Birsa Munda and Janjatiya Gaurav Divas – 15 November

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Why in news: 15 November 2026 is the sixth Janjatiya Gaurav Divas, the day the Union Government set apart in 2021 to honour tribal freedom fighters on the birth anniversary of Birsa Munda (1875–1900), the leader of the Munda 'Ulgulan'.

Key points

- Life: Birsa Munda was born on 15 November 1875 at Ulihatu (now in Khunti district, Jharkhand) in the Chotanagpur region. His followers called him 'Dharti Aaba' (father of the earth) and revered him as 'Bhagwan'.
- Why the Mundas rose: the British land system, moneylenders and outsiders ('dikus') broke down the Mundas' traditional 'khuntkatti' system of joint land-holding, and labour was forced on them. Birsa urged his followers to reform their society and to recover their land and their rule.
- The Ulgulan (the 'Great Tumult', 1899–1900): his followers attacked symbols of diku and colonial power – police stations, churches and the property of moneylenders and zamindars. Birsa was arrested and died in Ranchi jail on 9 June 1900, and the movement faded out.
- Legacy in law: the movement forced the colonial government to pass laws so that tribal land could not easily be taken over by dikus – the Chotanagpur Tenancy Act, 1908. The State of Jharkhand was formed on his birth anniversary, 15 November 2000.
- Recognition today: on 10 November 2021 the Union Cabinet declared 15 November 'Janjatiya Gaurav Divas'; the Bhagwan Birsa Munda Smriti Udyan cum Freedom Fighter Museum stands at the old Ranchi jail. PM-JANMAN (₹24,104 crore) for Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) was announced at Khunti on Janjatiya Gaurav Divas 2023. Tamil Nadu has six PVTGs – Todas, Kotas, Kurumbas, Irulas, Paniyans and Kattunayakans.

In the exam: TNPSC – Birsa Munda (born 15 November 1875, Ulgulan 1899–1900), Janjatiya Gaurav Divas, Tamil Nadu's six PVTGs; UPSC Prelims – tribal movements of the 19th century (Munda, Santhal, Kol), khuntkatti, the Chotanagpur Tenancy Act 1908, PM-JANMAN.

Questions

1. The 'Ulgulan' (Great Tumult) of 1899–1900 led by Birsa Munda took place mainly in the

A. Santhal Parganas
B. Chotanagpur region
C. Rampa region of the Godavari agency
D. Bastar region

2. Consider the following statements:

1. The State of Jharkhand was formed on 15 November 2000, the birth anniversary of Birsa Munda.

2. The Chotanagpur Tenancy Act was passed in 1908, after the Munda uprising.

3. Birsa Munda died in the Cellular Jail, Port Blair.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

A. 1 only

B. 2 and 3 only

C. 1 and 3 only

D. 1 and 2 only

Answers with explanations

1. **B) Chotanagpur region** – Birsa Munda's Ulgulan was centred in the Chotanagpur region (today's Jharkhand), the homeland of the Mundas. The Santhal Parganas saw the Santhal Hul of 1855–56; the Rampa region is linked with the Rampa rebellions, including Alluri Sitarama Raju's revolt of 1922–24; Bastar saw the Bhumkal rebellion of 1910.

2. **D) 1 and 2 only** – Statement 3 is wrong: Birsa Munda died in Ranchi jail on 9 June 1900; the old Ranchi jail now houses the Bhagwan Birsa Munda Smriti Udyan cum Freedom Fighter Museum. Jharkhand was carved out of Bihar on 15 November 2000, and the Chotanagpur Tenancy Act, 1908 protected tribal land after the Ulgulan.

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