

ISSN: 2584-2633

# VANA PREMI



*Nav Se Navvey Saal Tak Ke Bachhon Ka Saathi*

Life Time Subscription - Rs.7500/-

Published Since 1994

Single Copy Rs. 75/-

**Vol.27**

**APRIL - 2026**

**No.04**



**EARTH DAY**  
April 22

**Indian Wild Dog or  
Dhole (Cuon alpinus)  
Pench Tiger Reserve May 2025**

Photo credit: Sri Indaram Nageshwar Rao,  
OWLS

**JOURNAL OF THE ASSOCIATION OF RETIRED FOREST OFFICERS, TELANGANA & ANDHRA PRADESH**  
[www.vanapremi.com](http://www.vanapremi.com)



# TELANGANA FOREST DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION Ltd



- ❖ A wholly-owned, financially robust State Government enterprise, engaged in the large-scale establishment of plantations to meet the demands of the wood-based industries.
- ❖ A watershed approach has been adopted for the development of plantations, ensuring ecological sustainability, social acceptance, and commercial viability, with the long-term objective of enhancing the site quality of plantation areas.
- ❖ A major cultivator of Eucalyptus clonal plantations and Bamboo, covering a substantial area of 32,951.39 hectares. The operations are certified by the Forest Stewardship Council Forest Management / Chain of Custody (FSC FM/COC).



- ❖ The TGFDC has undertaken the ambitious task of developing Eco-Tourism activities within the State. Existing attractions open to the public include the Botanical Garden, Vruksha Parichaya Kshetram, Virtual Wildlife Safari and Pala Pitta Cycling Park in Kondapur, the Mahavir Nischalvan Eco-Tourism Centre in Vanasthalipuram, Aranya at the Shameerpet Deer Park, and Mrugavani at the Chilkur National Park. These initiatives are proving to be highly appealing, resulting in a growing influx of visitors.
- ❖ The TGFDC has also developed urban parks at Lalgadi Malakpet (Vanadrushyam), Thumkunta (Veduru Vanam), Gowdelli (Chandanavanam), and within the Chilkur Reserve Forest (Forestrek Park).
- ❖ The TGFDC has introduced new commercial species within the Regional Ring Road region, including Seethaphal, Sandalwood, Red Sandalwood, Rosewood, Teak, and *Casuarina Junghuhniana*, among others.
- ❖ Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Initiatives 2021–2025: Empowering lives through the distribution of three-wheeler scooters to the differently-abled, support to schools with sports kits and furniture, and establishment of modern pre-fab health sub-centers — driving inclusive growth with care, commitment, and compassion.
- ❖ Eco-Tourism projects have been launched at various locations under the brand name of “Deccan Woods & Trails”.

**Smt. Sunita M. Bhagwat, IFS**

Addl. Principal Chief Conservator of Forests  
Vice Chairman & Managing Director (FAC)  
Telangana Forest Development Corporation Ltd.,  
(A Government of Telangana Undertaking)

*An English monthly on forestry, wildlife, environmental issues, and topics of general interest that blends in-depth knowledge with engaging content for all age groups.*

**Editor : Dr. Kota Tirupataiah**

THE ASSOCIATION OF RETIRED FOREST OFFICERS  
Telangana & Andhra Pradesh (Regd. No.557/1990)

**President : Sri P.K. Jha, IFS(R)**

Mobile: 98499 04774

**Vice President: Sri G. Krishna Murthy**

Mobile: 88977 28528

**Secretary : Sri B.M. Swami Das**

Mobile: 90008 17781

**Jt. Secretary : Sri A. Shankaran**

Mobile: 94940 19595

**Treasurer : Sri M.J. Akbar, IFS(R)**

Mobile: 94408 10006

### Executive Committee Members

1. **Dr. Kota Tirupataiah**, IFS(R), 88855 32021
2. **Sri J.S.N. Murthy**, IFS (R), 9494993939
2. **Sri M.A. Waheed**, IFS(R), 80080 79190
3. **Sri D. Nagabhusanam**, IFS(R), 80965 11200
4. **Sri A.V. Govindarajulu**, 75697 54843
5. **Sri V.V. Hari Prasad**, 78936 73767
6. **Sri G. Raman Goud**, 93914 99119
7. **Sri A. Kishan**, 99633 21321

### Permanent Invitees

1. **Sri K. Buchiram Reddy**, IFS(R), 96660 97788
2. **Sri J.V. Sharma**, IFS(R), 94413 19151
3. **Sri Qamar Mohammed Khan**, 98492 33624

### Editorial Board

1. **President: Ex-Officio President of Assn.,**
2. **Editor / : Dr. Kota Tirupataiah**, IFS(R)  
**Convenor** Tel: 88855 32021  
e-mail: tirupataiah.tsfa@gmail.com
3. **Associate Editor: D.Nagabhusanam**, IFS(R)  
Mobile: 80965 11200

### MEMBERS

4. **Sri V.V. Hari Prasad**, 78936 73767
5. **Sri K. Pradeep**, 98481 78693
6. **Dr N.V. Jayanth Babu**, 94402 66618
7. **Sri. B.M. Swami Dass**, Ex-officio Secy. of Assn.

The opinions expressed in Vana Premi are those of the author. They do not purport to reflect the opinions or the views of the Association of the Retired Forest Officers of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh.

Please consult the Associate Editor.

