

## **Environment protection and Economic development must go together: Vice President**

**Tree plantation and environment protection should become mass movement;**

## **Addresses Convocation 2018 of Indira Gandhi National Forest Academy**

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The Vice President of India, Shri M. Venkaih Naidu has said that Environment protection and Economic development must go together. He was addressing the Convocation 2018 of Indira Gandhi National Forest Academy, in Dehradun, Uttarakhand today. The Governor of Uttarakhand, Dr. Krishna Kant Pal, the Chief Minister of Uttarakhand, Shri Trivendra Singh Rawat, the Union Minister for Science & Technology, Earth Sciences and Environment, Forest & Climate Change, Dr. Harsh Vardhan and other dignitaries were present on the occasion.

The Vice President said that fundamental principle of forest management should be based on conservation and sustainable utilization of natural resources. He further said that we need to employ environment friendly approach and we must live with nature for better future. It should be the sacred duty of everyone to plant and protect trees, he added.

The Vice President said that states must be incentivised for increasing forest Cover. He further said that Niti Ayog, and the Centre must have provisions to encouraging states doing well, and top most priority must be given to the forest, rivers and the Mother Nature. Tree plantation and environment protection should become mass movement, he added.

The Vice President said that the symbiotic association of man and forest is deeply embedded in the religious and the socio-cultural mind set of our countrymen and it is getting disturbed in recent times due to increasing demand of natural resources and

lack of understanding about Mother Nature. He further said that the Indian culture has traditionally revered trees as holy symbols of divinity. It was considered as a sin to cut trees like Peepal which is called 'Ficus Religiosa', he added.

The Vice President said that there is a need to guide, provide knowledge to tribal or local communities on conservation techniques. He further said that foresters must be development facilitators and a growth enabler without compromising the national interest and the welfare of the people especially the tribal groups who depend on forests for their livelihood. India has come a long way in changing the management strategies from keeping people away from the forests for protection purposes to managing the forest with cooperation of people in the form of Joint Forest Management, he added.

Following is the text of Vice President's address:

"I am extremely delighted to be with you today at the convocation of 2016 batch of Indian Forest Service officers. I am also glad to note that two officer trainees from our neighboring country Bhutan are also passing out today. I have no doubt in saying that the contribution of Indira Gandhi National Forest Academy in training these foreign trainees will further strengthen the ties between the two nations and foster joint collaboration in combating wildlife related offences which are often trans-border crimes.

You are entering the forest service at a crucial time in which India is trying to carve out an important and rightful position in the world.

India is among the fastest growing economies in the world today. It is now paying much more attention to environment than earlier.

While before 1980, almost 150,000 hectares of forest land was being diverted to non-forestry activities every year, it is heartening to note that this rate of diversion has been reduced to 15,500 hectares per annum after 1980.

In terms of forest cover, India has shown an increasing trend in comparison to the global trend of decreasing forest cover during the last decades. As per the India State of Forest Report, 2017, India is ranked 10<sup>th</sup> in the world with 24.4% of land under forest and tree cover.

It is heartening that India is placed 8<sup>th</sup> in the list of top ten nations reporting the greatest annual net gain in forest area. There has been an increase of 8,021 Sq. Km. in the total forest and tree cover during 2015-17.

You will have a great opportunity as IFS officers try and to reach the ideal of increasing the forest areas to one third of the total land area as was envisaged way back in the National Forest Policy 1952.

You all are aware that we are making rapid strides to enhance our human development ranking in the global scale. This requires accelerated developmental activities. However, these developmental activities need to have in built safety nets to safe guard our natural resources that support millions of poor people.

In the present context, as IFS officers, you play the role of a magistrate in regulating the developmental works for safeguarding the ecological security of the country.

The unique aspect of our civilization is that Indian culture has, since time immemorial, glorified nature and emphasized the coexistence of man, animal and plant life. This natural association of man, animal, and plant life is manifested in our religious texts, in our rich literatures and ancient philosophies.

Some of the greatest religions of the world that sprang from this soil had preached nonviolence, taking even animals into the ambit of this doctrine. Such sublime ingredients of our culture have made the Indian civilization a repository of universal values and timeless ideals.

The symbiotic association of man and forest deeply embedded in the religious and the socio-cultural mind set of our countrymen and emphasized since time immemorial, is getting disturbed in recent times due to increasing demand of natural resources.

The Indian culture has traditionally revered trees as holy symbols of divinity. It was considered as a sin to cut trees like Peepal which is called 'Ficus Religiosa'.

Infact, Lord Krishna identifies himself as the Ashwatha, or the peepal tree among all the trees.

