

From the Margins to the Mainstream A New Dawn for India's Tribal Communities

June 14, 2025

A New India with Tribal Communities at the Core

India is home to one of the most vibrant and diverse tribal populations in the world. With over **10.45 crore** tribal citizens, comprising **8.6%** of the total population, the Adivasi communities have been integral to India's civilisational fabric. They have preserved rich traditions, languages, and knowledge systems that continue to shape the nation's cultural identity. Their contributions are timeless, with references in the Ramayana and Mahabharata **highlighting their wisdom, valour, and deep connection with nature.**



Despite their rich heritage, tribal communities were historically left out of the mainstream development narrative. For decades, they were seen more as custodians of culture than as equal partners in progress.

Under the leadership of **Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi**, there has been a clear and deliberate shift from **tokenism to targeted empowerment**. The **Union Budget 2025–26** marked a turning point, with a significant increase in funds for the **Ministry of Tribal Affairs**, reflecting the government's commitment to **inclusive growth** that truly leaves no one behind.

Strengthening Budgetary Support for Tribal Development¹

Over the last decade, the Government of India has significantly increased financial allocations to promote the welfare of Scheduled Tribes. The **Ministry of Tribal Affairs' annual budget** has **tripled**, rising from **₹4,295.94 crore** in 2013–14 to **₹14,926 crore** in 2025-26, demonstrating a strong commitment to inclusive growth.

¹<https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2098853>

Tribal Budget Growth Over the Decade



MoTA Annual Budget



Scheduled Tribe Component (DAPST) Allocation



Major flagship schemes have received substantial funding, including **₹24,104 crore for PM-JANMAN** and **₹79,156 crore for Dharti Aaba Abhiyan**, aimed at the holistic development of tribal communities. Additionally, the **Development Action Plan for Scheduled Tribes (DAPST)** has seen a **fivefold increase**, from **₹24,598 crore in 2013–14** to **₹1.23 lakh crore in 2024–25**, with **42 Union Ministries/Departments** now contributing to ST-focused initiatives. This cross-sectoral approach ensures comprehensive and sustained progress in tribal education, health, infrastructure, and livelihoods.

Forest Rights Act: Securing Tribal Land and Livelihoods

The **Forest Rights Act (FRA)** empowers tribal and forest-dwelling communities by legally recognising their individual and community rights over forest land and resources. Over the past decade, the government has strengthened implementation through **FRA cells in 17 states and 1 Union territory**, capacity building, and awareness drives.

Under the **Dharti Aaba Abhiyan**, dedicated funding supports **livelihood development and post-claim support**. National-level meetings, including **Manthan Shivirs** and a **District Collector/District Magistrates Conference** in 2025, were held to fast-track claim processing and ensure on-ground action. The focus remains on securing land rights and enabling **sustainable forest-based livelihoods**.

Progress in Forest Rights Implementation

Particulars	Up to March 2025
Number of Titles Distributed to Individuals	23.88 Lakh
Number of Titles Distributed to Communities	1.21 Lakh
Claims Disposed	43.72 Lakh
Land Area Vested (in Acres)	232.66 Lakh Acres

Building a Future from the Ground Up

1. PM-JANMAN: A Lifeline for India's Most Vulnerable Tribes

The Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan (PM-JANMAN) is not just a scheme—it is a powerful mission of justice, dignity, and upliftment for India's Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs). Launched with a vision of holistic development, this initiative is transforming lives in 75 PVTG communities across 18 states and 1 Union Territory, reaching the most remote corners of the country.

With a massive **₹24,104 crore** investment, PM-JANMAN is bridging decades of neglect by ensuring access to the basics—housing, water, healthcare, education, nutrition, roads, and sustainable livelihoods—over a three-year period.

Ministry	Activity	Mission Target (2023–2026)	Sanctioned Details	Physical Achievements
Ministry of Rural Development	Provision of pucca houses	4.90 lakh houses	4,34,837 houses	1,04,688 houses completed
Ministry of Health and Family Welfare	Mobile Medical Units (MMUs)	733 MMUs	687 MMUs	687 MMUs functional with over 38 lakh footfalls
Ministry of Jal Shakti	Piped Water Supply	19,375 villages	18,379 villages	7,202 villages 100% saturated
Ministry of Women and Child Development	Construction and operationalisation of Anganwadi Centres	2,500 AWCs	2,139 AWCs	1,069 AWCs made operational
Ministry of Education	Construction and operationalisation of hostels	500 hostels	243 hostels	Work started in 95 hostels
Ministry of Communications	Installation of mobile towers	Coverage of 4,543 habitations	3,679 habitations	2,271 habitations covered
Ministry of Power	Electrification of unelectrified households	1,42,133 HHs	1,42,133 HHs	1,05,760 households electrified
Ministry of New and Renewable Energy	Solar power for households	As per identification of eligible beneficiaries	9,961 households sanctioned	2,057 households electrified
Ministry of Tribal Affairs	Establishment of Multipurpose Centres (MPCs)	1,000 MPCs	1,000 MPCs	Construction in progress in 612 MPCs; 38 MPCs completed