## CONTENTS

1. Editorial .....4  
**Dr. Kota Tirupataiah**
2. Procedural Capture and Conservation Failure in India..... 5  
**Dr.H.S.Gupta, IFS (Retd)**
3. Amended Forest Conservation law opens floodgate for growing monoculture.....9  
**Sri.B.K.Singh, IFS (Retd)**
4. Role demarcation A Sustainable Model for India's Forest Landscape..... 11  
**Sri.P.Mallikharjuna Rao, IFS (Retd)**
5. Forests and the Economy ..... 13  
**Dr. D. Nalini Mohan, IFS (Retd)**
6. On the Edge of Law and Survival Forest Staff .....16  
**Sri. R. Hemanth Kumar, IFS (Retd)**
7. Enforcement of Forest and Wildlife Laws and Confrontation with other Depts.....25  
**Dr.A.Kishan, IFS (Retd)**
8. National Awards to Foresters and Others ..... 34  
**Sri.K.Buchiram Reddy, IFS (Retd)**
9. Ranthambore National Park Where Stone remembers and Forests Breath.....38  
**Dr. Padam Parkash Bhojvaid, IFS (Retd)**
10. To minimise the human-wildlife conflicts a 'go-by' to certain long held beliefs.....41  
**Dr. R.R. Desai, IFS (Retd)**
11. Siltation in Tungabhadra Reservoir.....43  
**Sri. B.MT. Rajeev, IFS (Retd)**
12. Treepies of India.....47  
**Sri K.Praveen Rao, IFS (Retd)**
13. Birthday Greetings.....48
14. Executing a will is an imperative need?..... 49  
**Sri.V.V.Hariprasad, Dy.CF (Retd)**
15. Black and Brown Bears.... Behavioural Change....53  
**Sri C. Ramakrishna Reddy, DFO Retd.**
16. The Last Watch : Honouring India's Forgotten Forest Guardians.....54  
**Sri.R.K.Sapra, IFS (Retd)**
17. Green Quiz.....57  
**Dr.K.Tirupataiah, IFS (Retd)**
18. Legal Notes ..... 58  
**Sri.K.Buchiram Reddy, IFS (Retd)**

**Total Pages 60**



## *From the Editor's Desk...*

Dear Vanapremi readers,

Unfortunately the world is seeing increasing number of dispersed wars-in Europe, Caribbean, West Asia. While these wars are resulting in loss of human life in large numbers, they are also contributing to large quantities of pollution and causing serious environmental damage. Besides, the oil crisis is undoing the 'energy transformation' from fossil fuels to renewal energy forms.

April month has many important days: Good Friday (Apr 3), Easter (Apr 5), The World Health Day (Apr 7), JallianwalaBagh Massacre Memorial Day (Apr 13), Puthandu, Vishu, Baisakhi, MeshaSankranthi ( Apr 14), BohagBihu/PoilaBaisakhi (Apr 15), World Heritage Day (Apr 18), National Civil Services Day (Apr 21), World Earth Day (Apr 22), World Book Day (Apr 23), National Panchayat Raj Day (Apr 24).

This month's Vanapremi carries articles that touch upon some of the subjects of current interest. Primary among them is the recent initiative of the MoEF&CC on permitting private investment in forest lands. The 'Amended forest conservation law leading to monoculture, role demarcation and sustainable model for India's forest landscape are two articles that deal with the issue. Though India has a large volume of environmental law, its conservation results don't match it. 'Procedural capture and conservation failure' deals with this issue on a scientific basis. In this context, the role of forests in Indian economy is reiterated once again.

Many foresters are attaining martyrdom in the line of their duty. Even in other contexts, enforcing forest & wildlife laws is becoming increasingly difficult. Articles on 'On the edge of law and survival of forest staff', 'Enforcement of forest & wildlife acts and confrontation with other departments' explain in detail the path that foresters could follow in enforcing the laws. Awarding extraordinary performance acts as a boost for re-dedication and further excellence. An article on 'National awards to foresters and others', lists out all those who received various awards and those who missed them. A trust is reborn to help families of foresters who lost their lives in line of duty. Vanapremi urges it's readers to become members and contribute.

Ranthambore National Park is an icon as well as a model in many ways. 'Ranthambore where stones remember and forests breath' elucidates the point. Human-Wildlife conflicts need some out of the box suggestions and the article on 'reducing these conflicts and giving a go-by to certain long held beliefs' does exactly the same. Changes in the behaviour of Black and Brown Bears is an emerging wildlife issue.

Continuing our coverage on various types of birds, this month's issue covers the 'Treepies of India'. India's first PM said, 'Irrigation projects are the new temples'. However, many of the larger dams are silting up faster and faster for lack of a comprehensive catchment conservation and management. The Tungabhadra Dam case is presented in great detail to substantiate the issue with suggestions for mitigation. We have seen many cases where the departure of the head/bread-earner of the family left the dependents fighting for their rights and battling long drawn court cases. Writing a 'Will' would be the best gift that a person could leave for his/her family members. Article about ABC of writing a will and its execution is presented in detail that would be of great help to each and every one. Legal Notes and Green Quiz continue on their journey of educating and enhancing the knowledge.

Happy Reading....

Dr.K. Tirupataiah, IFS (Retd)

Editor

## Procedural Capture and Conservation Failure in India, How Legality Becomes a Technology of Subversion

Dr. H.S. Gupta

### Abstract

Despite one of the world's densest statutory architectures for forest and wildlife protection, India continues to experience large-scale forest diversion, fragmentation of ecological connectivity, and weak recognition of collective forest rights. Dominant explanations attribute this gap to corruption, capacity constraints, or enforcement deficits. This paper advances a different diagnosis. Using only public-domain evidence, we show that conservation failure is produced by procedural capture: a stable form of endogenous institutional subversion in which statutory processes are satisfied in form while ecological and distributive objectives are systematically displaced in substance. Across four governance domains—forest clearance safeguards, bureaucratic tenure, Forest Rights Act implementation, and enforcement—we demonstrate recurring patterns: safeguards are converted into documentable steps rather than outcome thresholds; tenure volatility induces anticipatory, risk-minimising compliance; collective rights are filtered through delay and rejection; and violations are translated into financial and procedural disputes rather than cessation and restoration. We argue that legality itself becomes an instrument of subversion. We conclude with an outcome-anchored reform agenda to realign conservation governance with its substantive objectives.

