lahore Conspiracy Case. He refused to recognize the court of the colonialists. In order to end the Lahore Conspiracy Case as soon as possible, the Government of India issued the Lahore Conspiracy Case Ordinance in the early 1930s. Mahavir Singh and other accomplices (Shri Batukeshwar Dutt, Gaya Prasad, and Jitendra Nath Sanyal) while explaining their purpose against the government atrocities, said that they do not expect any justice from this court. Saying this, he refused to participate in its proceedings. At the end of the statement, he said, "We have been accused of waging war against the British Government. We do not expect justice from any court set up by the British Government and therefore we will not participate in this drama of justice".

In the year 1929, Shri Mahavir Singh was sentenced to life imprisonment in the Lahore Conspiracy Case. After some time in the Lahore jail, Mahavir Singh was sent to Ballari Central Jail (Mysore) in 1930 and then to the Madras jail. In January 1933, Mahavir Singh was sent to the Port Blair Jail in Andaman under 'Saza-e-Kalapani'. This jail in the Andaman was a symbol of severe torture. Mahavir Singh Ji continued his fast against the injustice and inhuman treatment meted out by the jail officials.

Read more about Amar Shaheed Shri Mahavir Singh Ji at: <https://cmsadmin.amritmahotsav.nic.in/district-repository-detail.htm?1668>

On 12 May 1935, all the political prisoners went on a fast in jail for their demands. From the sixth day of the fast, the jail authorities began force-feeding. After half an hour of struggle, 10-12 people together succeeded in putting Mahavir Singh on the ground, after which the doctor put one knee on his chest and put the tube inside the nose. He did not see that the tube had gone into the lungs of Mahavir Singh rather than his stomach. 1 liter of milk went into his lungs, due to which on 17 May 1933, the son of India, Shri Mahavir Singh was martyred for the great cause of the country.

Source: The Office of District Magistrate, Etah



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The Making of the Cellular Jail

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[Events](#)
[Campaigns](#)
[Long Live Democracy](#)
[Competitions](#)
[History Corner](#)
[Blog](#)
[Media Coverage](#)
[Downloads](#)

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The Making of the Cellular Jail

The history of our freedom struggle is replete with acts of courage, sacrifice, and dedication to the cause of freedom. The heroes of our freedom struggle came from every nook and corner of the country. They did not speak one language and they did not belong to one region or one caste. An intense love for their country and a keen desire to see it free was their common goal. The walls of Cellular Jail were accustomed to witnessing all these along with the unspoken inhuman tortures, sufferings, and extreme sacrifices. The undaunted spirit was beyond our imagination. Nothing could deter them from their committed task; neither money nor the tearful affection of their family members. The jail became a synonym for 'black terror'; and the 'imprisonment in the Cellular Jail' came to be notorious as 'Kalapani ki Saza'. Since the Cellular Jail is sanctified by the dust of the martyrs' feet and their sweat and blood, it not only evokes interest and curiosity in the minds of every Indian but also becomes a holy place of pilgrimage or 'Mukti Teertha' in the present Indian consciousness.

Recommendation by Lyall and Lethbridge

A report on the working of the Penal Settlement of Port Blair by Sir Charles James Lyall of Bengal Civil Service and Surgeon Major Alfred Swain Lethbridge, Inspector General of Jails, Bengal dated 26th April 1890 submitted to the Secretary to the Government of India, Home Department mentioned in detail about the situation and difficulties pertaining to the penal settlement and prisoners in the Andamans. Their observation report became a basis for the authority to consider the construction of a concrete jail at Port Blair.

At point no. 12 of the report, Lyall and Lethbridge mention:

"Our next recommendation for making the earlier stages of imprisonment in the settlement more penal is that there should be a preliminary stage of separate confinement in cells. In the British and other European prison systems this preliminary stage has been worked for many years with the greatest success, and it is now considered essential in the management of jails where prisoners sentenced to penal servitude are first received." Further, they write, *"The close confinement of prisoners for long period in the Madras cellular jails and in one of the jails in Bengal (Midnapur) has shown that there is no reason to fear any deterioration in health either mentally or physically."*

Thus, this mentioning of them elucidates the fact that there was not only thought for security but other concerns too. Lyall and Lethbridge had observed the great loss of health among the prisoners and a large number of admission to hospitals from wounds and ulcers.

Further, they say:

"To enable the authorities to carry out this system, a cellular jail containing at least 600 cells should be constructed without delay".

Initially, they served the thought to make the jail in Viper but some difficulties with it they highlighted in a separate appendix. Further, they suggested a well-raised inland non-malarious site at Port Blair. The option for selecting a site at Aberdeen was also in place. The local officers suggested Lyall and Lethbridge about the reclaimed land on Viper for construction of the new jail but insufficient space was observed in response.

Lyall and Lethbridge laid down some technical suggestions:

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[Themes](#)
[Themes 2.0](#)
[Events](#)
[Campaigns](#)
[Long Live Democracy](#)
[Competitions](#)
[History Corner](#)

[Blog](#)
[Media Coverage](#)
[Downloads](#)

- > The improvement will secure the discipline and work of the prisoners in the Settlement when they know that they will be sent back to separate confinement if they give trouble. Instead of giving long sentences in the chain gang which can be evaded by going to the hospital, Settlement Officers would use the cells as a punishment for shorter periods and far more effectively.
- > Preliminary confinement would be an excellent means of acclimatising prisoners without exposing them to the weather. Here also the health of the prisoners could be noted with accuracy, and their subsequent selection for special work could be made easier.
- > In this stage, it will be easy to teach educated prisoners the Roman character, and so increase the number of prisoners qualified for work as writers.
- > It will enable the authorities to dispense with the use of fetters on the first arrival or as a punishment. This in our opinion is a matter of considerable importance in a climate where the slightest abrasion has a tendency to fester and to pass rapidly into the stage of severe ulceration. The great loss of health and a large number of admissions to hospitals from wounds and ulcers will be noticed in the medical portion of this report.

