

Statue of Maharaja Ranjit Singh vandalised in Pakistan

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In news- A nine-foot-tall bronze statue of the first ruler of the Sikh Empire, Maharaja Ranjit Singh was vandalised by an activist of the banned Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan at the Lahore Fort in Pakistan's Punjab province.

About the statue

- The nine-feet tall statue, made of cold bronze, shows the Sikh emperor sitting on a horse with a sword in hand in complete Sikh attire.
- The statue was unveiled on his 180th death anniversary in June 2019.
- This is not the first time that the statue has been targeted.
- The arm of the statue was broken in Lahore last year.
- It was also damaged in August 2019 by two young men.
- It was sculpted by local artists, under the aegis of the Fakir Khana Museum.

About Maharaja Ranjit Singh-

- He was born on 13 November 1780 to Maha Singh **Sukerchakia** and Raj Kaur – the daughter of Raja Gajpat Singh of Jind, in Gujranwala, in the Majha region of Punjab (now in Pakistan).
- **Ranjit Singh**, popularly known as **Sher-e-Punjab** or “Lion of Punjab”, was the first Maharaja (founder) of the Sikh Empire.
- He was the **ruler of the northwest Indian subcontinent** in the early half of the 19th century.
- After his father died, he fought several wars to expel the Afghans in his teenage years and was proclaimed as the “Maharaja of Punjab” at age 21.

- Prior to his rise, the Punjab region had numerous **warring misls (confederacies)**, twelve of which were under Sikh rulers and one Muslim.
- He successfully **absorbed and united the Sikh misls** and took over other local kingdoms to create the Sikh Empire.
- He **repeatedly defeated invasions by outside armies, particularly those arriving from Afghanistan, and established friendly relations with the British.**
- In 1831 he signed the **treaty of perpetual friendship with the English.**
- In 1838 he entered into a **tripartite treaty with the English and Shah Shuja** to depose Dost Muhammad Khan, the exiled Amir of Afghanistan and placed Shah Shuja on the throne.
- After his death in 1839, he was succeeded by his son Kharak Singh.

Ranjith Singh's reforms –

He gave territorial identity to Punjab by the policy of diplomacy and aggression. **He considered himself a servant of the Khalsa** and he did not permit the coins to bear his name.

Economic reforms:

- Ranjit Singh came up with the **Land revenue system based on the Mughal period Zabti System** in which assessment of land revenue was based on the measurement of land.
- The state demand was fixed at around 33-40% depending on the fertility and richness of the soil.
- The next important form of revenue was fine in return for punishment.
- The **Kardars were responsible for the collection of revenue.** Of the total income, 1/4th was in the army and the rest in the civil administration.

Administrative Reforms:

- He **established the government in the name of Sarkar-i-Khalsa.**
- He also issued **currency in the name of Guru Gobind Singh and Guru Nanak Dev.**
- He divided the entire state into four provinces and he emphasised on the maintenance of law and order.
- Most of the crimes were punished with a fine and there was **no capital punishment.**
- **Justice was administered by the Panchayats** in the villages and the **Kardars** in the towns. There was **no hierarchy of courts.**
- In the provincial headquarters, there were the courts of the Nazims. Above them, there was the **Adalat-i-Ala** in Lahore which heard appeals from the district and provincial courts

Military Reforms:

- Ranjit Singh possessed a very strong and **well-equipped army called Fauj-i-Khas**, which was **trained and disciplined by Italian and French officers on European lines.**
- He adopted the '**Mahadari**' system in which he made a **monthly payment of salaries to soldiers** and officers.
- He also established the **Canon factory in Lahore and Amritsar.**