

India Republic Day

26 January



Republic Day marks India's adoption of a republic constitution (with a president rather than a monarch) on January 26, 1950, after gaining of independence from British rule in 1947.

Republic Day is a national holiday in India.

History

India won its freedom from British colonial rule in 1947, after many decades of struggle. Although India officially had independence from the British it still wasn't entirely free of them. The country remained a constitutional monarchy under King George VI. Lord Mountbatten was the Governor General of India. Lord Mountbatten appointed Jawaharlal Nehru to be the first Prime Minister of independent India.

India wanted to become an independent republic. A republic is a country without a monarch (king or queen), where the head of state is usually an elected president.

To become a republic, India needed to draft and implement its own Constitution. The first draft was finished on November 4, 1947, but it took almost three years for the Constituent Assembly to finally ratify (agree) it. This happened on November 26, 1949, but the Assembly waited till January 26, 1950, to put the new Constitution of India into effect. So, on January 26, 1950, India declared itself a republic.

Every year on January 26, India celebrates its Republic Day.

Celebrating

Republic Day is celebrated every year with much enthusiasm all over the country. Flag hoisting ceremonies and parades by armed forces and school children are held in different parts of the country. As part of the celebrations there are also speeches and cultural dances.



These photos show people in India celebrating Republic Day. What different ways are they celebrating? How do you think they feel? Can you imagine what the sounds and smells and feelings are in each celebration?

Can you write about and describe each scene as if you were there with them?

The Republic Day Parade



The grandest and most important of Republic Day parades is held at Rajpath in New Delhi and is presided over by the President of India.

One of the main functions of the Republic Day Parade is to pay tribute

to the martyrs who have sacrificed their lives for the country and to confer bravery awards on military persons, citizenry and children for showing courage in the face of adversity.

Before the parade starts, the Prime Minister of India places a floral wreath at the new National War Memorial near India Gate, in memory of those soldiers who lost their lives in battle. This is followed by two minutes' silence.

As the President of India unfurls the tricolour flag, the national anthem is played. The regiments of the Armed Forces then start their march past. Prestigious awards are given out by the President. Different regiments of the Indian Army, in addition to the Navy and Air Force march toward India Gate along with their bands. Paramilitary forces and other civil



forces also participate in the parade.

School children also dance and sing in the parade, and there is a procession of carnival floats from each Indian state. The grand finale is a dramatic flyover by air force fighter planes.

Beating the Retreat Ceremony

Beating The Retreat officially marks the end of Republic Day festivities. All the important Government Buildings are beautifully decorated with lights every evening from 26th to 29th January. The Beating the Retreat ceremony happens on the evening of January 29th, the third day after the Republic Day.



The ceremony starts by the massed bands of the three armed services marching in unison, playing popular marching tunes.

The drummers give a solo performance, known as the

Drummer's Call. Then the drummers play Abide With Me (which is also said to be Gandhi's favourite). Chimes are made by tubular bells, placed quite at a distance. It creates a mesmerising ambience.

At exactly 6pm the bugle call for Retreat sounds. The band master then marches to the President and requests permission to take the bands away. He informs him that the closing ceremony is now complete.

The bands march back playing a popular martial tune Saare Jahan Se Achcha. The National Flag is lowered, and the National Anthem is sung, bringing the Republic Day celebrations to a formal end.



Discussion:

Why do you think Indian people like to celebrate Republic Day?

What do you think they are celebrating?

Are you proud of the country you come from? Why?

Challenge:

As a class plan how to celebrate Indian Republic day. Think about how you might decorate the room, what to wear, and what special activities you could do?