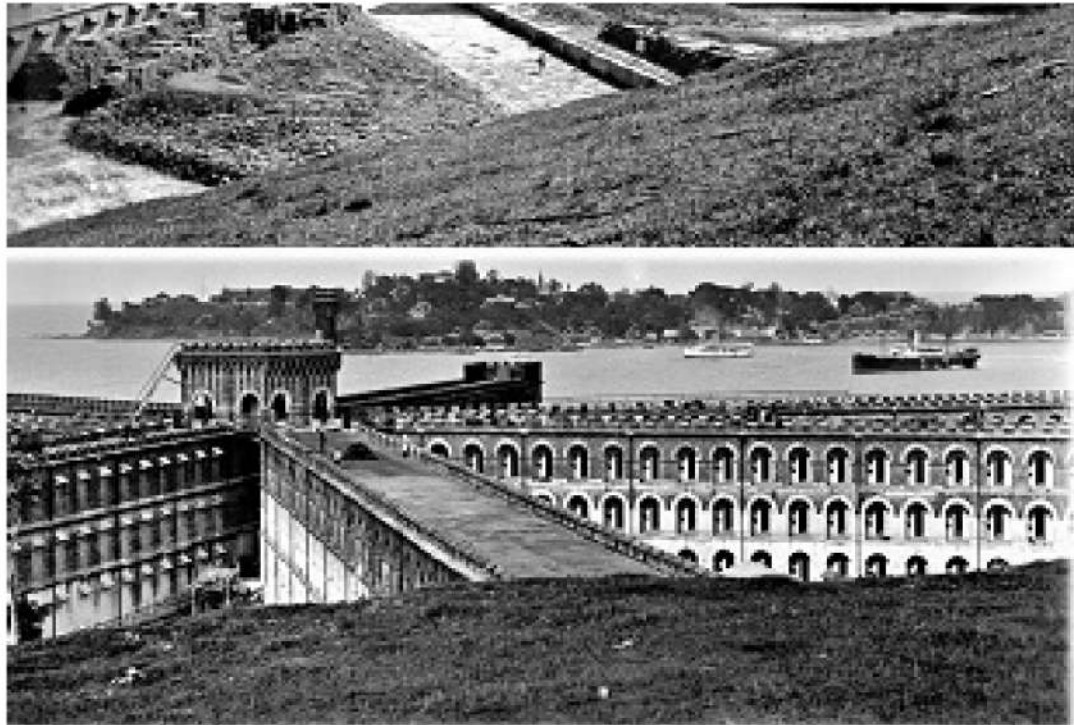
In the report, it was clearly insisted that the life of a convict in the Andamans should be more penal in character. On basis of the report (approved vide letter no. 689 dated 29th July 1893), finally, it was decided to construct a jail that further came to be known as Cellular Jail. For the construction of the jail, two possible sites in the settlement were topographically surveyed. The first site was situated between Pahargaon and Protheroeapur while the other site which was finalized, was at Atlanta Point in Aberdeen. On basis of the settlement order no. 423 dated 13th September 1893 issued by Colonel Norman McLeod Thomas Horsford, IA the construction was started in October 1896. Mr. W.G. MacQuillen was the sub-engineer then. About 600 convicts chiefly from Viper, Navy Bay, Phoenix Bay, Birchgunj, and Dundas Point were engaged in the work. Some of the building materials were brought in from Burma. The lime used in the mortar was obtained by burning raw corals which were collected from the innumerable coral reefs. Bricks were brought from the kilns situated at Dundas Point, Navy Bay, and other places on the islands. About the importance of its location, G. H. Turner 1897 mentioned:

"At Aberdeen, the new Cellular Jail in course of construction is the most auspicious landmark on entering the harbor. It is built on a hill some sixty feet above the sea level."


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[About](#)
[Themes](#)
[Themes 2.0](#)
[Events](#)
[Campaigns](#)
[Long Live Democracy](#)
[Competitions](#)
[History Corner](#)

[Blog](#)
[Media Coverage](#)
[Downloads](#)



Cellular Jail during its construction

Eventually, the construction work was completed in 1906. The Viper Jail at the other end subsequently had to be closed on 1st February 1907. In the first year, 138 cells were constructed only in the wing 1 and 2; but in 1905-06, the total number of constructed cells of all the wings increased to 663 having 78 in Wing1, 60 in Wing2, 126 in Wing3, 105 in Wing4, 105 in Wing5, 126 in Wing6 and 63 in Wing7. In the year 1909, additional 30 cells were constructed in Wing3. The construction work was witnessed and supervised by different Chief Commissioners beginning from Col. Norman McLeod Thomas Horsford (1892-1894) to Col. Sir Richard Carnard Temple (1894-1903) to F.E. Tuson (1903-1904) to William Rudolf Henry Merk (1904-1906) to Lt. Col. Herbert Arrott Browning (1906-1913).

Built in the shape of a gigantic starfish with seven massive tentacles-like wings fanning out from a central watch tower, the Cellular Jail housed seven three-story wings, from which, now only three remain. The Cellular Jail earned its name for its uniformed isolated cells. All the wings were not equal in length. A panopticon idea was carefully adopted in the design of the Cellular Jail, and as a result of this, the British rulers kept effective surveillance on a large number of inmates with less number of guards. The seven wings intersected at a central guard tower. The wings were engineered in such a way that the face of a cell in a wing saw the back of cells in the opposite wing. For this technical reason, communication between the prisoners was impossible. For instance, the Savarkar brothers interned in the same jail and did not see each other for nine long months before a coincidence. Wing 3 stood with the comparatively maximum number of cells. The size of each cell was thirteen and a half feet by seven feet. Each cell was well secured with a sturdy iron bolt and lock on a rectangular groove on the outside of the cell wall a few inches away from the door. A double-storied building on the left side near the entrance of the jail was also



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[Themes](#)
[Themes 2.0](#)
[Events](#)
[Campaigns](#)
[Long Live Democracy](#)
[Competitions](#)
[History Corner](#)
[Blog](#)
[Media Coverage](#)
[Downloads](#)

In the beginning of the twentieth century, the Swadeshi movement, the partition of Bengal, and the emergence of extremist groups in the country led to the adoption of violent methods. Revolutionary activities grew up in Maharashtra, Bengal, Punjab, and other provinces. The Anushilan Samiti was the most active organization which played a prominent role in planning and executing the attacks on the British officers with its headquarters in Bengal and many other parts of the country. Arms were collected and bombs were manufactured by the members of the Anushilan Samiti. From 1906, a secret wing under Barin, Upen, Ullaskar, and others began working in a garden house in Manicktola in the eastern suburb of Calcutta. This activist group of revolutionaries came to be known as the 'Jugantar' group. Their slogan 'Vande Mataram' taken from Bankim Chandra's '*Anand Math*' thrilled the revolutionaries. Such were these organizations which built their young workers 'thunderbolts'. Among these workers, were Barindra Kumar Ghosh (younger brother of Sri Aurobindo), Ullaskar Dutt, and Bhupendra Nath Dutt (younger brother of Swami Vivekananda). The prominent figures of Indian nationalism Lokmanya Tilak, Surendranath Banerjee, Bipin Chandra Pal, Lala Lajpat Rai, Madan Mohan Malviya, and Rabindranath Tagore were great admirers of the revolutionaries. As the freedom struggle spread to different parts of the country, batches of these firebrand freedom fighters were deported to the Andamans from time to time.

The political prisoners of the Manicktola Conspiracy Case or say Alipore Bomb Case after the Bomb incident of 30 April 1908, were the first batch to enter the newly built Cellular Jail. It was perhaps the first 'criminal conspiracy' of high magnitude hatched by the revolutionary youth to wage war against the British. The first batch of prisoners convicted in the case included Barindra Kumar Ghosh (for life), Ullaskar Dutt (for life), Upendranath Banerjee (for life), Hem Chandra Dass (for life), Indu Bhushan Roy (for 10 years), Bibhuti Bhushan Sircar (for 10 years), Hrishikesh Kanjilal, Sudhir Kumar Sircar, Abinash Chandra Bhattacharjee (for 7 years), and Birendra Chandra Sen (for 7 years). These political prisoners were brought to the Andamans by the vessel *Maharaja*, in December 1909, with the clear instruction to the Superintendent of the jail that they should be regarded as especially dangerous, and should not be allowed to work in the same gang with each other, nor with Bengali convicts looking to their large number, should not be employed in clerical work and as rule, they should be given hard gang labour. After his release from the Cellular Jail, Barindra Kumar Ghosh wrote his memoir *The Tale of My Exile* in 1922.

A few journalists (Hoti Lal Verma and Bauram Hari, Editors of *Swaraj*, an Urdu Weekly of Allahabad) convicted for seditious writing, were recommended to be confined in the Cellular Jail. Upendranath Banerjee and Hrishikesh Kanjilal were associated with the *Jugantar* Publication. Nand Gopal and Sham Dass Verma were also convicted for seditious writing in 1910 and Pandit Ram Charan Lal Sharma was the next after them.

Some of the patriots deported from 1909 onwards were repatriated in 1914 and the subsequent repatriation was due to the general declaration of amnesty on the occasion of the introduction of the new reforms under the Act of 1919. The dispatch of prisoners to the Andamans was suspended under a general decision adopted to abolish the penal system in the Andamans. On a few occasions, the Government of India formally resolved not to send political prisoners to the Andamans, but later on, it felt impelled to reverse the decision under compelling circumstances.

