



Paika Rebellion

The Government will release the commemorative coin and postage stamp in memory of Paika Rebellion.

- The decision to commemorate the bicentenary of the revolution was announced in the 2017-18 Budget Speech.
- Pre-dating what has been popularly regarded as the first war of independence in 1857, the **Paika Bidroha (Paika Rebellion) of 1817** in Odisha briefly shook the foundations of British rule in the eastern part of India.
- 2017 marked the double centenary of one of the biggest revolts ever seen in eastern India and one which was quelled with great brutality.

Paikas were essentially the **peasant militias of the Gajapati rulers of Odisha** who rendered military service to the king during times of war while taking up cultivation during times of peace.

Brief History

- Till 1803, Odisha was under Maratha rule, however after the second Anglo-Maratha War, the Marathas were forced to cede most of their territory in Odisha to the British East India Company.
- Establishment of **British rule in Odisha was followed by a policy of repression against the Paikas**. They lost their traditional position in the society and their lands were taken away.
- In addition to losing their estates, the Paikas were also heavily exploited by the revenue collectors under the British.

The Rebellion

- Paikas under the **leadership of Baxi Jagabandhu**, the hereditary chief of the militia army of the Gajapati King of **Khurda** (a kingdom near Puri), rose in rebellion in March 1817, taking support of tribals and other sections of society.
- The Paikas **attacked British symbols of power**, setting ablaze police stations, administrative offices and the treasury during their march towards Khurda.
- The Paikas were supported by the rajas, zamindars, village heads and ordinary peasants. The rebellion quickly spread to different parts of the province.
- British were initially taken aback and then tried to regain lost ground but faced stiff resistance from the **rebellious** Paikas. However, the Paikas were eventually defeated by the British.
- The Paikas retreated into the thick jungles of Odisha and carried out guerrilla warfare for several years. After successive defeats, the Paika leader, Bakshi Jagabandhu, surrendered to the British in 1825 and lived as a prisoner in Cuttack till his death in 1829.

Ceasefire in Yemen

The warring parties in Yemen Houthi rebels and Saudi Arabia-backed forces loyal to President of Yemen agreed to a United Nations-mediated ceasefire agreement.

- The agreement was reached in UN-mediated talks held in Stockholm in December 2018 and signed in the city of Hodeidah in Yemen.
- The coalition had blockaded the port, the main conduit for humanitarian aid to enter Yemen, for months, and the fighters, mostly UAE soldiers, were battling the rebels.

Hodeidah Ceasefire Agreement

- According to the UN, a ceasefire by the parties came into effect in the city and the three ports of Hodeidah, Ras Isa and Saleef from midnight 17 December 2018.
- Under the agreement, the Houthis will withdraw from the ports and from Hodeidah city and a UN-chaired committee including both sides will oversee the withdrawal of forces.
- The Yemeni ports will fall under the control of "local forces", who would then send the ports' revenues to the country's Central Bank.

What led to talks?

- **UN Efforts:** The UN has been pushing for an agreement for long.
- **Jamal Khashoggi Murder:** Saudi Arabia which is a major party in the crisis came under increased global pressure to stop fighting in Yemen after the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi inside its consulate in Istanbul.
- **Humanitarian Crisis in Yemen:** The spotlight on Yemen and its deteriorating humanitarian situation lead to a severe global outcry. The impact was so high that, the U.S., which supports Saudi Arabia in the war, cut down its involvement by ending refueling of coalition aircraft.

War in Yemen

- Since 2014, Yemen is facing a multi-sided conflict involving local, regional, and international actors.
- The Houthis, a group of Zaidi Shia Muslims who ruled a kingdom there for nearly 1,000 years. They used widespread anger against President Hadi's decision to postpone long-awaited elections and his stalled negotiations over a new constitution to protest against the government.
- They marched from their stronghold of Saada province to the capital Sanaa and surrounded the presidential palace, placing Hadi under house arrest.
- A military coalition led by Saudi Arabia intervened in Yemen on March 26, 2015, at Hadi's request, after the Houthis continued to sweep the south and threatened to conquer the last government stronghold of Aden. Prompting one of the world's worst humanitarian crises ever.

Humanitarian Crisis in Yemen

- According to WHO, since the Saudi intervention in 2015, at least 10,000 people have been killed in Yemen.
- The widespread damage caused to infrastructure by the coalition airstrikes and lack of supplies of food and medicines due to the blockade has pushed Yemen into a humanitarian catastrophe.
- About 12 million people are at the risk of starvation in Yemen. The country is also facing a massive cholera outbreak. According to UNICEF, a child dies every 10 minutes in Yemen from preventable causes.

