

On Birsa Munda's 150th birth anniversary, a call for a consumer-rights revolution in Jharkhand



Shivaji Kranti

November 15 carries a profound emotional weight for Jharkhand. It marks not only the birth anniversary of the legendary tribal icon Birsa Munda but also the foundation day of the state, created in the year 2000. Yet, twenty-five years later, Jharkhand finds itself battling for its own survival — not politically alone, but against economic exploitation, consumer insecurity and crumbling public systems.

Unregulated fake medicines: A threat to life

Jharkhand is facing a severe crisis of counterfeit medicines. The state currently has only 12 drug inspectors against a requirement of 42, leaving one inspector responsible for as many as four districts. As a result, the pharmaceutical supply chain remains largely unchecked.

A recent case in Sukhdeonagar ex-

posed fake antibiotic tablets at a government health centre — the manufacturers' details were fraudulent and the tablets contained no active ingredients. Experts warn that poor patients are the worst victims: they trust medication, complete the course, yet see no improvement because they were sold fake drugs. Even life-saving medicines for diabetes, hypertension, thyroid disorders and pregnancy care have been found to be compromised.

Although QR-code-based verification has been introduced, inadequate testing facilities make the system ineffective. Many districts lack proper drug-testing laboratories, raising serious questions about the state's commitment to citizens' safety.

Food adulteration at alarming levels

Food safety in Jharkhand has collapsed. The state's only food testing laboratory recently lost its NABL accreditation due to lack of upgrades. This has effectively halted legal testing for adulterated food products.

Earlier, more than 1,200 samples were tested annually, with a shocking 40% found adulterated. Now, with no functioning lab, adulterators have a free hand — from toxic food colors in spices to contaminated grains, adulterated milk and pesticide-laden vegetables.

Last year, an FSSAI drive exposed alarming adulteration in spices: starch in black pepper, harmful dyes in chili powder and even turmeric adulterants. The Jharkhand High Court has already expressed serious concern and ordered



speedy appointment of food safety officers, but the directive remains largely unimplemented.

Cybercrime surge: Citizens lose hundreds of crores

Jharkhand continues to make national headlines for cybercrime.

Between January and June 2025, the state recorded 11,910 cybercrime complaints — an average of 66 per day — and 767 arrests. Over the past eighteen months, cyber fraud has caused losses of ₹390 crore. Victims include pensioners, small

shopkeepers, single women and ordinary internet users. Fraudsters use foreign servers, fake digital arrests, blackmail and identity theft. Despite High Court directions to expedite refunds to victims, the process is still in its early stages.

Corruption deeply rooted

Corruption remains another major barrier to public welfare. Bribes are reportedly demanded even in government housing schemes like the Abua Awas. In the health sector, officials' collusion enables the continued circulation of fake medicines. ACB has launched probes, including one against a former NGO branch inspector accused of extorting bribes for clearing files.

These cases reinforce that corruption in Jharkhand is systemic, not exceptional.

Consumer affairs ministry's inaction

Despite the Consumer Protection Act 2019 being in force for five years, its implementation in Jharkhand remains weak. The role and functioning of the Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) at the state level also remain unclear.

A call for state and citizens to act

The article urges that Birsa Munda Jayanti and Jharkhand Foundation Day should not be reduced to symbolic celebrations. Instead, they must renew the state's commitment to justice and welfare.

Key recommendations include:

- Crackdown on fake medicines:

Increase drug inspectors, establish district-level modern drug-testing labs and digitize the entire medicine supply chain.

- Strengthen food safety: Upgrade the state food lab and open new testing facilities in major districts. Appoint food safety officers urgently.
- Combat cybercrime: Form dedicated cyber units in every district, expedite victim reimbursements and introduce cyber safety education in schools.
- Fight corruption: Empower the ACB and enforce mandatory rotation of officials to prevent entrenched corruption.
- Promote citizen responsibility: Encourage consumer awareness groups, prompt reporting of suspicious products and community monitoring of government schemes.

A new age of economic freedom

The article argues that while Birsa Munda fought for political freedom 150 years ago, today's struggle is for economic freedom — from fake medicines, food adulteration, cybercrime and institutional corruption. These, it says, are the "new colonizers" looting Jharkhand from within.

The call is clear:

"Abua Raj, Tohro Kaj" — Our state, our responsibility.

Time for a new people's movement — for safety, justice and economic dignity.

Jai Birsa Munda! Jai Jharkhand! (Shivaji Kranti: The author is the area organization minister of All India Consumer Panchayat.)

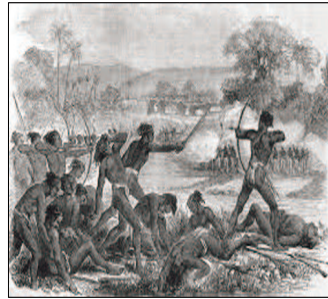
Long before 1857, Tamar rose in revolt marking Jharkhand's first fight for self-rule



Jharkhand marks its Foundation Day, historians and researchers are drawing attention to a powerful yet lesser-known chapter of India's freedom struggle — the Tamar Flag Rebellion of 1857. Long before the First War of Independence in 1857, tribal warriors of the Tamar region in present-day Ranchi district waged a sustained campaign of resistance against British rule, asserting the right to self-governance under traditional systems.

According to experts, the movement — led primarily by Munda and Oraon tribal communities — was one of the earliest organized resistances against colonial interference in eastern India. It began in 1789, triggered by the British imposition of heavy taxes, forced labour practices and the dismantling of indigenous governance structures. The tribal population responded by raising their own symbolic "jhanda" (flag) of sovereignty, refusing to recognize British authority and instead enforcing local administration through customary village leaders and community councils.

