Medicinal-plant conservation project in 16 tribal hotspots

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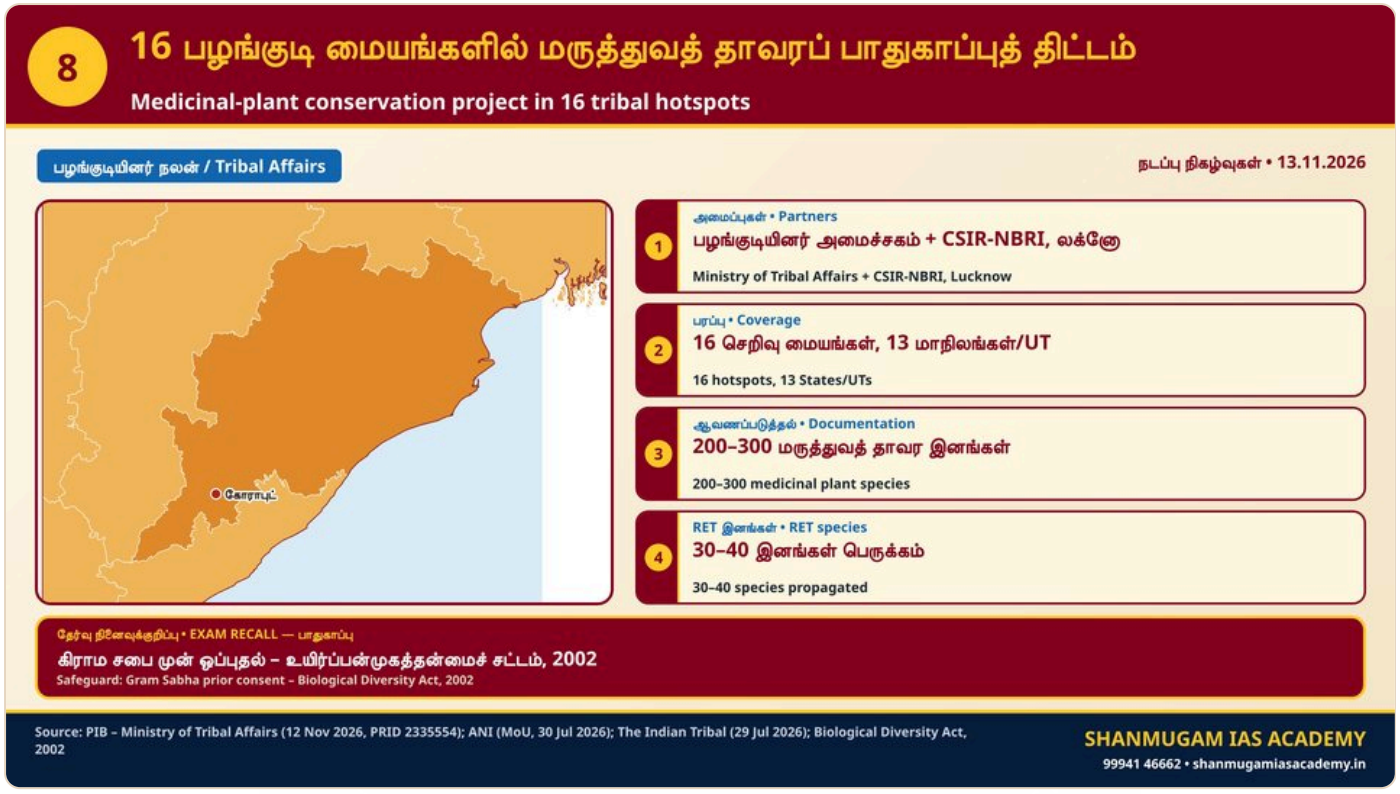

News

The Union Ministry of Tribal Affairs, with the CSIR-National Botanical Research Institute (CSIR-NBRI), Lucknow, launched a three-year project on medicinal-plant conservation and bioresource-based livelihoods on 12 November 2026 at the Central University of Odisha, Koraput. Its title is 'Integrated Conservation, Agro-Technology and Bioresource Enterprise Development for Sustainable Tribal Livelihoods in Tribal Hotspots of India'. It covers 16 tribal hotspots in 13 States/UTs; Odisha's are Kandhamal, Balangir and Koraput. Targets: document 200–300 medicinal plant species, propagate 30–40 rare, endangered and threatened (RET) species, set up 16 community nurseries and 16 seed banks, and distribute 40,000–50,000 quality planting materials. It will link Krishi Vigyan Kendras, Van Dhan Vikas Kendras and State tribal-welfare and forest departments, and document tribal medicinal knowledge with scientific validation. The MoU for it was signed in July 2026; October fieldwork in Sonbhadra, Uttar Pradesh, met 146 knowledge holders in 12 villages.