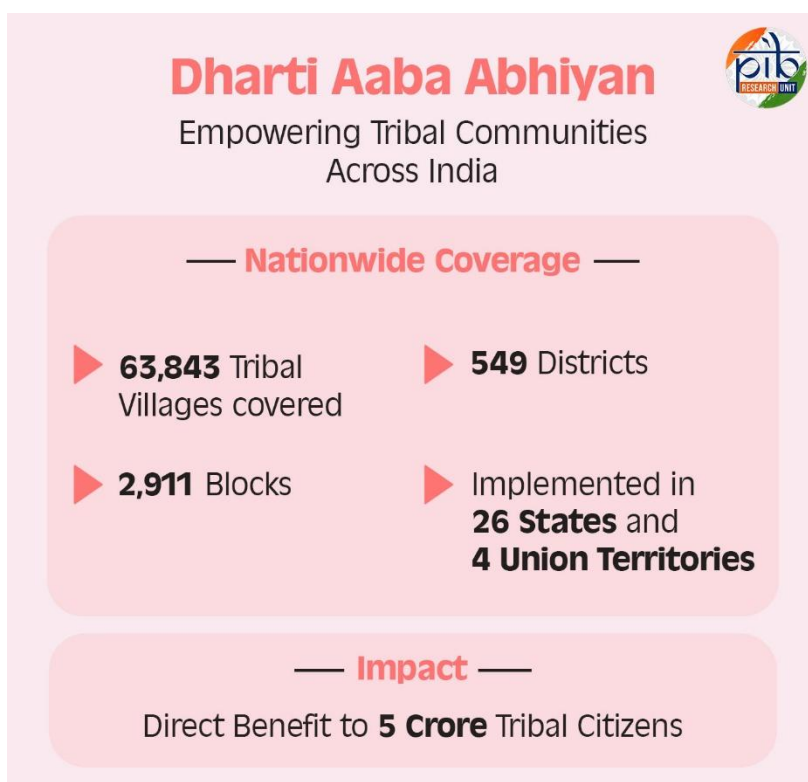
2.Dharti Aaba Abhiyan: Transforming Tribal Heartlands, Village by Village²

In line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of inclusive and holistic development, the **Dharti Aaba Janjatiya Gram Utkarsh Abhiyan** is a landmark initiative that ensures that governance benefits reach every tribal citizen. It reflects the Government of India's unwavering commitment to *Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas, Sabka Prayas*, and places tribal communities at the centre of India's development journey.

Launched by the **Ministry of Tribal Affairs on October 2, 2024**, the Abhiyan builds on the success of PM-JANMAN and represents a powerful step towards transforming tribal villages into hubs of opportunity and dignity. With a significant investment of **₹79,156 crore**, this multi-

²https://sansad.in/getFile/loksabhaquestions/annex/184/AU560_ILFOB6.pdf?source=pqals

sectoral initiative brings together **17 ministries** through **25 integrated interventions**, offering a comprehensive model for grassroots development.



Guided by Antyodaya: Reaching the Last Person First

The Abhiyan embodies the principle of **Antyodaya**, ensuring that development reaches the most underserved and remote tribal communities. It addresses critical gaps in infrastructure and basic services by focusing on:

- **Safe and permanent housing** along with access to clean drinking water
- Improved **healthcare and sanitation** facilities
- Quality **education and nutritional support** for children
- **Reliable electricity** and promotion of renewable energy sources
- **Road connectivity and expansion** of digital networks in tribal areas
- Sustainable livelihood opportunities through convergence of schemes and skilling

Progress Highlights of Dharti Aaba Abhiyan

	Area of Intervention	Targets & Achievements
Beneficiary Interventions	AWAS	11.45 lakh houses sanctioned and 76,704 houses completed.
	Electrification	1,84,551 household electrification connections sanctioned and 3,827 public places sanctioned.
	Drinking water supply	62,515 villages sanctioned and 25,870 villages saturated.
	Agriculture support to FRA Patta holders	Proposals approved for 4 states Assam, MP, Odisha and J&K benefiting 1,73,097 beneficiaries.