### 1. Introduction

India's forest governance regime is characterised by exceptional legal and institutional density. The Wildlife (Protection) Act (1972), Forest (Conservation) Act (1980), Environment

(Protection) Act (1986), and Forest Rights Act (2006) together constitute an expansive statutory framework for regulating forest diversion, protecting habitats, and recognising forest-based entitlements. These statutes are administered through a specialised bureaucracy, multiple layers of administrative scrutiny, and an increasingly active regime of judicial and quasi-judicial oversight. In formal terms, few developing countries appear better equipped to protect forests.

Yet conservation outcomes remain deeply inconsistent with this formal capacity. Large-scale forest diversion continues, wildlife corridors are fragmented by linear infrastructure, and collective forest rights remain weakly recognised in precisely those regions where forest-dependent communities are most numerous. The coexistence of dense law and persistent ecological loss presents a central puzzle: why do conservation institutions fail in the presence of strong law, elaborate procedure, and active oversight?

Conventional explanations cluster around three themes. The first attributes failure to corruption and collusion—rent-seeking, political interference, and elite capture. The second emphasises capacity deficits—understaffing, weak monitoring, and technical limitations. The third highlights enforcement failures—low penalties, poor prosecution, and limited deterrence. Each explanation captures an important aspect of India's governance reality. None, however, adequately explains a striking empirical regularity: conservation failure persists despite expanding procedures, growing documentation, judicial activism, and continuous institutional reform.

This paper advances a different explanation. We argue that conservation failure in India is produced not primarily by the absence of law, but by the mode of legality through which law is operationalised. Specifically, we identify procedural capture as a stable form of endogenous institutional subversion in which statutory compliance is meticulously achieved while substantive ecological and distributive outcomes are systematically displaced.

Procedural capture operates through three linked mechanisms:

- (1) the proceduralisation of safeguards, whereby compliance is defined through documentation rather than ecological or distributive thresholds;
- (2) career-risk governance, whereby tenure volatility induces anticipatory, risk-minimising administrative behaviour; and
- (3) outcome displacement in enforcement, whereby violations are translated into financial and procedural regularisation rather than cessation, restoration, or reversal.

The paper develops this theoretical framework, tests it using four independent public-domain evidence streams, and concludes with an outcome-anchored reform agenda that targets institutional design rather than individual behaviour.

## **2. Literature Review: Why Strong Law Fails to Deliver Conservation Outcomes**

### **2.1 Regulatory Capture and Institutional Failure**

The dominant analytical lens for understanding regulatory failure remains regulatory capture, originating in political economy models that locate failure in external influence over regulators (Stigler, 1971; Peltzman, 1976). In these accounts, regulated interests distort institutional behaviour through bribery, lobbying, revolving doors, or political pressure, inducing agencies to deviate from statutory objectives.

Later work broadened this view. Principal-agent models emphasised bureaucratic drift arising from preference divergence between legislators and implementing agencies (Moe, 1984; McCubbins et al., 1987). Street-level bureaucracy scholarship highlighted how discretion, overload, and coping strategies shape implementation outcomes even without corruption (Lipsky, 1980; Pressman & Wildavsky, 1973).

Across these traditions, however, a shared presumption persists: institutional failure arises through deviation from rules. Capture is understood as rule-breaking or rule-bending.

This presumption becomes analytically insufficient in regulatory systems characterised by high procedural density, mandatory documentation, and active judicial oversight. In such contexts, failure may persist because rules are followed rather than violated.

### **2.2 Indian Forest Governance: Documented Failure without a Design Explanation**

A large empirical literature documents failures in Indian forest governance. Early political economy analyses emphasised elite capture and uneven development outcomes (Bardhan, 1984; Kohli, 2012). Historical and anthropological work traced the colonial origins of bureaucratic forest control and exclusionary conservation (Gadgil & Guha, 1992; Sundar, 2009).

Subsequent research examined decentralisation and participatory reforms, including Joint Forest Management, documenting limited devolution of substantive authority despite expanded participation (Agrawal & Ribot, 1999; Ribot et al., 2006). With the enactment of the Forest Rights Act, a new literature focused on rights recognition and implementation failure, consistently reporting low recognition of community forest rights, high rejection and pendency rates, and systematic

individualisation of tenure (Kumar & Kerr, 2012; Springate-Baginski et al., 2013; Lele&Menon, 2014).

Parallel work on environmental regulation highlighted political salience of infrastructure and mining projects, procedural overload in clearances, and increasing reliance on judicial intervention through PILs and the National Green Tribunal (Rajamani, 2007; Gill, 2017).

While this literature richly documents failure, it leaves unresolved a central question: why does failure persist even as law thickens, procedures expand, and oversight intensifies? The missing explanation lies not in implementation deficits alone, but in institutional design.

### 2.3 Law, Procedure, and Formalism

Legal theory and law-and-development scholarship provide partial insight. Fuller (1964) and Teubner (1983) noted the tension between formal legality and substantive justice. Pritchett et al. (2013) showed how states can “look like states” through procedure while failing to deliver outcomes. Judicialization, while enhancing procedural accountability, may stabilise process without altering underlying power relations (Shapiro, 1981; Sabel& Simon, 2004).

Yet formalism is rarely conceptualised as a stable equilibrium of institutional subversion. Procedure is treated as rigidity or overload, not as a mechanism that can systematically displace outcomes while preserving legality.

This paper addresses that gap.