During the period 1909-1938, the Cellular Jail – the Indian Bastille was replete with the presence of many other leading great personalities of the Indian freedom struggle. Among them were Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, Ganesh Damodar Savarkar alias Babarao, Nani Gopal Mukherjee, Nand Kumar, Pulin Behari Das, Bhai Parmanand, Prithvi Singh Azad, Trailokyanath Chakravarty alias Maharaj, Ananta Singh, Pandit Ram Rakha, Mahavir Singh, Sachindra Nath Sanyal, Mohan Kishor Namadas, Mohit Moitra, and Baba Bhan Singh, and Batukeshwar Dutt, etc. The list is long and distinguished. Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, the doyen of the Indian revolutionaries, the 'potential danger' for the mighty British empire was convicted in the Second Nasik Conspiracy Case, brought to the Andamans in 1911 by vessel *S. S. Maharaja* with a badge of a sentence for fifty years around his neck, but he was repatriated in May 1921. The revolutionaries were convicted in different conspiracies including the Nasik Conspiracy Case (1909) and Khulna Conspiracy Case (1910), Second Nasik Conspiracy Case (1911), Rajindrapur Train Dacoity Case (1911), Gadar Party Revolution (1914), Shibpur- Nadia Action Case (1915), Assembly Bomb Case (1929), Lahore Conspiracy Case (1929-30), Chittagong Revolt (1930), Watson shooting Case (1932), Birbhum Conspiracy Case (1933), Midnapur Murder Case (1933) and many other cases.

The revolutionaries in Cellular Jail were not treated as political prisoners but as 'seditionists' or 'anarchists' and were treated worse than ordinary criminals. They were given class 'D' (Dangerous) or 'P' (Permanently Incarcerated). All kinds of torture ranging from engagement in backbreaking manual work, poor food, and non-medical aid to the hurling of abuses and


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[Themes 2.0](#)
[Events](#)
[Campaigns](#)
[Long Live Democracy](#)
[Competitions](#)
[History Corner](#)
[Blog](#)
[Media Coverage](#)
[Downloads](#)

in making the life of the prisoners most miserable. During the visit of Reginald Henry Craddock, a Home member in 1913, Nand Gopal lodged a complaint to him against David Barry for his inhuman behaviour. Mirza Khan, a miniature of Barry, was another cruel jail staff. The prisoners were not permitted to communicate with each other. All conversation was illegal and violative of the Barry rule. The sacred threads *Janeu* of the Hindu convicts were removed (Pandit Ram Rakha attained martyrdom in his fight for sake of it). Many of them either committed suicide or died of torture, in the midst of the endless tortures. Indu Bhushan Roy could not bear the humiliation and inhuman torture and he had to commit suicide out of exhaustion and frustration. The severest punishment in the jail was solitary confinement. During the visit of the Indian Jails Committee in 1919-20, the political prisoners submitted a Memorandum stating therein the cruel treatment to which they were subjected.

The conditions of political prisoners were summed up by Colonel Wedgewood, a member of the British parliament in an article published in the Daily Herald with the title 'Hell on Earth-Life in the Andamans'. As an impact of it, questions were asked in the council of the Governor General of India. In May 1932, Sir John Anderson visited the islands and recommended the use of the formidable penal settlement in view of the relaxed discipline in the Indian jails. The Government of India decided to defer the implementation of the recommendations of the Indian Jails Committee regarding the abolition of the penal settlement. On 12 July 1932, Sir Samuel Hoare, the secretary of state for India, announced in the House of Commons his approval of the proposal of the Government of India to transfer to the Andamans one hundred convicted revolutionaries. The policy decision of sending political prisoners to the dreaded 'Kalapani' was strongly criticized by the public and press, as it was against the spirit of the report of the Indian Jails Committee, 1919 (Cardew Committee) and their declared policy of abolishing the punishment of transportation. The monstrous gates of the Cellular Jail were again waiting for the political prisoners to swallow them. A batch of twenty-five political prisoners from Bengal including those convicted in the Chittagong Armoury Raid Case was the first batch to be transferred to the Andamans on 15 August 1932. Some more political prisoners were sent thereafter in 1932; and by the time of the hunger Strike of 1933, near about hundred political prisoners were incarcerated in the Cellular Jail.

Nand Gopal and few others had to lead the first Hunger Strike began in 1933 in participation of the revolutionaries. The Chief Commissioner said, *"I shall not budge an inch. Let their dead bodies be floating on the ocean"*. During the strike three patriots Mahavir Singh, Mohit Moitra and Mohan Kishor Namadas died. They were under forced feeding. Rabindranath Tagore became emotionally upset and remarked in his telegram, *"Your motherland will never forget her full blown flowers"*. The strike was called off on 26th June 1933, the 46th day after its commencement, with few relaxation offered to the prisoners. A Handwritten magazine 'CALL' which had its English and vernacular sections was issued to them. After the first hunger strike, the political prisoners tried to draw attention of the British Government to their repeated representation and uniform classification. The representation was submitted to the Home Minister.

In 1934, one of the political prisoners deported in 1932 namely Sudhendu Chandra Dam, Son of Ananda Chandra Dam from Chandrapur, Nakari of Bengal attempted attack on the Jail Superintendent.

Sir Henry Craik, Home member visited the jail in April 1936, and the political prisoners submitted a charter of demand to him. But after his return he described to a group of Simla journalists that Andaman was a 'prisoners' paradise'. There was a strong protest against the statement of Sir Henry Craik and the members of the Legislative Assembly insisted that some of them be sent to the Andamans to assess the truth. The Government accordingly sent Raizada Hansraj and Sir Mohammed Yamin Khan to the Andamans. After their return they wrote in their report that Andaman was not a 'paradise' but a "prisoners' hell". They observed the facts of repression and oppression meted out to the patriots by the British in the Cellular Jail. A Memorandum dated 13th October 1936, which was signed by 239 political prisoners expressing in detail their conditions. They submitted another memorandum dated 18th October 1936 with more facts to refute Craik's false statement.

On 24 July 1937 they started the second mass hunger strike. Their political demands gave a new impetus to the democratic movements in other jails and camps. The political prisoners at Alipore, Deoli, Berhampur started hunger strike in support of their compatriots in the Cellular Jail. Thus, the whole country rallied behind them. In reality it had become a mass movement for the repeal of repressive laws, repatriation of the exiled prisoners, release of political prisoners and extension of civil liberties. Thus the revolutionary prisoners transformed the Cellular Jail from a place of suffering and sacrifice into an active centre of freedom struggle. Eventually, as a result of intervention by national leaders, the hunger strike was called off on 28 August 1937, and repatriation started on 22 September 1937.

**Amrit Kaal**

[About](#)
[Themes](#)
[Themes 2.0](#)
[Events](#)
[Campaigns](#)
[Long Live Democracy](#)
[Competitions](#)
[History Corner](#)

[Blog](#)
[Media Coverage](#)
[Downloads](#)

incarcerated in the Cellular Jail in 1932-38, after repatriation, had to live in utter poverty with no livelihood support to live with. Saroj Kanti Guha, an associate of Master Surya Sen accompanied by another revolutionary Romen Bhowmick, killed Mr. Durno, the then District Magistrate of Dhaka on 28 October 1931. The story of his bravery has been less known and less spoken but available in page no. 282 of Shailesh De's *Ami Subhash Bolchhi* written in Bangla language. After killing of Magistrate Durno, Saroj Guha and other revolutionaries disappeared from the scene and remained out of the catch. The frustrated British arrested a large number of Dhaka residents on ground of suspicion. To protest against the arrest and torture of the innocent people Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose arrived but he was not permitted to enter the Dhaka and was arrested at Narayanganj Railway Station on 7 November 1931. He was released and sent back by a steamer from Chandpur (*Ananda Bazaar* dated 08-11-1931). Later, Saroj Guha was arrested and transported to Andamans. He was made blind of one eye by torture in the Cellular Jail. He came to Andamans during 1976-77 as a member of the group of Freedom Fighters.

