GENERAL STUDIES II

Birsa Munda & Janjatiya Gaurav Divas 2026: Ulgulan, PESA, FRA and Tribal Rights | UPSC 2027

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Janjatiya Gaurav Divas is observed across India on 15 November to commemorate the birth anniversary of Birsa Munda, the tribal freedom fighter who led the Ulgulan movement against colonial authority and exploitative agrarian relations in Chotanagpur. The 2026 Janjatiya Gaurav Pakhwada runs from 1 to 15 November, with government-announced initiatives related to tribal education, culture, healthcare, forest rights and rural development. This Civil Service Gurukul UPSC 2027 article examines Birsa Munda's historical contribution, the Munda land system, colonial exploitation, the Ulgulan movement, the Chota Nagpur Tenancy Act, Fifth and Sixth Schedules, PESA 1996, Forest Rights Act 2006 and contemporary questions of community self-governance. It also provides original UPSC Prelims MCQs, GS-I and GS-II Mains analysis and a concise revision framework.

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UPSC CURRENT AFFAIRS | PRELIMS & MAINS 2027

GS PAPER I | GS PAPER II | TRIBAL HISTORY & RIGHTS

Birsa Munda and Janjatiya Gaurav Divas 2026: Ulgulan, Tribal Self-Governance and Constitutional Rights

From the anti-colonial Ulgulan movement to modern Gram Sabha powers and forest rights, explore the history, law and contemporary governance of India's tribal communities.

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15 NOV
Janjatiya Gaurav Divas



Executive Summary / Brief Overview

India observes **Janjatiya Gaurav Divas on 15 November** each year to commemorate the birth anniversary of **Birsa Munda**, an influential tribal freedom fighter and social reformer.

Birsa Munda led the **Ulgulan** movement in the Chotanagpur region during 1899–1900 against colonial authority, oppressive land relations and exploitation.

Born in 1875, Birsa Munda became a symbol of Adivasi resistance, community dignity and customary land rights.

The Government of India designated 15 November as Janjatiya Gaurav Divas in 2021.

For 2026, the Ministry of Tribal Affairs announced a nationwide **Janjatiya Gaurav Pakhwada from 1 to 15 November**, combining historical commemoration with tribal welfare activities.

The observance highlights initiatives related to education, health, cultural heritage, forest rights and community participation.

The historical legacy of Birsa Munda remains relevant to contemporary questions of tribal self-governance, land alienation, forest-resource access and participatory development.

For UPSC 2027, the subject connects Modern Indian History, Indian Polity, Social Justice, tribal development and environmental governance.

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UPSC Exam Trigger

Birsa Munda ? Chotanagpur ? Ulgulan (1899–1900) ? Janjatiya Gaurav Divas (15 November) ? Fifth Schedule ? PESA 1996 ? FRA 2006 ? Tribal Self-Governance.

Important distinction: The Fifth Schedule, PESA and the Forest Rights Act have different legal purposes. They are complementary but not interchangeable.

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1. Why in the News?

The Ministry of Tribal Affairs announced nationwide Janjatiya Gaurav Pakhwada activities from 1 to 15 November 2026, culminating in Janjatiya Gaurav Divas.

The observance commemorates the birth anniversary of Birsa Munda and recognises the contributions of tribal communities to India's freedom struggle.

2026 Current Affairs Snapshot

Particular	Details
Commemorative Day	15 November
Honoured Leader	Birsa Munda
National Designation	2021
2026 Pakhwada	1–15 November
Administrative Ministry	Ministry of Tribal Affairs
2026 Programme Focus	Education, healthcare, cultural preservation, rights and community participation

The 2026 programme includes several announced launches and projects. Future events must not be confused with completed outcomes.

2. Birsa Munda: Early Life and Background

Birsa Munda was born on **15 November 1875** at Ulihatu, in present-day Jharkhand.

He belonged to the Munda Adivasi community of the Chotanagpur plateau region.

His lifetime coincided with major economic and administrative changes under British colonial rule.

Dharti Aaba

He is reverently known as **Dharti Aaba**, a title commonly translated as "Father of the Earth".

Social and Spiritual Leadership

Birsa Munda promoted community unity, social reform and resistance to exploitative practices.