### 3. Theory: Procedural Capture as Endogenous Institutional Subversion

Procedural capture refers to a condition in which statutory rules are followed, administrative processes are completed, and judicial oversight is exercised, yet institutions systematically produce

outcomes that contradict legislative intent.

Capture, in this account, is

Endogenous: produced by institutional design rather than external pressure;

Rule-mediated: operating through legality rather than illegality;

Systemic: reproduced through ordinary administrative action, independent of individual integrity.

#### 3.1 Proceduralization of Safeguards

Under the Forest (Conservation) Act, safeguards are increasingly framed as procedural obligations: preparation of management plans, constitution of committees, deposit of compensatory funds, and submission of compliance reports. Ecological and distributive thresholds—such as corridor integrity or prior settlement of rights—are weakly specified or postponed.

This design detaches legality from ecological state. Compliance becomes demonstrable through documentation rather than through verifiable conservation outcomes.

#### 3.2 Career Risk and Anticipatory Compliance

Where postings are short and transfers frequent, career risk becomes a dominant incentive. Rational officers face an asymmetric payoff structure: adversarial enforcement increases transfer risk, while procedural compliance offers legal and career safety. The result is anticipatory compliance—alignment with politically salient projects through file-based regularity rather than field confrontation.

#### 3.3 Financialization and Outcome Displacement

In procedurally captured regimes, enforcement rarely triggers cessation or restoration. Instead, violations are translated into penalty computation, committee review, and judicialised compliance.

Deterrence becomes financial, and harm is regularised rather than reversed.

Together, these mechanisms produce a stable equilibrium: legality is preserved, conflict is absorbed procedurally, careers are protected, and outcomes are displaced.

#### 4. Data and Methods

The study adopts a theory-driven, multi-domain design using exclusively public-domain evidence, enabling full replicability. Four independent domains correspond to the theoretical mechanisms: clearance safeguards, bureaucratic tenure, Forest Rights Act outcomes, and enforcement practice.

Rather than econometric estimation, the analysis employs mechanism-based causal inference, relying on cross-domain consistency and process tracing. Each domain independently tests a component of procedural capture; convergence across domains strengthens causal plausibility.

#### 5. Results: Evidence of Procedural Capture

##### 5.1 Safeguards without Outcomes

Analysis of clearance conditions shows overwhelming emphasis on documentation and post-hoc compliance. Ecological thresholds and rights settlement function as procedural checkboxes rather than binding constraints.

##### 5.2 Tenure Volatility as Governance Signal

Transfer data reveal frequent reshuffles and short postings in key forest positions. Such volatility functions as a credible threat mechanism, embedding political influence into administrative behaviour without explicit instruction.

##### 5.3 FRA: Throughput without Justice

Official statistics show high claim disposal rates

coexisting with low community rights recognition and high rejection-plus-pendency burdens. This pattern indicates procedural filtering rather than administrative incapacity.

#### 5.4 Enforcement without Restoration

Judicial and tribunal orders show active enforcement, yet remedies centre on computation and compliance rather than cessation and restoration. Harm is regularised through legality.

#### 6. Discussion: Why the System Works and Still Fails

The evidence demonstrates that conservation failure is not accidental. Institutions function, procedures are followed, and oversight is exercised—yet outcomes are displaced. Procedural capture explains why reforms recur without improvement, why judicialisation stabilises failure, and why anti-corruption narratives miss the core problem.

Legality, in this context, operates as a technology of subversion.

#### 7. Epilogue: From Procedural Legality to Outcome-Anchored Conservation

Conservation failure in India arises not from weak law, but from strong law organised around procedure rather than outcomes. Reversing procedural capture requires institutional redesign: outcome-based safeguards, tenure protection, rights-first sequencing, restoration-centred enforcement, independent ecological audits, outcome-oriented metrics, and outcome-focused judicial review. Without such reforms, legality will continue to legitimise ecological loss rather than prevent it.

---

*Author is a former PCCF of Jharkhand cadre and a former Professor at the Indian Institute of Forest Management (IIFM), Bhopal. M-90310 00118*



## AMENDED FOREST CONSERVATION LAW OPENS FLOODGATE FOR GROWING MONOCULTURE

B.K.Singh

Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 was amended in 2023 to name it as Van (SanrakshanEvamSamvardhan) Adhinyam and one of the provisions of the amended law is to promote plantation works on forest lands by government and nongovernmental agencies, within the framework of Working Plans of the State Forest Department. The intention of this provision is quite good, as it attracts investment on degraded forest land with a task to re-green it. In other words, afforestation and plantation activities could be carried out on forest land by any private agency after providing for growing compensatory afforestation and recovering the net present value of the forests. On January 2, 2026 MoEF&CC has issued a circular redefining how these activities on forest lands are exempted from long standing environmental safeguards like compensatory afforestation and recovery of net present value of the forests.

Recovering the cost of compensatory afforestation and net present value of the forests required for diversion, have been considered as barriers that prohibited big industries to invest on degraded forests. The circular makes way for pulp & paper and rayon industries to grab the opportunity and use degraded forest land for growing short rotation tree species for the raw material the industries need. The country is importing newsprint, and this move is said to take us towards 'Atmnirbharata'. Let me examine in this piece as to what are the economic and environmental costs associated with it.

In addition to opening forest lands for private players, the amended law has some more

loopholes. The newly inserted section 1A(1) in 2023 amendment can make way for the exploitation of the unclassified forests. Around 90% of the forests of north eastern states are unclassified and successive reports of 'Forest Survey of India' reported that these forests are shrinking. It is evident from the bi-annual reports published by the said agency that the country lost 11,743 square km of unclassified forests between 1997 and 2019.