Key facts for the exam

Point	Details
Launched	12 Nov 2026, Central University of Odisha, Koraput
Partners	Ministry of Tribal Affairs + CSIR-NBRI, Lucknow
Duration	3 years (MoU: July 2026)

Point	Details
Coverage	16 hotspots, 13 States/UTs
Odisha hotspots	Kandhamal, Balangir, Koraput
Others (some)	Wayanad, Kodagu, Kargil, Gadchiroli, Sonbhadra, Dharchula
Documentation	200–300 medicinal plant species
RET species	30–40 species propagated
Infrastructure	16 nurseries, 16 seed banks
Safeguard	Gram Sabha prior consent – Biological Diversity Act, 2002

Background

- The 16 hotspots: Alluri Seetharama Raju (AP), Kokrajhar (Assam), Narayanpur (Chhattisgarh), Navsari (Gujarat), East Singhbhum (Jharkhand), Kodagu (Karnataka), Wayanad (Keralam), Kargil (Ladakh), Anuppur (MP), Gadchiroli and Nashik (Maharashtra), Kandhamal, Balangir and Koraput (Odisha), Sonbhadra (UP) and Dharchula (Uttarakhand). Under the July 2026 MoU, RET medicinal plants will be conserved through tissue culture and special seed banks, and tribal youth trained in plant propagation.
- Legal background: under the Biological Diversity Act, 2002, prior informed consent must be taken from the Gram Sabhas and tribal communities concerned, and Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS) rules followed. Intellectual property from joint research will be jointly owned by the Ministry and NBRI and shared fairly with contributing communities. The National Biodiversity Authority (NBA), set up under this Act, is in Chennai.
- Constitution and institutions: the Ministry of Tribal Affairs was carved out of the Social Justice Ministry in 1999. Scheduled Areas in States other than Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram are governed under the Fifth Schedule; those four come under the Sixth Schedule. Van Dhan Vikas Kendras, which add value to minor forest produce, are run by TRIFED under the PM Van Dhan Yojana (2018). 15 November, Birsa Munda's birth anniversary, has been observed as 'Janjatiya Gaurav Divas' since 2021.

Tamil Nadu link: No Tamil Nadu district is among the 16 hotspots. But the National Biodiversity Authority (NBA), which enforces the Biological Diversity Act, 2002 that this project must follow, is headquartered in Chennai and grants access-and-benefit-sharing approvals for traditional knowledge. Nearby hotspots Wayanad (Keralam) and Kodagu (Karnataka) are Western Ghats areas close to the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve, which includes Tamil Nadu's Nilgiris district.

Frequently asked questions

What is this news about?

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What are the key facts to remember for the exam?

Launched: 12 Nov 2026, Central University of Odisha, Koraput; Partners: Ministry of Tribal Affairs + CSIR-NBRI, Lucknow; Duration: 3 years (MoU: July 2026); Coverage: 16 hotspots, 13 States/UTs.

What is the background to this news?

The 16 hotspots: Alluri Seetharama Raju (AP), Kokrajhar (Assam), Narayanpur (Chhattisgarh), Navsari (Gujarat), East Singhbhum (Jharkhand), Kodagu (Karnataka), Wayanad (Keralam), Kargil (Ladakh), Anuppur (MP), Gadchiroli and Nashik (Maharashtra), Kandhamal, Balangir and Koraput (Odisha), Sonbhadra (UP) and Dharchula (Uttarakhand).

Practice questions (with answers)

1. Which CSIR laboratory is the Tribal Affairs Ministry's partner in the medicinal-plant project launched at Koraput in Nov 2026?

A) CSIR-CIMAP, Lucknow

B) CSIR-NBRI, Lucknow

C) CSIR-IHBT, Palampur

D) CSIR-NEERI, Nagpur

Answer: B – Explanation: CSIR-NBRI (National Botanical Research Institute), Lucknow; MoU in July 2026. CIMAP is the medicinal and aromatic plants institute.

2. Where is the National Biodiversity Authority, set up under the Biological Diversity Act, 2002 that this project must follow?

A) New Delhi

B) Dehradun

C) Kolkata

D) Chennai

Answer: D – Explanation: Chennai. It grants access-and-benefit-sharing (ABS) approvals for using bioresources and traditional knowledge.

3. Which body under the Tribal Affairs Ministry runs the 'Van Dhan Vikas Kendras' that will be linked to the project?

A) NABARD

B) TRIFED

C) KVIC

D) NCST

Answer: B – Explanation: TRIFED, under the PM Van Dhan Yojana (2018); the centres add value to minor forest produce to raise tribal incomes.

4. Which Schedule deals with administering Scheduled Areas in States other than Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram?

A) Sixth Schedule

B) Seventh Schedule

C) Eleventh Schedule

D) Fifth Schedule

Answer: D – Explanation: The Fifth Schedule, with a Tribes Advisory Council. The four north-eastern States come under the Sixth Schedule.

5. Which organisation publishes the global 'Red List' that assesses how threatened species are?

A) International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)

B) WWF

C) UNEP

D) CITES

Answer: A – Explanation: IUCN (HQ Gland, Switzerland) has published the Red List since 1964; this project aims to propagate 30–40 RET medicinal plant species.

Sources: PIB – Ministry of Tribal Affairs (12 Nov 2026, PRID 2335554); ANI (MoU, 30 Jul 2026); The Indian Tribal (29 Jul 2026); Biological Diversity Act, 2002; National Biodiversity Authority; Constitution of India (Fifth and Sixth Schedules). © Shanmugam IAS Academy.