Ministry of Tribal Affairs launches national initiative for conservation of medicinal plants and promotion of sustainable livelihoods in 16 tribal hotspots across 13 States/UTs

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The Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India, in collaboration with the CSIR–National Botanical Research Institute (CSIR-NBRI), Lucknow, formally launched the project “Integrated Conservation, Agro-Technology and Bioresource Enterprise Development for Sustainable Tribal Livelihoods in Tribal Hotspots of India” at the Central University of Odisha, Koraput, on 12 November 2026.



The inaugural programme was attended by Additional Secretary, Ministry of Tribal Affairs, senior officials of the Ministry, Dr. Ajit Kumar Kumar Shasany, Hon’ble Vice-Chancellor of the Central University of Odisha, Dr. Sharad Kumar Srivastava, Chief Scientist and Principal Investigator, CSIR-National Botanical Research Institute, Lucknow, Ms. Snehaprabha Majhi,

ITDA Project Administration, Koraput, scientists from ICMR-National Institute of Health Research, Bhubaneshwar, scientists, experts, industry representatives, faculty members, and tribal community representatives.



The three-year initiative aims to conserve the rich medicinal plant biodiversity of tribal regions while harnessing traditional knowledge and indigenous bioresources to create sustainable livelihood and enterprise opportunities for tribal communities. The project covers 16 selected tribal hotspots across 13 States/Union Territories: Alluri Seetharama Raju (Andhra Pradesh), Kokrajhar (Assam), Narayanpur (Chhattisgarh), Navsari (Gujarat), East Singhbhum (Jharkhand), Kodagu (Karnataka), Wayanad (Kerala), Kargil (Ladakh), Anuppur (Madhya Pradesh), Gadchiroli and Nashik (Maharashtra), Kandhamal, Balangir and Koraput (Odisha), Sonbhadra (Uttar Pradesh), and Dharchula (Uttarakhand).



The major interventions under the project include documentation of approximately 200–300 medicinal plant species, scientific propagation of 30–40 rare, endangered and threatened (RET) species, establishment of 16 community nurseries and 16 seed banks, and development of community-level capacities for medicinal plant cultivation and bioresource-based enterprises. The project also envisages distribution of 40,000–50,000 quality planting materials to support conservation, propagation and sustainable cultivation.

As part of the initial implementation, CSIR-NBRI has already undertaken fieldwork in Sonbhadra district of Uttar Pradesh during October 2026. The field team interacted with 146 tribal knowledge holders across 12 villages and documented traditional medicinal practices. A total of 97 field numbers, representing approximately 200 medicinal and economically important plant samples, were collected. Additionally, 25 live orchid samples were collected for germplasm conservation and multiplication at the CSIR-NBRI Botanical Garden.

The initiative seeks to establish strong linkages between scientific institutions, Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs), Van Dhan Vikas Kendras (VDVKs), State Tribal Welfare and Forest Departments and local communities. Special emphasis will be placed on involving tribal farmers, traditional healers, women and rural youth in conservation, capacity building, cultivation and value-chain development.



A special technical session titled “From Tribal Knowledge to Enterprise” was organised as part of the programme, bringing together experts and stakeholders to deliberate on translating traditional knowledge and medicinal plant resources into sustainable economic opportunities. The programme also includes interaction with tribal farmers and traditional knowledge holders, followed by a field visit to the Koraput tribal hotspot on 13 November 2026.

Through this initiative, the Ministry aims to create a replicable institutional model that integrates biodiversity conservation, scientific research, preservation of indigenous knowledge and community-led enterprise development. The project represents an important step towards recognising tribal communities as custodians of India’s biological and traditional knowledge heritage while enabling them to derive sustainable economic benefits from their local bioresources.

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