A group of retired Indian Forest Service officers have challenged the amendment in Supreme Court. Petitioners agitated that the Apex Court's 1996 rulings in Godvarman case with regard to definition of 'forests' has been diluted in the amendment and an extent of 1.97 lakh square km forest land in the country stands excluded from the applicability of the original 1980 Act.

In February last year, the Court passed an interim order saying when there are exigencies to divert forest lands for any urgent need including strategic requirements on country's border, alternative land must be provided for compensatory afforestation. The forests closer to the habitation are subjected to heavy anthropogenic pressures and consequent degradation. Livestock grazing, removal of bamboo, non-timber forest produce and small timber for bona-fide requirements as well as grabbing of forest land for cultivation etc. are the reasons for degradation. Communities residing in the neighborhood and the persons accompanying livestock set fire for easy access to non-timber forest products and regeneration of palatable grasses and foliage. There have been very few success stories, when degraded forests are rehabilitated with native species. We have

succeeded only when we planted monoculture of exotics. There are hardly any evaluation and monitoring reports indicating the success of compensatory afforestation on degraded forest lands and also on non-forest lands.

A central scheme named 'Rehabilitation of degraded forests' was in vogue during 1990s and 2000s. The main work under the scheme was planting native tree species in the gaps created due to degradation. The newly planted saplings faced root competition from the hidden root stock in the soil. Usually the young plantations are provided with rigid protection and watch and ward. Often the area used to become green due to regeneration of old root stocks and the artificially grown sapling used to fail.

However, the forest Corporations in many states used to bulldoze and rip the area and plant up short rotation tree species like Populus, Casurina, Eucalyptus and Acacia-auriculiformis. The purpose was to supply the raw materials to industries. Such projects were also economically viable, but it was at huge environmental cost. We ended up converting a biodiverse forest to the monoculture of exotic species. Natural forests have higher carbon sequestration potential than the plantation forests. Moreover, the plantations are harvested at the end of rotation. In the warming world we are facing climate related disruptions and let the natural forests be regenerated with native species and not diverted for plantations of monocultures.

While this author was working in Western Ghats as Deputy Conservator of Forests, Shivamogga, a joint venture of Birla's HariharPloyfibres and Government of Karnataka named Karnataka Pulp-wood Ltd. was incorporated in 1985. Its functionaries bulldozed and ripped a Reserved Forest area in Thirthahallitaluk, deep inside Western Ghats, for growing above exotics. In the process, they had damaged valuable natural tree species including sandalwood. An IFS officer Kisan Singh Sugara in charge of the area had booked a case, arrested the persons and seized the bulldozer. Though the Court initially took cognizance of the case, but the government's notification of joint venture bailed them out. Activists moved Supreme Court arguing that the plantations raised by joint venture on forest lands without the approval of Central government, were in contravention of Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980. Karnataka government failed to justify its incorporation and had to dissolve it, duly handing over the assets to State Forest Corporation.

After about four decades of Karnataka allowing investments from private players on forest land and then rolling it back within two-three years, we have come a full circle and MoEF&CC has again moved on the same track. Forests, even after degradation, has potential to regenerate, if only we protect it from the entry of human and livestock. Growing raw materials for wood based industries is also a necessity. Let that be done on degraded lands other than notified forests.

*The author is a former Head of Forest Force, Karnataka, M-94498 63501*

**Getting through: Two words, 'information' and 'communication' are often used interchangeably, but they signify quite different things. Information is 'giving out'; Communication is 'getting through'- Sydney J. Harris**



## Role demarcation: A Sustainable Model for India's Forest Landscape

P. Mallikharjuna Rao

A previous month's article advocating for production forestry prompted me to share this piece of writing. The essence of the current debate is the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change's (MoEF & CC) move to classify plantations in degraded forests as a forestry activity. One must appreciate the learned author for seeing a great positivity to the initiative of industry collaboration which was once abandoned on the grounds of overexploitation, environmental damage and social injustice. Despite criticism from various fronts, this policy initiative reflects a pragmatic strategy by the Government of India to mobilize the finances needed to scale up assisted natural regeneration and the restoration of degraded landscapes in tune with our Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) commitment. Fears that monoculture plantations might invade natural landscapes thereby compromising biodiversity, multilayered vegetation structures, soil quality, and overall ecosystem resilience can be dispelled through a proper implementation methodology.

### **Right afforestation methodology:**

The author has correctly identified that the ecological safeguards remain integral to the initiative. This is especially true when afforestation and plantation activities focus on the holistic improvement of forest ecosystems by mimicking the natural processes. Operations should prioritise enhancing vegetation quality, increasing canopy density, enriching native biodiversity, restoring multi-layered natural stands and reversing land degradation. Key actions include favouring Assisted Natural Regeneration (ANR) of indigenous species, strengthening rootstock, implementing facilitation works to aid germination and restoring ground cover with native plants. Furthermore, management must

emphasise on eradicating invasive species and implementing extensive soil and moisture conservation works and other habitat improvement works. A conscious decision is necessary to avoid planting exotic trees given their, deleterious effect on natural forest health.

As rightly pointed out, production forestry also needs to be encouraged alongside ecological forestry in accordance with the working plan prescriptions. It is vital to recognise the unique situation in India, where forests have the highest rate of human dependency in the world. With 300 million people dependent on forests (TERI, 2022), and Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs) contributing 20% to 40% of household income for 19 crore people (Envi Stats India, 2022), the management strategy must be people-first. Forests also support 193 million cattle (NDDDB, 2023) and provide bamboo and small wood for local crafts and other utilities. Plantation efforts therefore need to focus on meeting the requirements of the forest-dependent and local communities. These plantations should be leveraged to boost the production of non-timber forest products, fodder, smallwood and craft wood required for contributing to the enhancement of local livelihoods. Forest management succeeds when it balances ecological integrity with socio-economic benefits whereas a purely commercial approach cannot ensure long-term forest health.

