Odisha's Paika Rebellion

What is the issue?

- The Odisha government identified 10 acres of land for the Paika memorial in Khordha district, dedicated to the 1817 Paika Rebellion.
- President Ram Nath Kovind will visit the Khorda to lay the foundation of the memorial.

What is the Paika rebellion of 1817?

- Paikas had been recruited since the 16th century by kings in Odisha.
- They were from a variety of social groups who render martial services in return for the rent-free land (nish-kar jagirs) and titles.
- After entering Odisha in 1803, the British introduced new revenue settlements due to which many Odia proprietors ended up losing their lands to absentee Bengali landlords.
- Changes in the currency and revenue systems meant the Odias had to pay taxes in silver, which was more expensive for them.
- This resulted in further marginalisation and oppression of the Odias.
- In 1817, Kondhs who belonged to the state of Ghumsur banded together to revolt against the British.
- Bakshi Jagabandhu Bidyadhar Mohapatra Bharamarbar Rai, the highest-ranking military general of King of Khorda Mukund Dev II, led the Paikas to join the uprising.
- During the course of the rebellion, they burnt government buildings in Banapur, killed policemen and British officials, and looted the treasury.
- The uprising lasted few months but was eventually crushed by the better-equipped and trained forces of the East India Company (EIC).
- Bakshi escaped to the jungles, and ultimately surrendered in 1825 under negotiated terms.

Why is the rebellion being remembered now?

- **200th anniversary of the Paika Rebellion (April 2017)** - Prime Minister Narendra Modi honoured descendants from 16 families that were associated with the uprising.
- By recognising the contribution of these families, and by associating itself with the Paika tradition, the BJP hoped to tap into latent sub-nationalist

impulses in the politics of Odisha.

- **July 2017** - Odisha government decided to formally ask the Centre to declare the rebellion as the "first war of independence in Indian history".
- On this, then Culture Minister Ashok Chandra Panda had said, "In the real sense, the rebellion of Khorda in 1817 is the first well organised rebellion against the British."
- **May 2018** - After a review of school textbooks, the NCERT introduced a page on the Paika rebellion in the Class-8 history textbook.
- **December 2018** - Modi released a stamp and a coin to commemorate the rebellion.

Was it a nationalist movement or a peasant rebellion?

- The Paika Rebellion is one among the peasant rebellions that took place in India when the British EIC was expanding its military enterprise.
- Because these uprisings violently clashed with European colonialists and missionaries, their resistance is sometimes seen as the first expression of resistance against colonial rule.
- Therefore considered to be "nationalist" in nature.

Source: The Indian Express

SHANKAR IAS PARLIAMENT
Information is Empowering