Operation Raahat

- India launched a rescue operation in Yemen to ensure safe passage to Indian citizens and other foreign nationals who were stuck in Yemen after Saudi Led coalition intervened.

Way Forward

- The war has reached a stalemate long ago. The Houthis are facing the loss of territory in recent months, while the Saudi coalition is facing growing international pressure.
 - A solution to the conflict can be found only if the rebels and the government make some political concessions.
 - The current deal, if implemented on the ground, will represent a breakthrough because the port is the gateway for the bulk of humanitarian aid coming into the country.
 - While the second round of talks is already expected to be held in January, a smooth ceasefire could lead to a fast framework for negotiations and a transitional governing body.
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Small Satellite Launch Vehicle

Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has completed the design for the **Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV)**.

- SSLV or the 'baby rocket' will provide on-demand access to space, with the rocket assembly taking a mere 15 days and minimum personnel to do it.
- It will be used **exclusively** for small satellites such as **nanosats** and **cubesats**.
- The payload capacity of the SSLV will be 500-700 kilograms in the Lower Earth Orbit (LEO), less than one-third the weight the PLSV can carry.
- It has **three stage solid propulsion system**, and like the PSLV and GSLV, can accommodate multiple satellites, albeit smaller ones. Currently, small satellites are being piggybacked on the bigger ones launched using the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicles (PSLV) and the Geosynchronous Launch Vehicle (GSLV).
- Unlike the PSLV and GSLV, the SSLV can be assembled **both vertically and horizontally**.

Requirement

- The decision of the US to **deregulate small and micro satellites** has given a fillip to the launch service markets.
 - The small satellite industry has witnessed a manifold spike in the last few years and with **latest innovations in nanotechnology**, the size of the satellites is expected to further decrease in the future. Further, what was previously inconceivable for even big satellites, is being undertaken very smoothly and efficiently now by small satellites.
 - With the huge number of small satellites outpacing the available launchers, many small satellites have to remain grounded as they do not find a launcher due to large queue and waiting time.
 - A dedicated launcher for small satellites, not only would cost reduce drastically but also there will be more opportunities to focus on primary research and delineate big satellite launch from small satellite launch.
 - However, a lot of big space technology entrepreneurs point out that the future small-satellite launch market will favor ridesharing and customized services on larger launch vehicles rather than small satellite launch vehicle.
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The Consumer Protection Bill 2018

Recently, the Lok Sabha passed The Consumer Protection Bill 2018.

- The Bill seeks to replace the three-decade-old Consumer Protection Act, 1986.

Rights of The Consumer

1. Right to **Safety**
2. Right to **Information**
3. Right to **Choose**
4. Right to **Seek Redressal**
5. Right to **Education**
6. Right to **be Heard**

Provisions in the bill

- The Bill enforces consumer rights and provides a mechanism for redressal of complaints regarding the **defect in goods and deficiency in services**.
- Under the Bill, **Consumer Disputes Redressal Commissions will be set up at the District, State and National levels for adjudicating consumer complaints**.
 - Appeals from the District and State Commissions will be heard at the next level and from the National Commission by the Supreme Court.
- The Bill sets up a **Central Consumer Protection Authority** to promote, protect and enforce consumer rights as a class. It can issue safety notices for goods and services, order refunds, recall goods and rule against misleading advertisements.
 - It will be headed by a Chief Commissioner and comprise other Commissioners. It will have an investigation arm headed by a Director General. It may also file complaints before the Consumer Disputes Redressal Commissions.
- The Bill establishes **Consumer Protection Councils at the district, state, and national levels to render advice on consumer protection**.
 - The Central and State Council will be headed by the Minister-in-charge of Consumer Affairs at the central and state level, respectively. The District Council will be headed by the District Collector.
- The Bill also lists **punitive actions against** those who are found manufacturing, storing, distributing, selling, or importing **products that are spurious or contain adulterants**.
- If a consumer suffers an injury from a defect in a good or a deficiency in service, he may file a claim of product liability against the manufacturer, the seller, or the service provider.
- The Bill defines contracts as 'unfair' if they significantly affect the rights of consumers. It also defines unfair and restrictive trade practices.
- The **case can be filed from anywhere**, unlike the existing law which allows the consumer to register the complaint only from the same place of purchase of the product or where the service is availed.