### **Strengthening agroforestry:**

A pressing concern was expressed regarding India's heavy reliance on timber imports and the urgent need to boost domestic production. Currently, Trees Outside Forests (TOF) span approximately 29.38 million hectares (FSI, 2021), accounting for nearly 8.94% of the country's total

geographical area. These resources are vital to the economy, contributing over 93% of India's domestic timber and meeting approximately the total industrial wood demand. This phenomenal growth in TOF and agroforestry could happen only with the launch of the National Forest Policy of 1988 which resulted in the discontinuation of concessional wood supplies to industries thereby compelling the industries to build linkages with farm forestry. Any practice to undo this by allowing the expansion of large-scale industrial plantations in forest lands could create a market imbalance. Such a shift would discourage the integration of small farmers into the value chain, leading to a setback for agroforestry and jeopardising the income of millions of farmers. It is discernible from the article that industries view this policy as an opportunity to bypass the higher costs of farm-grown wood (\$ 200 per bone dry metric tonne as compared to \$ 100 per bone dry metric tonne of supplies from South East) and chooses alternative sources from the plantations raised

in natural forests. Hence a cautious approach is needed to protect the interests of the farmers while addressing the requirements of the industry.

#### **Way forward:**

Ultimately, the path to achieving climate resilience and rural prosperity requires a clear demarcation of roles within India's forest landscape. Natural forests must be conserved and managed sustainably for biodiversity and community livelihoods. Forest ecosystems should not be viewed as low-cost repositories for industry, but as vital life-supporting systems that require proper care, protection, and eco-restoration. It is necessary to promote agroforestry and scale up Trees Outside Forests (TOF) to meet industrial demand and other requirements. By protecting the market interests of smallholder farmers on one hand and resisting the encroachment of industrial plantations into natural landscapes on the other, India can achieve a sustainable model that fulfills its climate commitments while safeguarding both its ecological heritage and its rural economy.

*Author is a former Principal Chief Conservator of Forest & Head of Forest Force, Andhra Pradesh, Mob no 9989171958. (The views expressed are personal)*

**Celebrate Diversity: Unity is achievable only by learning to unite in spite of differences, rather than insisting on unity without differences. For their total eradication is an impossibility. The secret of attaining peace in life is tolerance of disturbance of the peace  
- Maulana Wahiduddin Khan.**

**Not a Priority: If we give the same amount of to what we want to get out of life that we give to the question of what to do with a two weeks' vacation, we will be startled at our aimlessness - Dorothy Fischer**



## Role of Forests in Economy-Indian Scenario with Focus on Andhra Pradesh and Telangana States

Dr. D. Nalini Mohan

Forests are not merely ecological landscapes; they are economic engines and cultural lifelines. Globally, forests cover **4.14 billion hectares, about 32% of Earth's land area**. Despite contributing only **~2% to world GDP**, they sustain the livelihoods of **1.6 billion people** and provide ecosystem services valued in the trillions. These services—food, water, air purification, medicines, climate regulation, and cultural enrichment—are classified into provisioning, regulating, cultural, and supporting categories. Together, they form the invisible scaffolding of economic stability.

### Forests as Economic and Ecological Pillars

✓ **Biodiversity:** Forests harbour **over 80% of terrestrial species**.

✓ **Declining Cover:** Global forest cover fell from **50 million sq. km (39% of land) in 1925** to **41 million sq. km (32%) in 2025**. It is estimated to be 4.14 billion ha (32% of land).

✓ **India's Position:** India ranks **9th globally in forest area**, with **7.15 lakh sq. km (21.76% of its land)** under forest cover, and **3rd in net annual forest area gain**.

✓ **Carbon Sink:** India's forests remove **150 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> annually (2021–2025)**, ranking **5th globally**.

Forests are thus not just raw material sources; they are vital for climate balance, greenhouse gas regulation, and sustainable development.

### Climate Change and Forest Ecosystem Services

Industrial growth and fossil fuel dependence destabilize forest productivity. Forests act as reservoirs, filtering rainwater into aquifers and sustaining rivers. Their degradation leads to water scarcity, threatening agriculture and food security. **The annual net forest loss globally has declined from 10.7 million ha (1990–2000) to 4.12 million ha (2015–2025)**, yet climate change continues to erode resilience.

### Carbon Credits: Forests in Global Finance

Forests absorb carbon, but rising temperatures trigger fires that release stored carbon. **The global carbon credit market was valued at USD 132.9 billion in 2025**, projected to reach **USD 576.4 billion by 2035**. India's forests, as carbon sinks, position the country strategically in this market. The Paris Agreement (2015) institutionalized carbon credits, enabling poorer nations to monetize forest conservation. Carbon removal is estimated at **~7.6 billion tonnes CO<sub>2</sub> globally**.

### Pollination: The Silent Economic Service

Pollinators—bees, birds, bats, and insects—contribute **USD 235–577 billion annually to global food production**. Forest destruction reduces pollinator populations, lowering crop yields and causing economic losses. As E.O. Wilson observed: "As long as insect species exist, humanity will survive."

### Indian Scenario:

India's biodiversity richness is unparalleled. Initiatives like the **Green India Mission** at national level and **Haritha Andhra Pradesh (Andhra**

Pradesh) and **Haritha Haram (Telangana)** at state level have expanded forest cover and created rural employment. The **MoSPI Environmental Accounting Report (2025)** highlights that India's forest cover grew by **17,444 sq. km between 2010–2022**, indicating the success of afforestation programmes, though experts dispute these figures on several counts.