"The Tamar uprising was not a spontaneous revolt; it was a sustained struggle that lasted over four decades," said a senior historian from Ranchi University. "It demonstrates that Jharkhand's tribal groups were among the first to articulate the principle of autonomous self-rule long before



it became a nationwide movement."

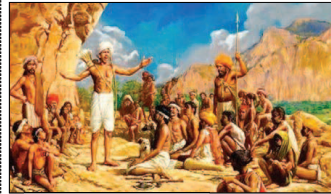
Archival accounts show that the rebels repeatedly disrupted colonial revenue operations, resisted the entry of British officials into villages and organized collective defence units. In response, the British launched several military operations to regain control of the region, but the rebellion continued in waves well into the 1830s. Even after its eventual suppression, it laid the ideological groundwork for later movements, including the Kol rebellion (1831–32) and the Ulgulan (1895–1900) led by Birsa Munda.

Historian Dr. Anita Lakra notes that the Tamar revolt is crucial in understanding Jharkhand's political identity. "The idea of 'gaon chhalata hai apna kanoo se' — that villages are governed by their own customary laws — was at the heart of the uprising. This principle continued to echo in later tribal rights movements," she said.

On Jharkhand Foundation Day, experts are urging that the Tamar Flag Rebellion be incorporated more prominently in textbooks and public memory. They argue that the struggle represents not only an early fight against colonial exploitation but also a defining moment in the assertion of tribal autonomy and cultural resilience. As the state celebrates 25 years of its formation, the rediscovery of such histories reinforces Jharkhand's long tradition of self-determination and collective resistance.

Before India fought for freedom, Ulihatu fought for land - experts recall on Foundation Day

How a small Jharkhand village shaped India's earliest tribal land laws



As Jharkhand celebrates its Foundation Day, historians and tribal rights scholars are turning national attention to Ulihatu — the birthplace of iconic tribal freedom fighter Birsa Munda — and to the powerful legacy of land rights struggles that began in the region long before the state was carved out in 2000. While Birsa Munda is widely recognized across India as a revolutionary leader who fought British rule at the age of just 20, few people know that Ulihatu and its surrounding villages were already brewing with political consciousness and resistance several decades before his birth in 1875.

Experts say that this region of the Chotanagpur plateau was a stronghold of indigenous governance systems, where Munda communities controlled land collectively through customs like khuntkatti — a system recognizing clan-based ownership. British attempts in the 19th century to dismantle these systems through taxation, forced labour and the entry of moneylenders and zamindars triggered waves of resentment. "When Birsa Munda emerged as a leader in the 1890s, he was not starting a new struggle; he was stepping into a movement already alive among the people of Ulihatu," said anthropologist Dr. R.S. Toppo.

Between 1895 and 1900, Birsa led what came to be known as the Ulgulan — the "Great Tumult" — a widespread tribal uprising that rejected exploitative land practices, demanded restoration of traditional rights and called for a return to indigenous systems of self-rule. His message resonated powerfully across Ranchi, Khunti, Tamar and Singhbhum. "Birsa's lead-

ership transformed scattered resistance into a unified political force," said historian Dr. Anita Lakra. "He ignited a sense of identity and collective ownership that shaped the future of tribal movements."

One of the most enduring impacts of Birsa's struggle was on colonial land laws. After suppressing the

Foundation Day, several researchers emphasized that Jharkhand's identity today is rooted in land, forest and cultural autonomy — draws inspiration from Ulihatu's history. They argue that Birsa Munda's legacy should be remembered not only as a chapter in India's freedom movement but as a pioneering example of in-



Ulgulan, the British administration initiated inquiries into tribal grievances. These investigations contributed directly to reforms that culminated in landmark protections for Adivasi land, most notably the Chotanagpur Tenancy (CNT) Act of 1908, which still prevents the transfer of tribal land to non-tribals. "India's earliest structured land-rights protections can be traced back to the consciousness raised by Birsa's movement," explained legal scholar Prof. J. Munda of Ranchi University. "It is not just a freedom struggle; it is the foundation of modern tribal jurisprudence." On

digenous land-rights assertion. "Jharkhand is the birthplace of India's earliest tribal land-rights movement," said Prof. Munda. "Recognizing this history is essential to understanding why the demand for a separate state was justified and why its cultural foundations remain so strong." As the state marks its 25th year, the rediscovery of Ulihatu's legacy serves as a reminder that Jharkhand's struggle for identity and autonomy began long before it achieved statehood — in the hills and forests where Birsa Munda once walked, preached and inspired a revolution.

Kolhan at 25: Industrial growth, challenges, new opportunities for Jharkhand's future



Anil Modi

dustrial identity.

A legacy of industrial strength

For decades, Tata Steel has anchored the industrial foundation of Kolhan, placing the region firmly on the country's industrial landscape. In recent years, companies such as Rungta Steel Ltd. and Ramkrishna Forgings Ltd. (RKFL) have added fresh momentum.

These industries have not only excelled in production and exports but have also generated thousands of direct and indirect jobs. Competing with multinational giants, they have carved out a presence in international markets, contributing significantly to Kolhan's economy.

Persistent challenges

Despite this growth, several fundamental issues continue to hinder the region's progress:

- Poor road and logistics infrastructure affects small and medium traders.
- Limited financial support and complex clearance processes restrict the growth



of small industries.

- A lack of skill development and technical training among local youth hampers employability.
- Policy uncertainty and inconsistent regulations deter potential investors.

Looking ahead: Sectors with high potential

Leaders believe Kolhan's industrial future should not

remain confined to mineral-based industries. The region holds immense scope for diversification:

Food processing: Agricultural products

Training institutes: aligned with industry needs can improve job opportunities for local youth.

Decade Roadmap for the Next

Godrej Finance Limited

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