Third Battle of Panipat

Prelims – History of India

Mains *– Significant issues in Modern Indian History*

Why in News?

Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis recently said that the Third Battle of Panipat was a testament to the bravery of the Marathas and not a reminder of their defeat.

- **Background -** The Maratha Empire, having expanded its influence after weakening the Mughal Empire, faced a challenge from Ahmad Shah Durrani, who sought to assert his authority in the region.
- **Time period -** ***January 14, 1761, at Panipat***, about 95.5 km north of Delhi.
- **Opposing sides**

Maratha Empire	**Coalition of the** **King of Afghanistan**, Ahmad Shah Durrani with **2 Indian Muslim allies** - Rohilla Afghans of the Doab, and Shuja-ud-Daula, the Nawab of Oudh.

- **Maratha Leadership-** Sadashivrao Bhau, the commander-in-chief of the Maratha camp.
- **Afghan Leadership -** Ahmad Shah Durrani, also known as Ahmad Shah Abdali.
- **Causes -** Baji Rao's son, Balaji Baji Rao (popularly known as Nana Saheb), increased the territory under Maratha control by invading Punjab in 1758.
- This brought the Marathas into direct confrontation with the Durrani empire of Ahmad Shah Abdali.
- In 1759 Abdali raised an army from the Pashtun tribes and made several gains against the smaller Maratha garrisons in Punjab.
- He then joined with his Indian allies, the Rohilla Afghans of the Gangetic Doab, forming a broad coalition against the Marathas.
- Militarily, the battle pitted the French-supplied artillery and cavalry of the Marathas against the heavy *cavalry and mounted artillery (zamburak and jizail)* of the Afghans and Rohillas led by Ahmad Shah Durrani and Najib-ud-Daulah, both ethnic Pashtuns.
- **Outcome -** The Afghan forces led by *Ahmad Shah Durrani won the Third Battle of Panipat*.
- About 40,000 Maratha prisoners were slaughtered in cold blood the day after the battle.
- The battle halted Maratha advances in the north, destabilizing territories for 10 years, culminating in Peshwa Madhavrao's rule, which revived Maratha domination after Panipat's defeat.
- In 1771, after Panipat, a Maratha army was sent to North India to re-establish

Maratha domination and punish refractory powers.

Reference

The Hindu | Third Battle of Panipat