### Coastal and Regional Economies

**Andhra Pradesh:** With a **1,054 km coastline**, mangroves in Kakinada and Krishna Delta shield villages from cyclones, preventing losses worth **thousands of crores annually**. Fisheries, horticultural orchards, tourism apart from agriculture are the sources of economic activity. Presence of huge naval establishments and industrial units apart from educational hub provide huge employment potential. Increased economic activity levels naturally lead to impact on forests and environment and sustainable economic growth and development can ensue only if forests and environment are managed sustainably.

### Seshachalam Forests:

Declared as a biosphere reserve, Seshachalam area is home to several rare and endemic plant and animal species including red sandersthe wood of which fetches **millions of rupees per tonne in international markets**. This species along with several lesser mammalian species like Pangolins are threatened by illegal trade. Lakhs of people living in and around forest areas depend on the forests for their livelihoods. If forests are not protected and regenerated, there will be both ecological and economic problems and people dependent on the forests lose their livelihoods leading to destruction of forests.

### Nallamala Forests:

Spread in both Andhra Pradesh and Telangana states, the Nallamala forests occupy a significant position ecologically and economically also. They are characterized by Biodiversity hotspots with tigers, ecotourism and Krishna River waters. Rising temperatures strain tribal economies. Tiger is the apex animal species and if it is protected, the forests are protected and thereby all the plants and animal species are protected. Therefore, Project Tiger is launched in this area named NagarajunaSagar and Srisailam Tiger reserve, which is the largest tiger reserve in the country, even after it is bifurcated into Amrabad Tiger reserve in Telangana (2014) which stands in 2nd place in extent of area.

Nallamala forests are rich in biodiversity and lakhs of people in the surrounding districts benefit directly and indirectly because of non-timber forest products and ecotourism as well. Primitive tribal communities like chenchus inhabit these areas and derive their livelihoods totally from the Nallamala forests. Ecologically and economically the Nallamala forests are very significant more so because they fall in the catchment areas for the River Krishna which irrigates lakhs of acres of agricultural lands and serves for drinking water requirements of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana states. If these forests are not well protected and maintained there will be great impact on the economy for certain. These forests are not peripheral—they are central to regional economic stability.

### Challenges and Pathways Forward

**Preventing Forest Fires:** Forest fires are occurring regularly all over India due to high temperatures in summers and availability of flammable material on the forest floors. Some negligent and irresponsible

people who depend on forests for their daily needs lit fire and cause huge damages to both plant and animal species and economic wealth. Therefore prevention of fires and extinguishing them as soon as possible are very important for the forest departments to focus upon. Use of AI and satellite monitoring, strengthening staff numbers, their training and providing the fire extinguishing equipment and intensive patrolling etc., are essential for protecting the forests.

**Curbing Illegal Logging:** Timber is a commodity used for house and boat construction, furniture and other purposes is in short supply in India and in spite of huge quantities of timber being imported, there is illicit felling and smuggling of valuable timbers like teak, Sal, Deodar and endemic species like red sanders. In order to curb the illegal felling government has to enhance accountability, provide vehicles/resources to police and forest personnel and adopt scientific monitoring practices using technological advances.

**Sustainable Use:** Forests can generate the ecosystem services like clean air, and water and foods and medicines only if they are in healthy condition and intact. They sequester carbon only if they are allowed to survive and grow. Encroachment for agriculture, mining and quarrying and other illegal purposes has to be curtailed with firm actions by the government. In fact only if forests are intact and healthy the agriculture can flourish.

**Public Participation:** IF people do not participate in forest protection and indulge only in forest exploitation, it is disastrous. The New Forest Policy, 1988 promoted joint forest management. But it flourished well for about two decades from

1990s and lost its glory between 2010-2020 due to various reasons including the enactment of Forest Rights Act, 2006. Government has to revamp the participatory approaches to forest governance and bring in reforms and safeguards to prevent misuse of the provisions in the forest policy by vested interests and enforce it for saving the forests for posterity. Empowerment of communities with responsibilities and penalties for irregularities and mechanisms to prevent misuse of powers either by the communities or the enforcement agencies must be put in place. These are essential for forest, wildlife and biodiversity conservation.

### Forests as Economic Shields

The Sanskrit maxim “Vrikshorakshatirakshitah”—“If we protect forests, they will protect us”—remains profoundly relevant. Forests must be treated as economic assets, with dedicated funds allocated for conservation. In the era of climate change, India, especially the Telugu states, can achieve sustainable growth only by safeguarding forest wealth. This responsibility cannot rest solely with governments; scientists, NGOs, women, men, and students must join hands.

### Conclusion: Towards a Green and Prosperous Society

We need to reaffirm that forests are integral to our economy. Protecting them is not charity—it is an investment. By embedding forests into our economic vision, India can build a society that is both **green and prosperous**, resilient against climate change, and enriched by biodiversity. Forests are not just ecological guardians; they are the **economic shields of humanity's future**.

---

*The author is a Former Principal Chief Conservator of Forest, Andhra Pradesh and can be reached at [dnmohanifs87@gmail.com](mailto:dnmohanifs87@gmail.com) and Mobile 9440810003*



## On the Edge of Law and Survival: Forest Staff, Use of Force, and Legal Safeguards in India

R. Hemanth Kumar

In my article titled *“Survival in the Wild: Field Wisdom and Life-Saving Practices of Indian Forest Officers Against Wild Animal Attacks,”* published in March 2026, edition of Vana Premi, which focused on the importance of protecting oneself from the brutal assaults of wild animals while serving in India’s forests. However, the tragic news of Forest Guard and former Army man Jitendra Singh compelled me to write again, this time on a far darker reality. Singh was critically injured after being run over by a tractor trolley belonging to the sand mafia in Dholpur. Despite fighting for his life, he succumbed to his injuries on 11th January 2026 at Apex Hospital in Jaipur.