His movement combined religious, social, agrarian and political elements.

Historical Timeline

Year	Event
1875	Birth of Birsa Munda
1890s	Growth of Birsa's social and political influence
1895	Arrest during an earlier phase of mobilisation
1897	Release from imprisonment
1899–1900	Ulgulan movement
1900	Death in British custody at Ranchi
1908	Chota Nagpur Tenancy Act enacted
2021	15 November designated Janjatiya Gaurav Divas

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3. Ulgulan: The Great Tumult of 1899–1900

Ulgulan, often translated as the Great Tumult or Great Upheaval, was a major resistance movement led by Birsa Munda.

It emerged in the Chotanagpur region against colonial authority and exploitative agrarian arrangements.

Principal Objectives

- Resist exploitative colonial policies.
- Protect customary land rights.
- Challenge oppressive intermediaries.
- Defend community identity.
- Assert greater control over local affairs.

Historical Outcome

British authorities suppressed the movement and arrested Birsa Munda.

He died on 9 June 1900 while in British custody at Ranchi.

Although the rebellion was suppressed, its legacy contributed to continued demands for stronger protection of tribal land.

4. Why Did Tribal Communities Resist Colonial Rule?

A. Land Alienation

Changes in land administration and revenue systems weakened community claims over ancestral land.

B. Diku Exploitation

The term **Diku** was used for outsiders who were viewed as exploiting tribal communities, including some landlords, moneylenders and intermediaries.

C. Moneylending and Indebtedness

Debt and coercive economic relationships could result in loss of land and greater dependency.

D. Colonial Forest Policies

Restrictions on forest access affected livelihood, customary practices and community control over natural resources.

E. Forced Labour and Agrarian Pressure

Exploitative labour and rent arrangements contributed to social and economic grievances.

Khuntkatti System

The traditional **Khuntkatti** system was associated with lineage-based customary land rights among the Mundas.

Colonial land relations undermined aspects of these customary arrangements.

5. Significance of Birsa Munda in Indian History

Anti-Colonial Resistance

His movement demonstrates that opposition to colonial authority was not limited to urban elites or major cities.

Agrarian Justice

Ulgulan drew attention to land rights and economic exploitation.

Cultural Identity

The movement defended tribal community identity and local traditions.

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Self-Governance

Its continuing legacy is relevant to contemporary questions of community participation and control over local resources.

Historical Perspective

Tribal resistance should not be reduced to a single individual or rebellion.

India's anti-colonial history includes numerous community-led uprisings across different regions.

6. Chota Nagpur Tenancy Act, 1908

The **Chota Nagpur Tenancy Act, 1908** was enacted to regulate landlord-tenant relations and land rights in Chotanagpur.

Its protective framework includes restrictions on certain land transfers.

Connection With Ulgulan

The Act followed a wider historical period of resistance to land alienation, including the Munda movement.

However, it is not accurate to claim that Birsa Munda personally drafted or enacted the 1908 law.

UPSC Significance

It provides a historical example of how agrarian conflict and customary land claims shaped later legislation.

7. Constitutional Safeguards for Scheduled Tribes

Provision	Significance
Article 244(1)	Administration of Scheduled Areas under the Fifth Schedule
Article 244(2)	Sixth Schedule arrangements for specified northeastern tribal areas
Article 275(1)	Grants-in-aid, including relevant tribal welfare support
Article 338A	National Commission for Scheduled Tribes
Article 46	Directive Principle promoting educational and economic interests of weaker sections, particularly SCs and STs
Article 342	Specification of Scheduled Tribes

Fifth Schedule

The Fifth Schedule provides a special framework for administration and control of Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes in relevant states.

It includes provisions concerning the Governor and Tribes Advisory Councils.

Sixth Schedule

The Sixth Schedule provides arrangements for autonomous district and regional councils in specified tribal areas of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram.

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Common UPSC Trap

The Fifth and Sixth Schedules are not identical.

PESA primarily relates to Fifth Schedule Scheduled Areas, not the autonomous council arrangements of the Sixth Schedule.

8. PESA Act, 1996: Gram Sabha and Local Self-Governance

PESA stands for the **Provisions of the Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996**.