The book of Shailesh Dey, *Ami Subhash Bolchhi* (I am Subhash Speaking), written in 1968 is most illuminating. Amalendu Ghosh, while writing the preface to this work, rated this thousand page tome as the well-documented detailed history of Indian armed nationalism. Dey described the inspiring tale of all the armed nationalists in a moving fashion, while telling the story of Subhas Chandra Bose. Khudiram, Prafulla Chaki, Surya Sen, Rashbehari Bose, Bhagat Singh, Dundee Khan, all come to life in the pages of this book. The most noted aspect of this work is that it focused on the patriotic episodes untold in the mainstream history books, such as the revolt of the Indian soldiers led by Dundee Khan in Singapore during the First World War or the insurrection of the fourth Madras Coastal guards in course of the second World War in which nine young soldiers lost their lives. In the last part of his work, Dey clearly stated that the accounts of many events of the Indian Freedom Struggle were deliberately suppressed by the Government of India. It was the duty of the patriotic citizens like him to make the public hear the voice of the neglected armed nationalists.

Cellular Jail in 1941 Earth Quake

The Cellular Jail with the passage of time, suffered many ravages brought about nature and man. The earthquake of 1941 and the Japanese invaders have caused substantial damage to the building. The Central Tower originally square in shape, after the damage, was replaced with a new tower of round shape. Four of the seven wings were grounded, two by the Japanese (they used the bricks in construction of bunkers and in other works) and two have made way for the Govind Ballabh Pant Hospital. The wing 1, 6 and 7 and the watch tower have been preserved.



[About](#)
[Themes](#)
[Themes 2.0](#)
[Events](#)
[Campaigns](#)
[Long Live Democracy](#)
[Competitions](#)
[History Corner](#)

[Blog](#)
[Media Coverage](#)
[Downloads](#)



Cellular Jail damaged in 1941 earthquake

The Cellular Jail during Japanese occupation

The Andaman history has travelled a long way from 'barracks' of 1857-58 mutineers to the 'bricked jail' of political prisoners of 1932-38. The colossal Cellular Jail has witnessed the torture and suffering of the prisoners of not only the British Raj but also of the Japanese occupation.

During the Second World War, right after the Japanese force arrived in the islands in March 1942, they released all the prisoners then incarcerated in the Cellular Jail. Later on, they used the jail with a strange concept. They imprisoned many of the citizens using the jail cells as 'confession rooms' through a series of varied tortures. A large number of the reputed local residents with a majority of the members of Indian Independence League (IIL) and Indian National Army (INA) were incarcerated in the Cellular Jail, on false charges of espionage. Muthuswamy Naidu died of torture in the Cellular Jail on 26 January 1943 being the first islander to die in the Cellular Jail during the Japanese occupation. A series of mass-killing began with the massacre of seven reputed imprisoned islanders namely Narayan Rao, Itter Singh, Surendra Nath Nag, Abdul Khaliq, Suba Khan, Chotey Singh and Gopal Krishna at Dugonabad on 30 March 1943. This was the First Spy Case also known as Narayan Rao Spy Case. In the Second Spy Case or say Dr. Diwan Singh Spy Case, the Imperial Japanese Force arrested the residents particularly the members of the IIL and INA and confined all of them in the cells of the Cellular Jail. These batch of prisoners included Dr. Diwan Singh, Bachan Singh and the members who were later massacred at Homfraygunj on 30 January 1944.

The Japanese forces in the Andamans appeared to be far more cruel and barbaric than the British through their mass-killing and inhuman torture as experienced and expressed by the islanders. They in the Cellular Jail, in addition to the suspected citizens, arrested their mothers, wives, sisters and daughters and tortured them to the extent unspeakable. After Dr. Diwan Singh with his colleague Bachan Singh was arrested on 27th October 1943, Kesar Kaur and many other female members were also arrested only to put emotional pressure on their imprisoned family members particularly on Dr. Diwan Singh. N. Iqbal Singh on basis of what the co-prisoners stated, described about how Dr. Diwan Singh had to undergo the various treatments with strategies of the Japs being changed every day. He wrote –

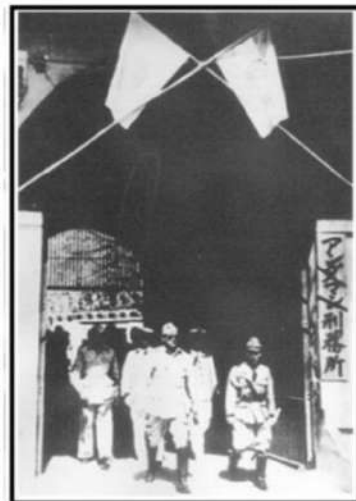
"Now the Japanese and their Indian stooges thought of a new plan. They arrested some women including one Kesar Kaur, most of whose husbands were already in the jail being tortured. These women were told to go and persuade Dr. Diwan Singh to confess, and if they succeeded in doing so, their husbands would be released. When they were taken to Dr. Diwan Singh, he told them, You don't know how treacherous these Japanese are. I am undergoing all this torture and suffering in the interest of your husbands and others in this island. Were I to 'confess' to this false charge, not one of your men-folk will be spared. They will all be put to death."



About Themes Themes 2.0 Events Campaigns Long Live Democracy Competitions History Corner
Blog Media Coverage Downloads

the torturing group would shriek with laughter. Some other varieties of the torture by the Japanese were, water treatment, electric treatment, and sitting treatment, etc; and Dr. Diwan Singh had to bear almost all these forms of the torture. Kesar Kaur was again asked to give her statement that Dr. Diwan Singh was a British Spy. On the other end Dr. Diwan Singh, who despite the extreme torture was in no mood to accept the crime that he did not commit. Kesar Kaur on her refusal was beaten and tortured to the extent she fell unconscious again and again. She insisted on repeating, *"I will not tell a lie, even if you beat me to death. Diwan Singh is like a father to me."* Kesar Kaur's husband Banta Singh was also tortured but he too remained true to his soul. The irritated and frustrated Japanese, on finding no strong witness, were inflicting every kind of torture that they could think of on Dr. Diwan Singh.

Meanwhile, Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose arrived in the Andamans on 29 December 1943, received by Admiral Ishikawa. He hoisted the first Indian National Flag at Port Blair on the next day and visited the Cellular Jail. During his entire visit to the Andamans, he was always surrounded and escorted by the Japanese officials and soldiers. He visited Cellular Jail but was intentionally not taken to the Wing No 6 where the local citizens, members of the Indian National Army (INA) and Indian Independence League (IIL) including the President of IIL Dr. Diwan Singh, were incarcerated facing the barbaric treatment of the Japanese.



Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose during his visit to Cellular Jail on 30 December 1943

Netaji went back and with him the hope of relief went back. Dr. Diwan Singh and other had to continue to bear the series of torture. The irritated Japanese finally picked up another arrow of torture from their quiver. They decided to cut his beard and the hair of the head. Dr. Diwan Singh for the first time became emotional and said,

"You can lop off my head and kill me. I will accept that punishment cheerfully, but don't commit this sacrilege. Despite his protest with his full energy, he failed to stop the cruel Japanese in doing so."

