Magna Carta

Mains Syllabus: GS I - History of the world will include events from 18th century such as industrial revolution, world wars, redrawal of national boundaries, colonization, decolonization, political philosophies like communism, capitalism, socialism etc.— their forms and effect on the society.

Why in the news?

Magna Carta Day 2025 was celebrated on June 15.

What is the Magna carta?

- **Magna Carta** - Also known as the Great Charter, It is a document issued in 1215 that limited the power of the English monarchy and established the principle that everyone, including the king, was subject to the law.

Magna Carta was not intended to be a great charter of rights for all people, but designed by the barons to ensure that their rights were protected against the king's power.

- **Signed by** - It was sealed by King John of England at Runnymede on June 15, 1215, under pressure from English barons.
- **Aim** - The charter aimed to restrict the king's arbitrary actions and ensure that he acted within the bounds of law.
- **Clauses** - There are 63 clauses in the Magna Carta including regulation of feudal customs ,the operation of the justice system, granting of taxes, the extent and regulation of the royal forest, debt, the Church and the restoration of peace.
- **Popularization** - Copies of Magna Carta were sent out to be read out in each county to popularise it.
- **Annulment** - Within three months, fearing the loss of his power, John sought to annul it with the help of Pope Innocent III.
- The barons then renounced their support and invited the son of the king of France to take the crown of England.
- **Reissue** – After the death of King John , several versions of the document were reissued over the years and At present, four copies of the original have survived.

Major Provisions of Magna Carta

• **Limiting the King's Power** - The Magna Carta explicitly stated that the king was not above the law and could not rule arbitrarily.
• **Golden Clauses** - Clause 39 prevents arbitrary imprisonment or seizure of a freeman without lawful judgment or due process.
• Clause 40 ensures that justice is not sold, denied, or delayed to anyone.
• **Protection of Liberties** -It guaranteed certain rights to free men, including the right to justice, property ownership, and freedom from excessive taxation.
• **Protection of Widows' Rights** -The document included provisions to protect the rights of widows, specifically the right to choose whether or not to remarry after their husband's death.
• **Right to Rebel** - The Magna Carta even included provisions allowing barons to declare war on the king if he failed to uphold the document's terms, showcasing a bold step in limiting royal authority.

What are the significances of magna carta?

- **Foundation of Human Rights** – By declaring the sovereign to be subject to the rule of law and documenting the liberties held by "free men," the Magna Carta provided the foundation for individual rights.
- **Symbol of Freedom** - It remains a powerful symbol of individual liberty and the rule of law.
- **Basis of Constitution** - Magna Carta has formed the basis of constitutions around the world.
- **Rule of Law -** Today, clauses 39 and 40 are still on the UK statutes and are seen as the basis of concepts such as rule of law and habeas corpus (guarding against arbitrary detention).
- **Due Process and Equality** - It established principles of due process and equality before the law, meaning that individuals were entitled to a fair trial and equal treatment under the law.
- **Development of Democracy** - While primarily focused on the rights of barons and the church, the Magna Carta set a precedent for limiting the power of the monarch and paved the way for the development of democratic principles.

References

[Indian Express | Magna Carta]

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