It extends the Panchayati Raj framework to Fifth Schedule Scheduled Areas with special exceptions and modifications.

Important PESA Provisions

- Protection of community resources and customary practices.
- Gram Sabha participation in local development decisions.
- Consultation before land acquisition, resettlement and rehabilitation in Scheduled Areas.
- Ownership of minor forest produce through the legally specified institutional framework.
- Measures to prevent land alienation.
- Control over moneylending to Scheduled Tribes.
- Regulation of village markets.
- Specified roles concerning minor mineral concessions.

Consultation vs Consent

PESA provides specific consultation and recommendation requirements, which depend on the decision involved.

It is inaccurate to describe every PESA procedure as requiring an identical, unqualified form of Gram Sabha consent.

Why Implementation Matters

Effective PESA implementation requires consistent state laws, functioning Gram Sabhas, accessible information and accountable administration.

9. Forest Rights Act, 2006: Individual and Community Rights

The **Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006** is commonly known as the Forest Rights Act (FRA).

It recognises specified forest rights of eligible forest-dwelling Scheduled Tribes and other traditional forest dwellers.

Important Categories

- Individual rights relating to eligible habitation and self-cultivation.
- Community rights to specified forest resources.
- Grazing and access to certain water bodies.
- Rights concerning minor forest produce.

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- Community forest resource rights.
- Habitat rights for eligible Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups.
- Recognition of certain traditional knowledge and biodiversity-related rights.

Community Forest Resource Rights

These can enable eligible communities to protect, regenerate, conserve and manage community forest resources under the Act.

Role of Gram Sabha

The Gram Sabha initiates the forest-rights claims process through the statutory procedure.

Further verification and decision-making involve the bodies specified under the Act and Rules.

Important Distinction

FRA recognises defined statutory forest rights. It is not equivalent to automatic ownership of all forest land.

10. Fifth Schedule vs PESA vs FRA

Feature	Fifth Schedule	PESA	FRA
Nature	Constitutional framework	Parliamentary law	Parliamentary law
Year	1950 Constitution	1996	2006
Main Focus	Administration of Scheduled Areas and STs	Local self-government in Scheduled Areas	Recognition of forest rights
Key Institutions	Governor, Tribes Advisory Council	Gram Sabha and Panchayats	Gram Sabha and statutory claims committees
Territorial Reach	Applicable Scheduled Areas	Fifth Schedule Scheduled Areas	Eligible forest dwellers under the Act across applicable areas

Exam Trigger: Fifth Schedule = administrative framework; PESA = local self-governance; FRA = recognition of forest rights.

11. Tribal Self-Determination and Contemporary Governance

Tribal self-determination in this context refers to the meaningful ability of communities to participate in decisions affecting their land, livelihood, culture and local institutions.

Key Dimensions

- Secure access to land and forest resources.
- Protection of customary traditions.
- Meaningful Gram Sabha participation.
- Fair and transparent development processes.
- Access to education and healthcare.

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- Preservation of indigenous languages.
- Representation of women and vulnerable groups.

Balanced Perspective

Local autonomy must be understood within applicable constitutional and statutory arrangements.

Self-governance does not imply that every Scheduled Area has a separate sovereign political status.

12. Janjatiya Gaurav Pakhwada 2026: Current Affairs

The Ministry of Tribal Affairs announced activities throughout 1–15 November 2026.

Initiative	Announced Details
National Tribal Literary Festival	Scheduled for 12–13 Novemb[illegible] at India Habitat Centre, New Delhi
EMRS Student Engagement	Interaction involving approximately 200 students scheduled for 12 November
Rani Durgavati Adivasi Mahila Sammelan	Scheduled for [illegible]4 Nov[illegible]ber, focusing on tribal women entrepreneurs
Tribal Welfare Projects	More [illegible] 300 projects announced for inauguration or foundation-stone laying around 15 [illegible]ber
Jan-HIT Portal	Announced digital initiative for tribe-disaggregated health information
National FRA Digital Platform	Announced initiative for digitisation of the forest-rights claims process
State-Level Observances	More than 160 activities planned across 19 States and UTs

Related Tribal Development Initiatives

PM-JANMAN focuses on improving essential services for Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs).

