Amit Shah inaugurates 1857 martyrs' memorial at Ambala Cantonment, Haryana

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News

Union Home and Cooperation Minister Amit Shah on 5 Nov 2026 inaugurated, at Ambala Cantonment (Haryana), a national-level memorial to the martyrs of the 1857 First War of Independence – 'Azadi Ki Pehli Ladai Ka Shaheed Smarak' – built on 22 acres along the Ambala–Delhi National Highway at about ₹594 crore. He said Ambala is the ground where the freedom struggle began on 10 May 1857, and recalled V.D. Savarkar calling 1857 a 'revolution', not a 'mutiny'. CM Nayab Singh Saini and minister Anil Vij were present. The event was part of Haryana's 60th-anniversary celebrations; the ₹1,260 crore Jalbehra–Shahabad highway was also opened.

Key facts

Memorial	Azadi Ki Pehli Ladai Ka Shaheed Smarak – Ambala Cantonment, Haryana
Inauguration	5 Nov 2026 – Amit Shah; CM Nayab Singh Saini, minister Anil Vij
Size	22 acres; ₹594 crore (PTI)
Features	20+ galleries, holography, light-and-sound show, phulkari and sarkanda crafts, 2,500-seat open-air theatre
Ambala 1857	Around 9 am on 10 May 1857 the 5th and 60th Native Infantry at Ambala rose – hours before the Meerut rising that evening (historian K.C. Yadav)

Haryana	Formed 1 Nov 1966 under the Punjab Reorganisation Act, 1966

Background

- History: the 1857 uprising broke out at Meerut on 10 May 1857; next day the sepoys seized Delhi and proclaimed Mughal emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar II their leader. The immediate cause was the Enfield rifle cartridges said to be greased with cow and pig fat. The Governor-General was Lord Canning. In March 1857 Mangal Pandey of the 34th Bengal Native Infantry attacked British officers at Barrackpore; he was hanged in April.
- Leaders: Nana Saheb, Tatya Tope (Kanpur), Rani Lakshmibai (Jhansi), Begum Hazrat Mahal (Lucknow), Kunwar Singh (Jagdishpur, Bihar), Bakht Khan (Delhi). Bahadur Shah Zafar was exiled to Rangoon (Burma) and died there in 1862. Result: Government of India Act, 1858 – Company rule ended and the British Crown took direct control; Canning became the first Viceroy; Queen Victoria's Proclamation (1 Nov 1858, Allahabad).
- Historiography: V.D. Savarkar called it the 'First Indian War of Independence' in 'The Indian War of Independence, 1857' (1909). British historians called it the 'Sepoy Mutiny'. For the 1957 centenary, S.N. Sen wrote the official history 'Eighteen Fifty-Seven'.
- Polity–geography: Haryana was carved out of Punjab on 1 Nov 1966 as the 17th State; its capital Chandigarh (a Union Territory) is shared with Punjab. Ambala, on the Grand Trunk Road, is an old army cantonment.

Tamil Nadu link: half a century before 1857, on 10 July 1806, Indian sepoys rose against the British in Vellore Fort – the 'Vellore Mutiny', called a forerunner of 1857. The cause was Commander-in-Chief John Cradock's orders banning earrings and caste marks and introducing a new turban (Agnew turban); Tipu Sultan's family was then confined in the fort. After the mutiny, Madras Governor William Bentinck was recalled.

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