Hitherto Dr. Diwan Singh became too weak to bear further tortures and eventually during a course of torture, he left this world without breaking his spirit on 14 January 1944. An eye witness stated about his condition he saw at his last time, that his hands and his feet and the rest of the body bore signs of having been burnt. His arms seemed to have been lacerated by sharp knives and wounds were full of puss. The hairs on his head and his beard seemed to have been forcibly pulled out. It appeared as though his eyes too had been gouged. His spine had been broken as a result of continuous beating. Because his flesh had been

**Amrit Kaal**

[About](#)
[Themes](#)
[Themes 2.0](#)
[Events](#)
[Campaigns](#)
[Long Live Democracy](#)
[Competitions](#)
[History Corner](#)
[Blog](#)
[Media Coverage](#)
[Downloads](#)

Martyrs of Cellular Jail during Japanese Occupation

The Andaman history is incomplete without mentioning of the martyrdom of Dr. Diwan Singh Kalepani. The other martyrs who died of inhuman torture in the Cellular Jail during the period 1943-1945, were Hari Kishen (died on 15-01-1944), Bhagwan Dass (died on 20-01-1944), Bhikham Singh (died on 30-11-1943), Bakshish Singh (died on 20-01-1944), Baldeo Sahai (June 1944), Charanji Lal (died on 21-01-1944), Dhanakdhari Lal (died on 26-01-1945), Farman Shah (died on 25-01-1944), Gulab Khan (died on 21-01-1944), Hari Kishen (died on 15-01-1944), Khan Sahib Nawab Ali (died on 23-07-1945), Lall Singh (died on 23-01-1944), Niranjana Lal (died on 28-11-1944), Patti Ram (died on 22-01-1944), Santa Singh (died on 24-01-1944), Sangra Singh (died on 17-01-1944), Singhra Singh (died on 25-01-1944) and many others.

The Imprisonment and Torture on False Charges of Espionage

After the martyrdom of Dr. Diwan Singh, Ramakrishna and Bhagwan Singh (grandson of Mangal Singh Dogra of the first war of independence 1857) were also arrested and tortured. In addition to some names already mentioned, the residents including the members of the IIL, incarcerated in the Cellular Jail, were Ram Swaroop (arrested in November 1943 by the Japanese and on 07-10-1945 by the Allied British Force), Guru Moorthy (arrested on 10 November 1944), Lachman Singh (grandson of Mangal Singh Dogra of the first war of independence 1857, arrested in January 1944), Abdul Gafoor (arrested in November 1943 and released after a month to be re-arrested in July 1944), Brojendra Lal (arrested in November 1943, sentenced for three years on 30 January 1944 with Convict No. 622), Ram Gobind (arrested in November 1943, sentenced for fifteen years on 30 January 1944 with Convict No. 620), Het Ram (arrested on 15 January 1944 and sentenced for fifteen years on 30 January 1944), Sardar Khan (arrested in November 1943 and released after a month but re-arrested in June 1944), Bijay Bahadur (arrested twice by the Japanese force and then his third arrest was made by the British on their re-occupation to produce before the War Crime Trial court at the Cellular Jail), Lala Niranjana Lal (arrested twice by the Japanese), P. Arumugam (arrested after Netaji's departure), Master Ram Narayan (arrested in Oct 1943 and July 1944), S. Paras Ram (arrested in August 1944), Kristo Mohan Lal Shah (arrested at the time of mass arrest of November 1943), Sakar Kandi (arrested in November 1943), Sebastin Pinto (arrested in November 1943), Lala Brij Lal Dua (arrested within a week of the departure of Netaji and re-arrested in July 1945), Ram Phal (arrested in Sept 1944 and hospitalized due to severe torture), Memeveetil Mohammed (arrested in Nov 1943 and provided with Convict No. 624 sentenced for ten years), Pando (arrested and sentenced after Homfraygunj massacre for three years imprisonment), Nassar Mullah (arrested and sentenced after Homfraygunj massacre for three years imprisonment with providing of Convict No. 619), Labh Singh (arrested and sentenced after Homfraygunj massacre for three years imprisonment with providing of Convict No. 631), Naseeb Singh (arrested and sentenced on 30-01-1944 after Homfraygunj massacre for three years imprisonment), Birshah, Y. Venkat Ratnam, P.R. Ghose, Sukh Ram, Awaldeen (arrested in July 1944), Radha Krishna (arrested in April 1944), and Lachman Dass. In addition to these members, many other persons were imprisoned in the Cellular Jail with the false charges under the mass arrest in January 1944. These prominent persons were Autam Lachman Dass, Pyare Mohan, S.R. Bose, Narayan Swamy, Shore Chand, Master Abdus Subhan, Pt. Ram Bhore, Manohar Singh, Sardar Kundan Singh, Santook Singh, Pandit Ralla Ram, T.S. Guruswamy, D. Sirikishen, Kesar Dass, Bhagat Singh, Jeevan Singh, Gulam Hussain Shah, Ram Singh, Krishna Nair K, Pathan Khan and Ram Dass.

Ichawati Nag and Ruth Meshack, President and Secretary of the Women's Wing of the Indian Independence League respectively, and many other female members of the IIL including Savitri Bai, Khairun Nisa and Kishen Dei (incarcerated in the Cellular Jail for six times) were imprisoned facing inhuman torture in the Cellular Jail during the Japanese occupation.

Durga Parshad, a prominent figure of the islands, was also arrested and in the prison he had to face barbaric treatment of the Japanese force. He was released after a fortnight, after the formation of Azad Hind Government. He continued to work and he was again arrested in the month of April 1944 to face again the barbaric torture of the Japanese and the Indian Military Force to confess being a British spy, but he on all occasions denied the false charges. The trial, the torture and the denial went simultaneously with him and he was again interned in jail, and received his release order on 14 September 1945, owing to the Japanese surrender. He was again arrested by the British force on their re-occupation, on the charges of waging war against the British through the organ of IIL. He had to face the War Crime Trial conducted in the Cellular Jail.

Sardar Bunta Singh with his brothers joined the IIL. The Japanese force arrested and interned him in the Cellular Jail and allotted him Convict No. 623. When he was arrested his brothers Dulip Singh, Gopal Singh and Gajjan Singh and sister-in-law Kesar Kaur were already imprisoned in the Cellular Jail. He was severely tortured to confess being British Spy. On 30 January


Amrit Kaal

[About](#)
[Themes](#)
[Themes 2.0](#)
[Events](#)
[Campaigns](#)
[Long Live Democracy](#)
[Competitions](#)
[History Corner](#)
[Blog](#)
[Media Coverage](#)
[Downloads](#)

Abdul Ahmed (son of Roshan), P. Ram Lall (son of Prasadi), Jag Narayan (son of Jai Narayan), Sham Singh (son of Durga Singh), Mahmood Ali, Kadar Baksh (son of Allah Baksh), and many other unsung heroes. Interestingly, the prominent INA leader L. Paras Ram (son of Lodi Ram) was enlisted by the Japanese but in his place another person having the same name was arrested by mistake.