There have been, in recent past, a number of movements to enhance awareness of forest protection, like the 'Chipko' movement which took root in Uttarakhand region in 1973 led by Gaura Devi, Sudesha Devi, Bachni Devi, Chandi Prasad Bhatt and Sunderlal Bahuguna.

In this context, I would like to recall what our father of the nation [Mahatma Gandhi](#), had said, to constantly remind ourselves that destroying forests is destroying ourselves. He had said:

“What we are doing to the forests of the world is but a mirror reflection of what we are doing to ourselves and to one another.”

Therefore, it is now recognized worldwide that the fundamental principle of forest management should be based on conservation and sustainable utilization of natural resources, without affecting its productive and ecological functions.

That's where, you, the youngest generation of forest officers passing out today, have a unique opportunity and responsibility of meeting the forest needs of the people on the one hand and improve the forest cover on the other.

Environment protection and Economic development must go together.

Tree plantation and environment protection should become mass movement.

Sisters and Brothers,

I have been told that scientific forest management in India is more than a century old.

We have come a long way in changing the management strategies from keeping people away from the forests for protection purposes to managing the forest with cooperation of people in the form of Joint Forest Management.

Therefore, as a Forester, your management approach should be as a development facilitator and a growth enabler without compromising the national interest and the welfare of the people especially the tribal groups who depend on forests for their livelihood.

Overgrazing, shifting cultivation and fires have resulted in elimination of many species. We need to work with local communities to rehabilitate the degenerated forests and encourage farmers to adopt ecologically sustainable practices. This is not an easy job and best brains and hearts are needed to make this fine balance.

I am confident that your two years of professional training, knowledge, and skills you imbibed in your field exposures would come handy to meet the challenging task.

On this occasion, I remember the recent supreme sacrifice made by valiant IFS officer late Manikandan of Karnataka Forest Department in the line of duty on the 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2018, which is a World Wildlife day. There are many other IFS officers and forest department staff who have laid down their lives while attending to their perilous duty to safe guard the forest resources. They are undoubtedly etched in the nation's memory forever.

Man-animal conflict is increasing in our country and it is a cause of concern for poor people living in the vicinity of forests. You should try to devise innovative solutions to overcome this conflict to reduce life and property of people as well as animals.

Sisters and Brothers,

I know that forest service is a very challenging service and you have to work in difficult terrains and face life-threatening situations in the forests every day from wild animals and vicious forces and unscrupulous smugglers who try to plunder the forest products.

You are an army of green soldiers committed to maintain our rich natural heritage to secure our collective future. I am genuinely impressed by your grit and passion to

choose this difficult and coveted profession, despite knowing the hardships associated with it.

You have a difficult task ahead of you, a very challenging, delicate balancing act.

You have to foster development, not impede it.

At the same time, you have to ensure that the natural resources and bio-diversity are protected.

You will have tough decisions to make as you will have to think of people and the planet as a unified eco-system.

You will undoubtedly have a number of opportunities to access the state of art knowledge in managing forestry in a scientific sustainable manner.

You will also be able to hone your skills in adroitly reconciling the economic needs of people with the preservation and improvement of environment.

In India, we say – “Dharmo Rakshati Rakshitaha” (If you protect Dharma, then Dharma will protect you).

Similarly with the forest and tree cover, there is an adage which says “Vruksho Rakshati Rakshitaha” (If you protect trees, they will protect you).

Keeping in view this symbiotic relationship between nature and mankind, the government has drawn up plans to introduce agro-forestry and support farmers to enhance their incomes through forestry. You are passing out today from Indira Gandhi National Forest Academy, after acquiring technical managerial and administrative skills to manage the forest sector.

The knowledge and skills, which you have mastered during your training should be a strong foundation as you begin a fulfilling professional career.

You have to constantly learn and grow professionally acquiring and updating your knowledge as learning is a never-ending process.

Along with knowledge and professional excellence, please keep the moral compass always handy.

Strong ethical bias lends greater credibility and respectability to the work you do.

My best wishes are with you.

I am sure you will shape your careers in the best possible manner, serving Mother Nature and her children in a way that people thrive and the planet keeps reviving.

I once again compliment all the offices trainees of 2016 batch and the trainees from

Bhutan, and especially those who have won awards for their merit and achievement. It is, indeed, recognition of your hard work.

I also congratulate Dr. Shashi Kumar and the faculty for training yet another set of fine officers to serve the nation. I wish you all the success in your career and in your endeavor in preserving and developing forest wealth of this great country.

Jai Hind!"

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