Adi Vaani: Bringing India's Tribal Languages into the Digital Age - 9 Languages, 35,000+ Downloads (PIB)



Original symbolic graphic: pcsmantra.com

Why in News

On the occasion of the Janjatiya Gaurav Pakhwada (1-15 November 2026) and **Janjatiya Gaurav Diwas** (15 November - Bhagwan Birsa Munda's birth anniversary), the Ministry of Tribal Affairs rolled out 300+ projects (228 inaugurations, 74 foundation stones) and two national digital initiatives - the **Jan-HIT Portal** and the **National FRA Digital Platform**. In this context, a PIB feature (15 November) highlights the **Adi Vaani** AI platform: as on 15 October 2026 it supports text translation in **nine tribal languages** and has recorded **over 35,000 Android downloads**.

What Adi Vaani Is

- **Profile:** an AI-powered translation and language platform of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs - launched on **1 September 2025**; developed by a national consortium led by **IIT Delhi** with BITS Pilani, IIIT Hyderabad, IIIT Nava Raipur and the **Tribal Research Institutes (TRIs)** of Jharkhand, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Meghalaya - "built with tribal communities, for tribal communities".
- **Language coverage:** started with **Santali, Bhili, Mundari and Gondi**; as on 15 October 2026, text translation in **nine languages**; plus speech translation, **OCR**, video subtitling and **300+ language primers**.
- **Reach:** 35,000+ Android downloads and ~6,500 monthly users.
- **Data building:** native speakers contribute words, sentences and voice recordings through TRIs and **AdiKosh** (the word bank), checked by language experts; the target is **~1,00,000 sentence pairs and 100 hours of speech per language**; as on 15 October 2026, **~13.9 lakh text sentences (across ten languages)** and **~300 hours of speech data** had been contributed.
- **The road ahead:** the Working Group on Tribal Languages (first meeting 15 October 2026) discussed positioning Adi Vaani as the **National Tribal Language Repository**.

Key Features

- Text-to-text translation (tribal languages to and from Hindi/English)
- Speech-to-text (documentation of oral languages)

- Speech-to-speech translation
- OCR - extracting text from images and scanned documents for translation
- Video subtitling, and digital dictionaries/primers

Why It Matters

- **GS-I/II (Society/Governance):** per Census 2011, India has **~10.45 crore Scheduled Tribe people (~8.6%)**; mother-tongue early learning (in the spirit of NEP 2020), healthcare communication and access to public services all improve.
- **Knowledge preservation:** oral-tradition languages carry centuries of knowledge of forests, farming, medicine and biodiversity; many are "low-resource" languages long unsupported by language technology.
- **A community-AI model:** community data contribution + expert validation + retraining - a replicable "participatory AI" experiment for India.

Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. Adi Vaani is an initiative of which ministry?

(a) Ministry of Electronics and IT

(b) Ministry of Tribal Affairs

(c) Ministry of Education

(d) Ministry of Culture

Answer and Explanation

Answer: (b) It is the Ministry of Tribal Affairs' AI-based translation platform, launched on 1 September 2025, developed by an IIT Delhi-led consortium.

Q2. In Adi Vaani, "AdiKosh" is:

(a) An e-marketplace for tribal arts

(b) The word bank - dictionary entries and spoken sentences recorded by verified speakers

(c) A tribal scholarship portal

(d) A forest-rights document repository

Answer and Explanation

Answer: (b) AdiKosh is Adi Vaani's word bank; speech recorded through it is validated by TRIs before training the models.

Mains Practice Question

Q: "Technology can either preserve linguistic diversity or erase it - policy decides the direction." Comment in the context of Adi Vaani. (250 words)

Outline: Introduction - the digital neglect of low-resource languages; the Adi Vaani model - community data, TRIs, validation; the gains - mother-tongue education, healthcare communication, service access, cultural preservation; the risks - data ownership, representational bias; conclusion - the National Tribal Language Repository is a step in the right direction.

FAQ

Short answer: Adi Vaani is the Ministry of Tribal Affairs' AI platform (launched 1 September 2025) - text translation in nine tribal languages, plus speech/OCR/subtitling tools; 35,000+ downloads; ~13.9 lakh sentences and ~300 hours of speech data via TRIs/AdiKosh; the goal is a National Tribal Language Repository.

Q: What makes Adi Vaani distinctive?

It is an AI-based translation and digital-preservation platform for tribal languages - text/speech translation, OCR, video subtitling and 300+ primers - with data from native speakers via TRIs/AdiKosh, validated by experts.

Q: How many languages, and what reach so far?

Text translation in nine languages as on 15 October 2026 (starting with Santali, Bhili, Mundari and Gondi); 35,000+ Android downloads and ~6,500 monthly users.

Q: Why does digital preservation of tribal languages matter?

These languages carry centuries of traditional knowledge (forests, farming, medicine, biodiversity); digital access strengthens mother-tongue education, health information and public services - and slows language loss.

Sources

- PIB (15 November 2026, official): Adi Vaani - Bringing India's Tribal Languages into the Digital Age