The Massacres or Genocides Operated from Cellular Jail

After the mass killing of seven reputed citizens, and forty-four INA and IIL members in the Homfraygunj massacre on false charges of espionage, the round up at Tarmugli and killing of fishermen, etc. the Japanese tendency of mass killing did not subside. Being frustrated by the shortage of food and sinking of the Japanese ships, the Japanese decided to reduce not only the suspected spies but the general population of the Andamans. More than 200 residents including Saudagar, Govardhan, Lall Singh, Brij Lall Dua, Dhani Ram, Sepoy Karnail Singh (4096), Sepoy Lal Khan (3828), were imprisoned in the jail, and same day on 4 August 1945 they were taken by the steamer Akbar and two Light Transport Crafts to a deserted island – Havelock Island. All of them died of forced drowning by the Japanese except few persons who were later rescued. Two of them were Saudagar and Govardhan. Few days after, hundreds of the residents were taken to an unknown place at Garacharama and killed. Hundreds of the residents were massacred at an uninhabited island – Tarmugli Island. Then, the dropping of the atom bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the Japanese surrender saved the lives of another group of residents, selected for the next round up in the end of August 1945. There is a narrative of an old renowned resident of the time that another group of about 325 people were made ready for the round up, but soon the news of Japanese surrender came in, and the Japanese released them forthwith. It is also learnt that a batch of people was housed in a bunker to be killed by poisonous gas after closing the mouth of the bunker, but they were killed or not and where it occurred, nobody knows.



Old column in memory of the freedom fighters interned in Cellular Jail, where Dr. Rajendra Prasad placed floral wreath in 1954

**Amrit Kaal**

[About](#) [Themes](#) [Themes 2.0](#) [Events](#) [Campaigns](#) [Long Live Democracy](#) [Competitions](#) [History Corner](#)
[Blog](#) [Media Coverage](#) [Downloads](#)

B.L. Banerjee and 300 other freedom fighters presented a Memorandum to the Prime Minister of India praying for the conversion of the Cellular Jail into a National Monument. The attempt to demolition of Cellular Jail was immediately stopped after the visit and instruction of the then Home Minister to the Andamans Islands in November 1967.

Meanwhile when came to know about the Government's plan to dismantle the remaining three wings of the historic Cellular Jail, a letter was written by a former revolutionary prisoner of the Cellular Jail, with his deep pain and anger,

"We do not know on whose initiative the demolition of the Cellular Jail was begun. We revolutionaries who were incarcerated in the Cellular Jail intervened. We felt strongly that this symbol of tyranny needed to be preserved as a National Memorial to remind our future generations of the tremendous cost that was paid in Indian blood for the freedom of our country".

In the same year, from their Headquarters at 4, Commercial Building, 23-A, Netaji Subhash Road, Calcutta-1, the Ex-Andaman Political Prisoners' Fraternity Circle which was an all-India body of the freedom fighters of the Cellular Jail and their family members, wrote a letter to the Prime Minister telegraphed on 30th April 1968 read –

"...Pls issue necessary orders to stop further demolition of Cellular Jail and to start immediate construction of National Monument, refer our representation dated 8th April." (File no.19).

The Circle represented by Biswanath Mathur, Dr. Bhopal Bose, Ananda Chakravarty, Rakhal Chandra Dey, Benoy Bose, and a few others met the then Prime Minister of India Mrs. Indira Gandhi in New Delhi in April 1968 and requested her to preserve the Cellular Jail as a memorial for the future generations. They appealed to the Prime Minister to stop the demolition of the Cellular Jail.

On 25 May 1968, signal no. 21/10/68-ANI was sent from Home, New Delhi to the Chief Commissioner, Andaman and Nicobar Islands enquiring about the existing status of the jail and some other points. In reply to that Mahabir Singh, the then Chief Commissioner replied vide his signal no. 41-1/68-Home (unclass) dated 27th May 1968 read,

"Kindly refer to your signal on 21/10/68-ANI dated twenty-fifth May regarding the preservation of Cellular Jail (.). The demolition of Cellular Jail was stopped after Home Ministers' visit in Nov. 1967 and no further demolition has been done. The old dilapidated jail hospital adjoining approach of the hospital is being dismantled as this is necessary to avoid risk of traffic (.). This old dilapidated hospital was not at any time part of the Cellular Jail".

Subsequently, a pilot team consisting of five members of the Fraternity Circle visited Port Blair on 20-25 March 1969. Again they submitted their representation with the proposal and waited on the PM for this purpose. The proposal was under consideration of GOI as it had the full support of Lal Bahadur Shastri, the then Home Minister who had visited these islands earlier. Eventually, the victory came in the noble hand of the Fraternity Circle. The Government of India on the recommendation of the Fraternity Circle agreed to preserve Cellular Jail as National Memorial.

On 3 May 1969, three wings of Central Tower were declared to be preserved as National Monument, but no concrete step was taken and the whole thing remained on the paper alone. (File 41-1/97-Jail; Acc. No. H (Jail)/812)

A batch of 'pilgrim voyagers' visited Andamans and Cellular Jail in 1975 and they were accommodated at a wooden guest house (now a circuit house namely 'Teal House') which was situated at a half kilometer distance from my house at Anarkali, Delanepur. My grandfather took us there to meet with them and we children touched their feet seeking their blessing. There was also a proposal to allot a plot of land for the construction of a permanent 'Pilgrim' Rest House at a suitable place near Cellular Jail. Next year in 1976, Bangeshwar Roy, General Secretary, Ex-Andaman Political Prisoners' Fraternity Circle, Calcutta deputed 3 batches of 'pilgrim voyagers' i.e. Ex-political prisoners who were incarcerated in the Cellular Jail in connection with the freedom movement and the members of their families, each batch consisting of 20 persons to visit Andamans and the Cellular Jail in the month of December 1976 and January and February 1977. The team led by Bangeshwar Roy arrived by the sailing of M.V. Harshavardhana. On 22 January 1977, a dinner was hosted in honour of the freedom fighters in Raj Niwas by the then Chief Commissioner S.M. Krishnatry. They took part in the unveiling of Netaji's statue on 23rd January 1977. These freedom fighters included a few INA members also.


Amrit Kaal

[About](#)
[Themes](#)
[Themes 2.0](#)
[Events](#)
[Campaigns](#)
[Long Live Democracy](#)
[Competitions](#)
[History Corner](#)
[Blog](#)
[Media Coverage](#)
[Downloads](#)



Freedom fighters visiting the Cellular Jail in 1974

With the help of the Ex-Andaman Political Prisoners' Fraternity Circle, the names of the political prisoners were engraved on the marble plaques in the Central Tower of the Cellular Jail. These marble slabs were delivered by Messrs. Marble Company Importers, 6-Brabourne Road, Calcutta. It was a pure justification with those brave sons of the motherland who languished and some of whom attained martyrdom while undergoing brutalities in solitary confinement in the dungeons of this "horror of horrors" named beguilingly as a jail.

On 30 December 1997, the then President of India K. R. Narayanan felicitated the surviving freedom fighters who were incarcerated in the Cellular Jail and their spouses. It was a momentous occasion during the 50th anniversary of the country's independence. Thirty freedom fighters out of a total of fifty-three surviving members were felicitated. Thirty-six widows and two relatives of freedom fighters also attended the function. Life-size statues of six martyrs Indu Bhushan Roy, Baba Bhan Singh, Pandit Ram Rakha, Mahavir Singh, Mohan Kishor Namadas, and Mohit Moitra were also unveiled by the President on that day. The President also released on the day a commemorative stamp and a one rupee coin depicting the Cellular Jail.

Thus, the Cellular Jail, hitherto notorious in the British Raj, during the Japanese reign became a grim epicenter or say torture chambers of all the in-human tortures and atrocities during the Japanese occupation of the islands. The saga of the Cellular Jail is not ending in the year 1938 with the final repatriation of the political prisoners. During the Japanese occupation in 1942-45, the Cellular Jail mutely witnessed the human suffering against the various types of inhuman torture along with the well-planned genocidal execution of the innocent population including the INA and IIL members, operated from its cells; and simultaneously the general residents and the freedom fighters had shown the highest degree of courage and patience, besides their marathon struggle. The Cellular Jail's history of patriotism and of sacrifices in fact goes beyond the timescale of the British reign. It now stands as a glorified and dignified heritage structure of 'epic human lessons', illuminating the sung and unsung Andaman history of its heroes.