	Area of Intervention	Targets & Achievements
	Fish Culture Support to tribal fisherman	Proposals for support to tribal fishermen valued at ₹52.18 crore have been approved for 10 States/UTs: Assam, Jharkhand, Nagaland, Tripura, Goa, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Himachal Pradesh.
Community Interventions	Upgradation of Ashram Schools / Tribal Residential Schools	3,420 projects approved.
	Tribal Multipurpose Marketing Centres (TMMCs)	71 TMMCs approved covering more than 5 lakh beneficiaries.
	Centre of Competence (CoC) for Sickle Cell Disease	15 CoCs approved in 14 States.
	Community Forest Resource Rights Management Plans (CFRM Plans)	920 CFRM Plans approved covering more than 90,000 hectares of forest land.
	Dharti Aaba FRA Cells	17 State Level FRA Cells for 17 States/UT and 414 District Level Cells in 19 States/UT approved.
	Mobile Medical Units (MMUs)	36 MMUs operationalised.
	Hostels	604 hostels sanctioned.
	Anganwadi Centres (AWCs)	236 AWCs sanctioned.
	Telecom connectivity	4,543 villages sanctioned and 2,983 villages covered.

Janjatiya Gaurav Divas: Honouring Tribal Legacy

To celebrate the invaluable contributions of tribal communities to India's freedom struggle and nation-building, the Government of India observes **Janjatiya Gaurav Divas** every year on **15th November**, in memory of **Bhagwan Birsa Munda**. The 2024 celebration marked his **150th birth anniversary**, and witnessed a nationwide outpouring of pride, participation, and policy-driven action aimed at preserving tribal heritage.

The 2024 **Janjatiya Gaurav Divas** saw massive virtual participation of **over 1 crore people**. A **national event in Jamui, Bihar**, was attended by the **Hon'ble Prime Minister**, underlining the significance of tribal contributions. To honour tribal heroes, **11 Tribal Freedom Fighter Museums** were sanctioned across 10 states. Between **15–26 November 2024**, more than **46,000 activities** were conducted nationwide, covering themes like **Education, Health, Livelihood, Art & Culture**, and more. Programmes like **Aadi Mahotsav** and **Dharti-Aaba TribePreneurs** celebrated tribal talent, while **29 Tribal Research Institutes (TRIs)** were engaged in organising festivals, seminars, and student-led events. National-level programmes were also held in **Bihar, Nagaland, Goa, Kerala, Assam, and Mizoram**.

Learning to Lead: Education that Empowers³

The Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS) initiative has undergone a significant transformation over the past decade, evolving into a flagship programme aimed at providing quality education to tribal students across India. The government's strategic interventions in policy, infrastructure, academics, and digital innovation have vastly improved access, governance, and learning outcomes for tribal youth. EMRS schools are now set up in every tribal block with over 50% ST population and at least 20,000 tribal residents (per 2011 Census). The Ministry has set the target to set up a total of 728 EMRS's benefiting around **3.5 lakh ST students** across the country.

Transformative Growth of EMRS (2004–2024)

Particulars	2004–2014	2014–2025
Total Schools Approved	90	555
Schools Functional	82	354
Buildings Completed	63	279
Recurring Cost per Student	₹42,000	₹1,47,000
Construction Cost per School (Plain)	₹12 Cr	₹38 Cr
Construction Cost per School (Hilly/NE/LWE)	₹16 Cr	₹48 Cr
Total Budget Allocation	Limited	₹28,920 Cr (2021–26)
Teachers & Non-Teaching Staff Recruited	Ad-hoc	9,000+
New Recruitment of Staff (2019–2026)	NA	38,480 approved



Empowering Tribal Students through Scholarship Schemes

Over the past 11 years, the Ministry of Tribal Affairs has significantly strengthened its scholarship ecosystem to empower tribal students through expanded coverage, increased funding, and digital transformation. Today, five central scholarship schemes benefit nearly 30 lakh tribal students annually, with a tripled budget outlay rising from ₹978 crore in 2013-14 to over ₹3,000 crore in 2024-25.