Provision	1986 Act	2018 Bill
Ambit of Law	▪ All goods and services for consideration. ▪ Free and personal services are excluded.	▪ All goods and services, including telecom and housing construction, and all modes of transactions (online, teleshopping, etc.). ▪ Free and personal services are excluded.
Unfair Trade Practices	Includes six types of such practices, like false representation, misleading advertisements.	Adds three types of practices to the list: (i) failure to issue a bill or receipt; (ii) refusal to accept a good returned within 30 days; and (iii)

		disclosure of personal information given in confidence
Product liability	No provision.	- Claim for product liability can be made against the manufacturer, service provider, and seller. - Compensation can be obtained by proving one of the several specified conditions in the Bill.
Regulator	No provision.	Establishes the Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA)
Pecuniary jurisdiction of Commissions	- District: Up to Rs 20 lakh. - State: Between Rs 20 lakh and up to Rs one crore. - National: Above Rs one crore.	- District: Up to Rs one crore. - State: Between Rs one crore and up to Rs 10 crore. - National: Above Rs 10 crore.
Appointment	Selection Committee (comprising a judicial member and other officials) will recommend members on the Commissions.	No provision for Selection Committee. The central government will appoint through notification.
Penalties	Imprisonment between one month and three years or fine between Rs 2,000 to Rs 10,000, or both.	Imprisonment up to three years, or a fine not less than Rs 25,000 extendable to Rs one lakh, or both.
E-commerce	No provision.	- Defines direct selling, e-commerce and electronic service provider. - The central government may prescribe rules for preventing unfair trade practices in e-commerce and direct selling.

Rat Hole Mining

Despite a ban, rat-hole mining remains a prevalent practice for coal mining in Meghalaya, where a mine has recently collapsed.

- Rat hole mining involves digging of **very small tunnels**, usually only 3-4 feet high, which workers (often children) enter and extract coal.
- The National Green Tribunal (NGT) **banned it in 2014**, on grounds of it being **unscientific and unsafe** for workers. The state (Meghalayan) government has challenged the NGT ban in the Supreme Court.
- According to available government data, Meghalaya has a total coal reserve of 640 million tonnes, most of which is mined **unscientifically by individuals and communities**.
- Since the **coal seam is extremely thin** in Meghalaya, no other method would be economically viable. Removal of rocks from the hilly terrain and putting up pillars inside the mine to prevent

collapse would be costlier. In Meghalaya this is the locally developed technique and the most commonly used one.

- The government **does not have a policy** in place to regulate mining and the new mining policy drafted in 2012 has not yet been implemented, Moreover, the NGT found the **2012 policy inadequate** as it does not addresses rat-hole mining.

Impact of Rat Hole Mining

- The water sources of many rivers, especially in Jaintia Hills district, have **turned acidic**.
- The water also has high concentration of **sulphates, iron and toxic heavy metals, low dissolved oxygen (DO) and high BOD**, showing its degraded quality.
- The **roadside dumping of coal** is a major source of air, water and soil pollution.
- Off road movement of trucks and other vehicles in the area for coal transportation also adds to the **ecological and environmental damage** of the area.
- The practice has been declared as **unsafe** for workers by the NGT.
- The mines branch into networks of horizontal channels, which are at **constant risk of caving in or flooding**.

Important Facts for Prelims (21st December 2018)

Asiatic Lion Conservation Project

- The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has launched the “**Asiatic Lion Conservation Project**” with an aim to protect and conserve the world’s last ranging free population of Asiatic Lion and its associated ecosystem.
- The Asiatic Lion Conservation Project is aimed to **strengthen the ongoing measures for conservation and recovery of Asiatic Lion** with the help of state-of-the-art techniques/instruments, regular scientific research studies, disease management, Modern surveillance/patrolling techniques.
- The project will be funded from the **Centrally Sponsored Scheme- Development of Wildlife Habitat (CSS-DWH)** with the contributing **ratio being 60:40 of Central and State share**.
- Asiatic lions that **once ranged from Persia (Iran) to Palamau in Eastern India** were almost **driven to extinction by indiscriminate hunting and habitat loss**.
- A single population of less than 50 lions persisted in the Gir forests of Gujarat by late 1890's. With timely and stringent protection offered by the State Government and the Center Government, Asiatic lions have increased to the **current population of over 500 numbers**.
- **Gir Protected Area Network** (1648.79 sq. km.) includes **Gir National Park, Gir Sanctuary, Pania Sanctuary, Mitiyala Sanctuary** adjoining reserved forests, Protected Forests, and Unclassed Forests.
- The Environment Ministry in the past has supported **Asiatic Lion** in Gujarat by including it in **list of 21 critically endangered species for recovery programme**.

21 species identified under the recovery programme are:

Snow Leopard, Bustard (including Floricans), Dolphin, Hangul, Nilgiri Tahr, Marine Turtles, Dugongs, Edible Nest Swiftlet, Asian Wild Buffalo, Nicobar Megapode, Manipur Brow-antlered Deer, Vultures, Malabar Civet, Indian Rhinoceros, Asiatic Lion, Swamp Deer, Jerdon’s Courser, the Northern River Terrapin, Clouded Leopard, Arabian Sea Humpback Whale, and Red Panda.