The old (Left) and present (Right) look of the Cellular Jail

**Amrit Kaal**

[About](#)
[Themes](#)
[Themes 2.0](#)
[Events](#)
[Campaigns](#)
[Long Live Democracy](#)
[Competitions](#)
[History Corner](#)
[Blog](#)
[Media Coverage](#)
[Downloads](#)



Inside view of a Gallery in Cellular Jail

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Amrit Kaal

About Themes Themes 2.0 Events Campaigns Long Live Democracy Competitions History Corner
Blog Media Coverage Downloads

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Amrit Kaal

[About](#)
[Themes](#)
[Themes 2.0](#)
[Events](#)
[Campaigns](#)
[Long Live Democracy](#)
[Competitions](#)
[History Corner](#)

[Blog](#)
[Media Coverage](#)
[Downloads](#)

- > File No. 16.
- > File No. 19.
- > File No. 19-4/59-PQ (RH) J.I (Acc. J/216 A).
- > File No. 19-4/59/PQ (RH) J.I (Acc. J/216).
- > File No. 19-4/74/PQ (Acc. J/480).
- > File No 21-2-1945 (Home) (Acc. 4).
- > File No. 21-2(1)45 (*Pension papers of J.J. Delaney*).
- > File No. 21-3/50 (H-65) (1941 *Earth Quake*).
- > File No. 21-21/51 (*Escape of Prisoners from Cellular Jail*).
- > File No. 21-2(1)/ 45 (Home Section).
- > File No. 27-3/50 of 1950 (Home Section).
- > File No 29-6/55 (Archives-J/170A) (*Refugee Misc./Rajani Ranjan Sarkar*).
- > File No. 31.
- > File No. 31-1/82 H&R.
- > File No. 33-21/71-Jud-I (Acc. J-1190) (*Allotment of land at Tirur*).
- > File No. 34.
- > File No. 34-190/90 H.
- > File No. 41-1/97- Jail.
- > File No. 41-14/98-Home (Jail) (*Convicts in Jail*).
- > File No. 41-35/69-Home (Acc. H/988, Category 'A').
- > File No. 41-46/76- Home (Acc. Jail/675-A).
- > File No. 41-76/79- Hom
- > File No. 42-1(*Viper*).
- > File No. 42-20/Rev/95-95/Part File No III.
- > File No 51/3/45 - Jails.
- > File No. 51-26/45 Jails (Home).
- > File No. 51/39/45 Jails (Home), (*Note of S.M. Sandak*).
- > File No. 55/6/45-Jails (Acc. J/113 Judicial/Revenue Section).
- > File No. 55/9/45 Jails (Home).
- > File No. 55/47/45 Jails (Home).
- > File No. 55/48/45 Jails (Home).
- > File No. 55/58/45 Jails (Home).
- > File No. 61-7/67 -Pub.
- > File No. 64-191/60-Pub (Acc. H/551-B).
- > File No. 64-272/62 - Pub (H 253-A).
- > File No. 67 (the *Andaman Islands under Japanese Occupation -1942-45 by Ramakrishna*).

**Amrit Kaal**

[About](#)
[Themes](#)
[Themes 2.0](#)
[Events](#)
[Campaigns](#)
[Long Live Democracy](#)
[Competitions](#)
[History Corner](#)

[Blog](#)
[Media Coverage](#)
[Downloads](#)

- > File No. H-901.
- > File No. J/63 A.
- > File No. J/128 A.
- > File No. J /170A (*Refugee Misc*).
- > File No. J/221.
- > File No. J/732/50.
- > File No. J/732/51 (Acc. J/133A).
- > File No. J/752 (Home).
- > File No. J/1724, (Home).
- > File No. J/1738, (Home).
- > File No. J/1761, (Home).
- > File (Revenue/Jail) Acc. 2549.
- > File (Revenue/Jail) Acc. 2800.
- > File (Revenue/Jail) Acc. 2424.
- > Letter dated 22-10-1945 from Littleworth to Chief Commissioner (Design), Port Blair.
- > Letter dated 03-12-1945 from N.K. Paterson, Chief Commissioner, Port Blair to Mrs. Nell Spencer.
- > Letter dated 10-12-1945 from Littleworth to Chief Commissioner, Port Blair.
- > Letter dated 20-12-1945 from Commandant & Superintendent of Police to Chief Commissioner.
- > Letter No 816 dated 24-01-1946 from N.K. Paterson, Chief Commissioner to Mrs. Nell Spencer.
- > Letter No 6-102/51 dated 03-03-1951 from Chief Commissioner to Secretary to GOI, New Delhi-2.
- > Letter dated 26-11-1953 from Superintendent of Cellular Jail to Secretary to Chief Commissioner.
- > Letter dated 21-03-1958 from Durga Parshad, Retired Forest Officer to Chief Commissioner (Acc. J/54 Judl/Rev Section).
- > Letter No 12276/13/19/60 dated 16-06-1960 from Superintendent of Police, Port Blair to Chief Inspector of Explosives in India, GOI, Department of Explosives, Nagpur.
- > Letter No 49879/K3/66/RD dated 08-12-1966 from the Secretary to Government of Kerala to Secretary to GOI, Ministry of Home Affairs, New Delhi.
- > Proclamation No 7 dated 7th February 1946 by Louis Mountbatten.

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[Tentative Lists](#) > Cellular Jail, Andaman Islands

Cellular Jail, Andaman Islands

Description

Cellular Jail is situated on South Andaman Island, one of 572 islands forming Union Territory of Andaman and Nicobar Islands in India. Inhabited since 2000 years, the islands were occupied by Europeans in the middle of 18th century. Few years later, British established naval base and a penal settlement on Chatham Island which was later shifted Viper Island.

The idea of establishing a permanent penal settlement in these islands was germinated in the minds of the British Rulers in 1857 to curb India's First War of Independence. A Committee of experts visited the islands for a survey in December 1857 and submitted a report to the Government in January 1858. The first batch of 200 convicts arrived on the island on 10th March 1858 under the overall charge of Dr. J. P. Walker.

Though the First War of Independence was quelled, the flame for achieving freedom could not be suppressed. Soon, freedom fighters taking part in various movements including Wahabi Movement, Manipuri Revolt, and a large number of Burmese from Tharawadda against British rule were also deported to the penal punishment in the Andaman. The prisoners were initially kept in the open enclosures.

As the time passed and the settlement grew in size, the authorities found it difficult to enforce strict discipline. A high security jail that could hold a large number in solitary confinement became necessary. A two-member committee headed by Sir Charles J. Lyall and Sir, A. S. Lethbridge visited Port Blair in 1890 and recommended the construction of penal facility near Port Blair. The construction of Cellular Jail building started in 1893 by the settlement order No.423 dated 13th September 1893. It was completed in 1905-06 using prisoners only as construction labour.

Cellular Jail is a massive three-storeyed structure with seven wings of unequal lengths, radiating from a central watch tower, shaped like spokes of a wheel. The architecture of Cellular Jail was conceptualized on the basis of '*Pennsylvania System* or *Separate System*' theory in which separate confinement is necessary for each inmate for complete isolation from other inmates. No communication of any kind was possible between prisoners in the same or different wings. The design of Cellular Jail is heavily influenced by '*Panopticon*' theory where radiating wings allowed a single guard to keep watch on all the prisoners from the central tower but without the prisoner being able to see him. Prisoners deported to Cellular Jail for long term imprisonment for opposing British rule in India included eminent political convicts; revolutionaries. Therefore, the Cellular Jail was designed to check exchange of ideas and to enhance the penal character of the settlement so that it could be considered as next to capital punishment.