Dharti Aaba Janjatiya Gram Utkarsh Abhiyan aims to address development gaps in tribal-majority villages through convergence of public programmes.

The announced 2026 initiatives should be assessed through implementation, actual participation and measurable outcomes.

13. Contemporary Challenges and Way Forward

Land Alienation

Strengthen enforcement of existing protective land laws and accessible grievance redress mechanisms.

Forest Rights Implementation

Improve claims processing, support community forest resource rights and ensure fair procedures.

Gram Sabha Capacity

Provide accessible records, local-language information and training for community institutions.

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Education and Health

Expand culturally responsive education and accessible health services in remote areas.

Language Preservation

Support tribal languages, oral histories and community-led cultural documentation.

Inclusive Development

Design projects with meaningful consultation and attention to displacement, livelihoods and environmental sustainability.

Accountability

Evaluate outcomes through rights recognition, service access, livelihood improvement and independent public monitoring.

14. UPSC Prelims 2027: Quick Revision Card

High-Yield Facts

1. Birsa Munda was born on 15 November 1875.
2. Birthplace: Ulihatu, present-day Jharkhand.
3. Community: Munda.
4. Ulgulan: 1899–1900.
5. Region: Chotanagpur.
6. Death: 9 June 1900, in British custody.
7. Chota Nagpur Tenancy Act: 1908.
8. Janjatiya Gaurav Divas: 15 November.
9. National designation: 2021.
10. Fifth Schedule: Article 244(1).
11. Sixth Schedule: Article 244(2).
12. PESA: 1996.
13. FRA: 2006.
14. National Commission for Scheduled Tribes: Article 338A.

Common UPSC Traps

- Confusing Ulgulan with the Santhal Hul of 1855–56.
- Attributing the 1908 Tenancy Act directly to Birsa's personal legislative action.
- Assuming PESA automatically applies throughout India.
- Confusing the Fifth and Sixth Schedules.
- Treating PESA and FRA as identical laws.

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- Assuming every proposed 2026 welfare launch was completed by 13 November.

15. Original UPSC Prelims Practice MCQs

Question 1

Consider the following statements about Birsa Munda:

1. He belonged to the Munda community.
2. He was associated with Ulgulan.
3. His movement was centred in the Deccan region.

Which statements are correct?

(A) 1 and 2 only
(B) 2 and 3 only
(C) 1 and 3 only
(D) 1, 2 and 3

Show Answer and Explanation

Correct Answer: (A)

Birsa Munda led the Ulgulan movement in Chotanagpur, not the Deccan.

Question 2

Janjatiya Gaurav Divas is observed on which date?

(A) 9 August
(B) 15 November
(C) 26 January
(D) 5 September

Show Answer and Explanation

Correct Answer: (B)

15 November commemorates the birth anniversary of Birsa Munda.

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Question 3

Consider the following statements about PESA:

1. It was enacted in 1996.
2. It relates to local self-governance in Fifth Schedule areas.
3. It abolishes the Gram Sabha.

Which statements are correct?

(A) 1 only
(B) 1 and 2 only
(C) 2 and 3 only
(D) All three

Show Answer and Explanation

Correct Answer: (B)

PESA strengthens the role of Gram Sabha under its specified framework.

Question 4

Match the following:

1. Fifth Schedule — Article 244(1)
2. Sixth Schedule — Article 244(2)
3. NCST — Article 338A

How many pairs are correct?

(A) Only one
(B) Only two
(C) All three
(D) None

Show Answer and Explanation

Correct Answer: (C)

All three constitutional references are correctly matched.

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Question 5

With reference to the Forest Rights Act, 2006, consider:

1. It recognises specified individual forest rights.
2. It also provides for specified community forest rights.
3. It grants unconditional ownership of every forest to every Gram Sabha.

Which statements are correct?

(A) 1 and 2 only
(B) 1 and 3 only
(C) 2 and 3 only
(D) All three

Show Answer and Explanation

Correct Answer: (A)

The Act recognises defined statutory rights subject to eligibility and legal procedures.

Question 6

Which of the following is most closely associated with the Ulgulan movement?