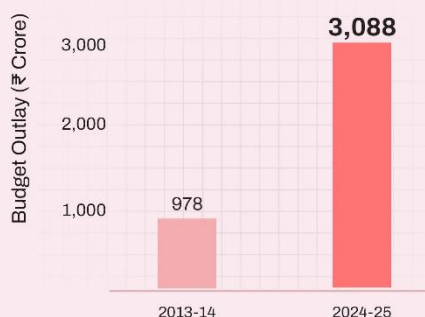
³https://sansad.in/getFile/loksabhaquestions/annex/184/AU5506_60kAa3.pdf?source=pqals

Expansion of Tribal Scholarship Scheme

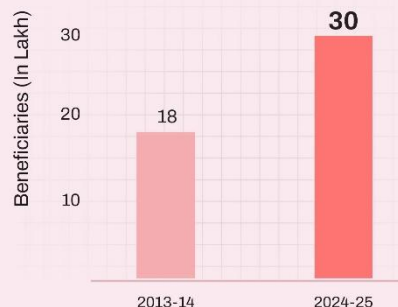
(2013-14 to 2024-25)



Growth in Budget Outlay
for Tribal Scholarship Scheme



Increase in
Beneficiaries



A key milestone has been the shift from manual to fully digital, Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT)-enabled systems, leading to faster, transparent, and real-time disbursal of over ₹22,000 crore in scholarships over the last decade. The number of students supported under various schemes has grown notably—MPhil/PhD fellowships rose from ~950 to 2,700, National Overseas Scholarships increased from 8 to 58 students, and Top-Class Education Scheme coverage more than doubled, benefiting 7,000 students in premier institutions like IITs, IIMs, and AIIMS.

Initiatives for Better Health Care for the Tribal Population

Sickle Cell Anaemia Elimination Mission

As part of its commitment to addressing health inequities among tribal populations, the Government of India launched the **Sickle Cell Anaemia Elimination Mission** in 2023. Announced in the Union Budget 2023–24 and formally launched by **Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 1st July 2023 in Shahdol, Madhya Pradesh**, this mission aims to eliminate Sickle Cell Anaemia (SCA) by **2047**, with a focus on tribal-dominated regions. It aims to screen **7 crore individuals** aged **0–40 years** in tribal-dominated regions.

- By **2025**, over **5 crore individuals** have already been screened.
- A **nationwide awareness campaign** was conducted from **19 June to 3 July 2024**, which included:
 - **1.60 lakh events**
 - **1 lakh health camps**
 - Distribution of **13.19 lakh** screening cards
- A **National Level Training of Trainers Programme** was organised in **January 2025** in Delhi to build capacity for SCA awareness and counselling.
- **15 Centres of Competence (CoCs)** were established across **14 states** under the **Dharti Aaba Abhiyan** to provide advanced diagnosis, treatment, and patient support.

AIIMS Delhi has played a pivotal role in advancing tribal healthcare through the establishment of the **Bhagwan Birsa Munda Chair of Tribal Health** with a focus on **Hematology**, the adoption of Lamtaput Block in Odisha for healthcare development, as well as support for mega medical camps like the one held in **Sundargarh, Odisha** during **Janjatiya Gaurav Varsh**.

This coordinated, multi-agency effort underscores the government's resolve to ensure that **tribal communities receive timely diagnosis, treatment, and care**, thereby making health a key pillar of tribal empowerment and inclusion.

Tribal Livelihoods and Entrepreneurship

Van Dhan Ecosystem:

Launched on **14th April 2018**, the **Van Dhan Yojana** is a flagship initiative under the 'Mechanism for Marketing of Minor Forest Produce (MFP) through Minimum Support Price (MSP) & Development of Value Chain for MFP.' Implemented by **TRIFED** as the nodal agency, the scheme aims to generate **livelihood opportunities for tribal gatherers** by transforming them into entrepreneurs. **Van Dhan Vikas Kendras (VDVKs)** have been established in tribal-dominated districts, where tribal Self-Help Groups (SHGs) engage in the **collection, value addition, and marketing of MFPs**.