The construction was carried out by the prisoners deported from the main land. Building material was brought in from Burma. The accommodation for the officers including Jailor and Assistant Jailors was provided within the building. The individual cells in the Jail are placed in one row along the 4' wide verandah running the whole length of every wing. Each cell measures 13 1/2 'x' 7', secured by a heavy iron grill door with specially designed latch system. Confinement in the small cells gave this facility its name 'Cellular Jail'. About 20,000 cubic feet of local stone and

**Date of Submission:** 15/04/2014**Criteria:** (iv)(vi)**Category:** Cultural**Submitted by:**
Permanent Delegation of India to UNESCO**State, Province or Region:**
Union Territory of Andaman and Nicobar Islands**Coordinates:** N11 40 29.8 E92 45 08.2**Ref.:** 5888

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30,00,000 bricks made by prisoners were used to construct the jail. The infrastructure for hard labour such as iron grills, chains, fetters, shackles, flogging stands, and oil mills was brought from England.

Other than isolation, the work quotas given to these prisoners were frequently impossible to complete within the time and the dire punishment followed for those who failed to meet them. Often punishment was inhuman. Torture and flogging were frequently resorted to on iron triangular frame, bar fetters, crossbar fetters and neck ring shackle, leg iron chains and gunny bag uniforms, unhygienic diet were other deterrents for those who refused to submit to the brutal wardens. No cells in the Cellular Jail had toilet facilities. The punishment varied from handcuffs for a week and fetters for six months to solitary confinement. Remoteness and terror of the facility gave it a name, 'Kala Pani' (Black waters).

Distressed prisoners in Cellular Jail frequently rebelled against the tyranny of the jail officials. Mass hunger strikes were resorted to especially between 1932 and 1937. The last strike began in July 1937 continued for 45 day. The strike was terminated only on the intervention of Mahatma Gandhi and Rabindra Nath Tagore. The Government decided to close down the penal settlement and all the political prisoners of Cellular Jail were repatriated to their respective states on mainland India by January 1938.

The Japanese occupied the Andaman and Nicobar Islands during World War II from 1942 to 1945. Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose visited Cellular Jail as Head of the Provisional Government of India on 29th December 1943. He called it, Indian Bastille.

The four out of original seven wings of the Jail had to be demolished after the damage during the earthquake in 1941. After Independence in 1947, many of the erstwhile political prisoners visited the islands. Their association - "Ex-Andaman Political Prisoner's Fraternity Circle" put up a proposal to preserve remaining three wings. Then, Cellular Jail was declared a National Memorial by the then Prime Minister of India on 11th February 1979.

Justification of Outstanding Universal Value

Cellular Jail was constructed during the phase in Indian history when the discontent against the British rule was on rise which was evident through the various civil movements all over India. The colonial rulers were making desperate attempts to suppress the freedom spirit. They resorted to penal hardships which involved complete isolation on the remote area like Andaman along with the brutal physical tortures and brutal punishments as one of the ways to crush these uprisings. This isolation from each other as well as from the main land was intended to repress nationalist feelings amongst the prisoners and the people rebelling in mainland India.

In Cellular Jail, extreme solitary confinement of every prisoner was achieved through the layout based on '*Separate System*'. The influence of '*Panopticon*' theory on the architecture of the Jail allowed British rulers to keep effective surveillance on the large number of inmates with less number of guards. The design based on the combination of the concepts involving isolation and effective surveillance through minimum labors resulted in the dreaded penal facility on the remote island to further isolate whoever attempted jeopardize British colonial rule in India in order to stop exchange of nationalist ideas. Infrastructure employed for physical hardships like gunny bag uniforms, working on kolhu (oil mill) as well as execution room, fetters, crossbar fetters, neck ring shackle and leg iron chains as part of brutal punishments points out to the inhuman treatment given to the prisoners. Such was the terror of the facility that it became famous as 'Kala Pani'.

The three wings of Cellular Jail which stand today symbolize its sombre history as a dreaded prison known for excruciating hardships forced on political prisoners to suppress the freedom movement although it was used for less than half a century since its conception. Distressed prisoners rebelled against these inhuman treatments through mass hunger strikes eventually resulted in closure of the Jail. Despite of the number of restrictions through design and torture, the site became the symbol of nationalist expression against the discontentment against the colonial British rulers.

Criteria (iv): The design of Cellular Jail which included seven (now 3 standing) wings radiating from the central tower containing 698 cells as well as remains of execution room, fetters, crossbar fetters, neck ring shackle and leg iron chains bears the testimony to the ways of extreme solitary confinement and physical hardships that were resorted to suppress the Indian freedom movement by British colonial rulers. The jail became infamous for the inhuman treatment meted out to the inmates by the jail officials which was reinforced through the architecture based on the *Separate System* and *Panopticon* theories.

Criteria (vi): The Cellular Jail was designed to incarcerate the political prisoners in utter isolation to prevent exchange of ideas in order to suppress the increasing discontent against British Government in India. The isolation and hardships inflicted upon these inmates failed to curb down the freedom spirit and had to be closed down. The stories of atrocities against the inmates in Cellular Jail became stories of freedom struggle. They took no time to spread all over India and contributed to the nationalists sentiments against colonial rulers. The direct association of Cellular Jail with Indian Freedom struggle has been significant in the independence of India and establishment of the largest democracy in the world.

Statements of authenticity and/or integrity

Authenticity: The remaining three wings of the Cellular Jail retain the architectural features such individual cells located along the gallery, central tower for the surveillance as well as fetters, crossbar fetters, neck ring shackle and leg iron chains, enforcing the sombre history of extreme solitary confinement, physical hardships and brutal punishment inflicted upon by the colonial rulers to suppress the Indian Freedom struggle.

Integrity: The four out of original seven wings of the Jail had to be demolished following the damage due to the earthquake in 1941. After Independence in 1947, due to the efforts of "Ex-Andaman Political Prisoner's Fraternity Circle" the Government of India declared remaining three wings and a central watch tower as a National Memorial. Since then, it has been protected by Union Territory Administration of Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Regular maintenance efforts are carried out by Andaman Public Works Department under the technical guidance of Archaeological Survey of India to ensure the integrity of the structure.

Comparison with other similar properties

A massive three storeyed structure of Cellular Jail was constructed to incarcerate political prisoners in isolation and physical hardships in order to suppress freedom struggle against British colonial rulers.

Comparison for Cellular Jail can be drawn from similar facilities developed during same region of erstwhile British Empire where comparable ideology and methods behind the rule were prevalent. World Heritage sites of Robben Island, South Africa and Australian Convict Sites present comparable examples for Cellular Jail as they were also based on the concept of isolation of inmates. However, Robben Island comprises a cluster including a leper colony, an administrative area and churches other than the high security prison for political, military prisoners and criminals; while Australian Convict Sites present examples of large-scale convict transportation to remote area which led to colonial expansion of European powers through the presence and labour of convicts.

In other global comparisons, Eastern State Penitentiary in Philadelphia, USA presents a comparable example for Cellular Jail. Architecture of Eastern State Penitentiary is based on the principles of *Separate System* and also influenced by *Panopticon* theory similar to the planning of Cellular Jail. Both the structures followed same design principles barring few infrastructural changes such as Eastern State Penitentiary had toilet facilities inside cells unlike Cellular Jail. Also, sheer scale of the Cellular Jail exceeds that of the Eastern State Penitentiary.

There are no sites at national level that are comparable to Cellular Jail.