(A) Plantation indigo pricing in Bengal
(B) Tribal land rights and resistance to colonial exploitation
(C) Naval mutiny of 1946
(D) Partition of Bengal in 1905

Show Answer and Explanation

Correct Answer: (B)

The movement was linked to agrarian exploitation, customary rights and anti-colonial mobilisation.

Question 7

Which statement best distinguishes PESA from FRA?

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(A) PESA provides for Scheduled Area self-governance; FRA recognises specified forest rights.

(B) PESA applies only to coastal regions; FRA applies only to cities.

(C) Both laws were enacted in 1950.

(D) FRA abolished all Gram Sabhas.

Show Answer and Explanation

Correct Answer: (A)

The laws address different but related dimensions of community rights.

16. UPSC Mains: Model Answers

GS Paper I | 15 Marks | 250 Words

Examine the historical significance of the Ulgulan movement and explain how tribal resistance contributed to India's anti-colonial struggle.

Model Answer — GS-I

Introduction: The Ulgulan movement of 1899–1900, led by Birsa Munda in Chotanagpur, was an important example of tribal resistance to British colonial rule.

Causes: Colonial changes in land tenure, outsider exploitation, indebtedness, forest restrictions and erosion of customary rights created widespread grievances.

Contributions:

1. It challenged colonial authority and exploitative agrarian relations.
2. It asserted community identity and customary land rights.
3. It brought together social, spiritual and political mobilisation.
4. It demonstrated the importance of tribal agency in India's freedom struggle.
5. Its legacy shaped later demands for protective agrarian legislation.

Limitations: The movement was suppressed and could not immediately end colonial control. Its legacy should also be understood within the wider history of tribal resistance.

Conclusion: Ulgulan demonstrates that India's freedom struggle included local resistance rooted in land, dignity, identity and community autonomy.

GS Paper II | 15 Marks | 250 Words

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"Commemorating tribal heroes must be accompanied by effective implementation of contemporary rights-based laws." Discuss with reference to the Fifth Schedule, PESA and FRA.

Model Answer — GS-II

Introduction: Janjatiya Gaurav Divas honours tribal contributions to the freedom struggle, while the Constitution and subsequent laws seek to protect contemporary tribal interests.

Institutional Framework:

1. **Fifth Schedule:** Provides a special administrative framework for Scheduled Areas.
2. **PESA:** Strengthens local governance and the role of Gram Sabhas in Scheduled Areas.
3. **FRA:** Recognises defined individual and community forest rights of eligible forest dwellers.

Implementation Challenges: Inconsistent legal harmonisation, limited awareness, administrative delays, land-related disputes and unequal access to services can weaken outcomes.

Way Forward: Improve Gram Sabha capacity, provide local language legal support, strengthen forest-rights claim processing, ensure meaningful consultation and evaluate actual livelihood outcomes.

Conclusion: Genuine recognition of tribal history requires accountable institutions and effective access to constitutional and statutory rights.

17. Final UPSC 2027 Takeaways

- Birsa Munda's Ulgulan is a major example of anti-colonial tribal resistance.
- Janjatiya Gaurav Divas is observed every 15 November.
- The 2026 observance includes welfare and cultural programmes announced for 1–15 November.
- The Fifth Schedule, PESA and FRA have separate legal purposes.
- Community participation is central to effective tribal self-governance.
- Rights protection, education, healthcare and cultural preservation should accompany public commemoration.

18. Frequently Asked Questions

Who was Birsa Munda?

Birsa Munda was a tribal freedom fighter and social reformer associated with the Ulgulan movement in Chotanagpur.

When is Janjatiya Gaurav Divas celebrated?

15 November every year.

What is Ulgulan?

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Ulgulan refers to the Great Tumult movement led by Birsa Munda during 1899–1900.

What does PESA stand for?

Provisions of the Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996.

What is the Forest Rights Act?

A 2006 law recognising specified forest rights of eligible Scheduled Tribes and other traditional forest dwellers.

Which schedule governs Scheduled Areas?

The Fifth Schedule under Article 244(1) provides the relevant special administrative framework.

Why is this relevant for UPSC?

It connects Modern History, Indian Polity, Social Justice, tribal self-governance and contemporary development policy.

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