Key Transformational Achievements in Tribal Livelihoods and Enterprise

Empowering Tribal Entrepreneurs

- **4,030 Van Dhan Vikas Kendras (VDVKs)** established across India
- Benefited over **12 lakh tribal individuals** by generating sustainable livelihoods through value addition of forest produce

Expansion of Minimum Support Price (MSP) for Minor Forest Produce (MFP)

- **77 new MFPs** added to the notified MSP list
- Ensured better price realization and income security for tribal gatherers

Strengthening Infrastructure and Market Linkages

- **1,316 Haat Bazaars, 603 storage units, and 22** processing units sanctioned
- Facilitated direct market access for tribal products and artisans
- **₹89.14 crore** released to support tribal infrastructure development

Promoting Tribal Culture and Commerce

- **38 Aadi Mahotsavs** organised in major cities across the country
- Showcased tribal handicrafts, art, and agro-products to a wider national audience

High-Level Recognition and Support

- Prime Minister inaugurated Aadi Mahotsav twice, enhancing national visibility and support
- President of India addressed **15,000+ women** SHG members in Jharkhand in 2023, empowering tribal women leaders

Financial Empowerment:

The **National Scheduled Tribes Finance and Development Corporation (NSTFDC)** has played a pivotal role in advancing the economic empowerment of Scheduled Tribes over the past decade. Operating under the **Ministry of Tribal Affairs**, NSTFDC has substantially scaled up its support to **tribal entrepreneurs, students, and self-help groups** through concessional financial assistance.

Between **2014 and 2025**, the corporation has more than **doubled its loan sanctions and disbursements**, expanded its **beneficiary outreach by over 95%**, and extended coverage to **28 States and UTs**. Its **loan portfolio grew by 171%**, while **revenue and surplus tripled**, indicating strong institutional growth and impact.

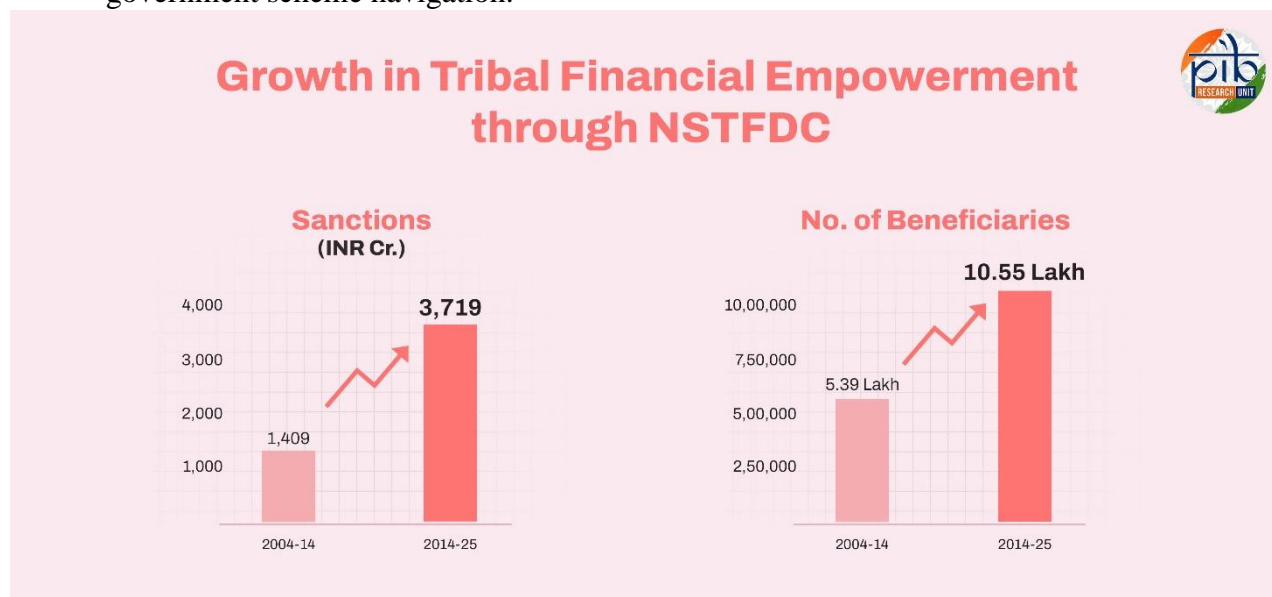
Policy Reforms and Strategic Initiatives (2014–2025)

1. Enhanced Lending Limits

- **Adivasi Mahila Sashaktikaran Yojana (AMSY):** Loan ceiling raised from ₹50,000 to ₹2 lakh.
- **Term Loan Scheme:** Project cost ceiling increased from ₹10 lakh to ₹50 lakh per unit.
- **Adivasi Shiksha Rinn Yojana (Education Loan):** Limit increased from ₹5 lakh to ₹10 lakh.

2. **139 tribal entrepreneurs** honoured in **Kohima and Vishakhapatnam** under *Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav* (2021).

3. Over **650 ST women SHG members** trained in **financial literacy**, digital finance, and government scheme navigation.



Startup & Innovation:

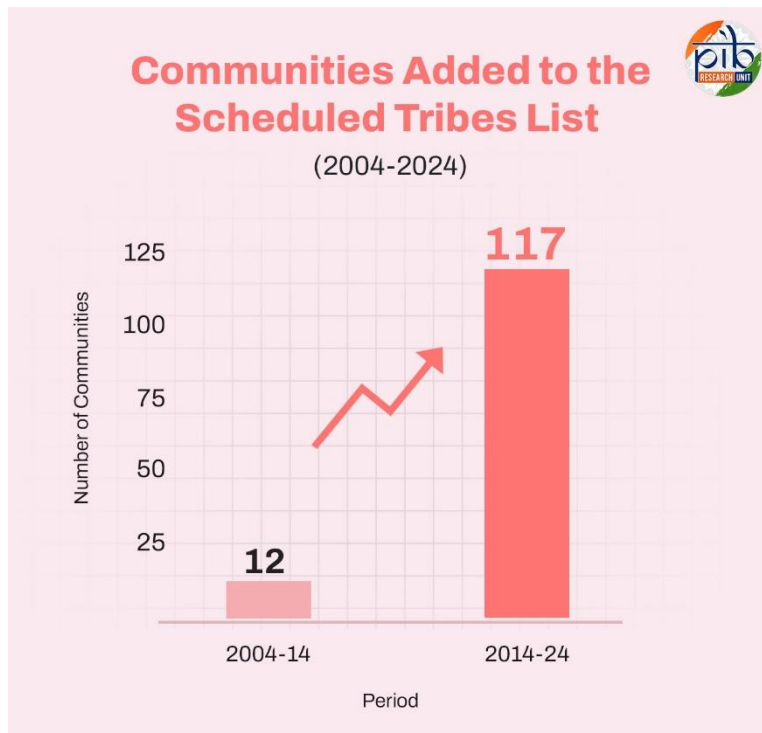
The **Pradhan Mantri Janjatiya Vikas Mission (PMJVM)** aims to boost tribal livelihoods by promoting enterprise development. It focuses on setting up **Van Dhan Vikas Kendras** and **Producer Enterprises** for value addition of **Minor Forest Produce (MFP)**, strengthening **MSP procurement**, and developing **Haat Bazaars and Warehouses** to improve market access. **TRIFED** serves as the nodal agency, ensuring effective implementation and market linkages.

Key Transformational Achievements of PMJVM

Achievement Area	Details
Empowering Tribal Entrepreneurs	4,030 Van Dhan Vikas Kendras (VDVKs) established Benefited over 12 lakh tribals
Expansion of MSP for MFPs	77 new Minor Forest Produce (MFP) items added to MSP list for better price realisation
Infrastructure & Market Linkages	1,316 Haat Bazaars sanctioned 603 storage units 22 processing units ₹89.14 crore released for infrastructure development
Promoting Tribal Culture & Commerce	38 Aadi Mahotsavs organised across major cities PM inaugurated Aadi Mahotsav twice President addressed 15,000+ women SHG members in Jharkhand (2023)

Expanding the Scheduled Tribes List

The recognition of tribal communities has seen a remarkable rise, with **117 communities added to the Scheduled Tribes list between 2014 and 2024**, compared to just **12 in the previous decade**. This **10-fold increase** highlights the government's commitment to acknowledging previously marginalised groups and extending to them the benefits of development and welfare schemes.



The inclusion in the Scheduled Tribes list opens doors to a wide range of welfare benefits for these communities, **from educational and job reservations to political representation and legal safeguards**, enabling their fuller participation in the nation's development journey.

Conclusion: The Rise of Janjatiya Bharat

India's tribal communities have moved from the margins to the mainstream, becoming central to the nation's development journey. Through focused schemes like **PM-JANMAN, Dharti Aaba Abhiyan**, and the **Van Dhan Yojana**, the government has ensured that tribal citizens gain access to rights, opportunities, and dignity. This transformation goes beyond welfare, it is rooted in justice, empowerment, and inclusion. With investments in **education, health, livelihoods, and culture**, **tribal communities** are shaping their own future. This is the essence of Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas, Sabka Prayas—a true Janjatiya Bharat in the making.

Reference

- Ministry of Tribal Affairs
- <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressNoteDetails.aspx?NoteId=153859&ModuleId=3#:~:text=The%20initiative%2C%20100%25%20funded%20by,of%20tribal%20communities%20across%20India.>
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