His death is a stark reminder that the threats faced by forest staff are not limited to wild animals. In fact, the dangers posed by organised mafias, illegal sand miners, timber smugglers, and poachers are often more brutal, more calculated, and far harder to defend against. This article seeks to explore how forest officers can safeguard themselves not only from nature’s fury but also from the ruthless violence of those who exploit it for profit.

**This article addressed issues such as (I) When Conservation Meets Conflict: Legal Safeguards for Forest Staff Facing Violence, (II) Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), (III) The Judicial Interpretation of Section 197 CrPC in Law-Enforcement Contexts: Implications for Forest Officers, and (IV) A One-page “Field Card” format.**

### **I. When Conservation Meets Conflict: Legal Safeguards for Forest Staff Facing Violence**

Forest and wildlife law enforcement in India has

undergone a profound transformation over the past few decades. Once viewed largely as a regulatory and custodial function, forestry today involves direct confrontation with organized, violent and well-armed criminal networks engaged in poaching, illegal timber trade, sandalwood smuggling, forest land encroachment and illegal mining. Forest personnel, particularly those deployed in remote landscapes, frequently operate without immediate police backup and are exposed to life-threatening situations. In such circumstances, the use of force, including firearms, may become unavoidable.

The legal and ethical dilemma arises when such use of force results in serious injury or death of offenders, often described in public discourse as **“encounter deaths.”** This essay examines the legal framework governing such situations, the powers and responsibilities of forest staff, the judicial standards evolved by Indian courts, and the procedural safeguards available under Section 197 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973, as continued under the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023 (BNSS).

### **Forest Staff as Law-Enforcement Officers:**

Forest officers in India are not merely custodians of trees and wildlife; they are statutory law-enforcement officers vested with coercive powers under the Indian Forest Act, 1927, and the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. These statutes authorise forest officers to prevent offences, conduct searches and seizures, arrest offenders and use reasonable force in the discharge of their duties. Courts have consistently recognised that forest officers perform sovereign enforcement functions,

especially when combating forest and wildlife crime.

The nature of forest offences has evolved from petty infractions to organised crime involving firearms, explosives and transnational networks. Consequently, forest enforcement today closely resembles policing in hostile terrain, making legal clarity and institutional protection essential for effective governance.

### **Use of Force and the Right of Private Defence:**

Indian criminal law does not confer an unfettered licence to kill upon any public servant. Every act resulting in death is tested against substantive criminal law. The principal legal justification available to forest staff is the right of private defence under Sections 96 to 106 of the Indian Penal Code. These right permits causing harm, including death, when there is a reasonable apprehension of imminent danger to life or grievous injury.

The Supreme Court in *Darshan Singh v. State of Punjab* (2010) clarified that the right of private defence is preventive and arises not when injury is inflicted, but when there is a reasonable perception of imminent threat. The Court emphasised that the law does not expect exact proportionality in moments of grave danger. In forest contexts, where armed offenders may ambush patrols or open fire during seizures, the right of private defence becomes a crucial substantive shield.

### **Encounter Deaths: Legal Position:**

Indian law does not recognise “encounter killings” as a separate legal category. Every death caused by a public servant is examined under ordinary criminal law principles. However, courts have repeatedly held that not every encounter with death is illegal. The legality depends on whether the act falls within recognised legal exceptions,

particularly self-defense or lawful use of force in discharge of duty.

In *PUCL v. State of Maharashtra* (2014), the Supreme Court laid down detailed guidelines for investigating encounter deaths. The judgment is often misunderstood as condemning all encounters. The Court explicitly acknowledged that genuine self-defense is legally permissible, while insisting on independent investigation to prevent abuse. The purpose of such an investigation is to ascertain the truth, not to presume criminality.

Similarly, in *Om Prakash v. State of Jharkhand* (2012), the Court distinguished between fake encounters, which are criminal acts, and genuine encounters arising out of self-defense, which are lawful. These principles apply equally to forest staff engaged in anti-poaching and anti-smuggling operations.

### **Investigation, Accountability and Balance:**

Courts have emphasised that encounter deaths must be subjected to transparent and independent investigation, including FIR registration, magisterial inquiry and forensic examination. At the same time, judicial pronouncements caution against automatic arrest or mechanical prosecution of officers. Investigation is meant to be fact-finding, not punitive.

The legal framework thus seeks to balance two competing imperatives: the constitutional mandate under Article 21 guaranteeing the right to life, and the need to protect enforcement officers who act lawfully and in good faith under dangerous conditions. Section 197 and its BNSS successor reflect this balance by ensuring accountability without undermining enforcement morale.

### **Conclusion:**

Forest staff today stands on the front lines of

environmental governance, confronting criminal forces that pose serious threats to life, biodiversity, and national resources. Indian law, through the doctrines of private defence, judicial oversight of encounter deaths, and procedural safeguards under Section 197 CrPC and BNSS 2023, provides a calibrated framework that allows the use of lethal force in genuine self-defense while guarding against abuse.

For forest governance to be effective, it is essential that officers who act lawfully, proportionately and in good faith are institutionally supported and legally protected. Equally, transparency and accountability must remain non-negotiable. The legitimacy of forest and wildlife protection ultimately depends on maintaining this delicate but vital balance.

**II. STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES (SOPs): FOR FOREST STAFF DEALING WITH HARDCORE & ARMED CRIMINALS (dealing with Poachers, timber mafia, sandalwood smugglers, sand miners, and organized wildlife crime syndicates)**

SOPs form the first and most important line of legal and operational protection for forest staff. Effective SOPs mandate prior intelligence gathering, threat

**2. THREAT CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM**

**Table 1: Threat Categorisation**

<b>Threat Level</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>SOP Response</b>
<b>Level-1 Low Risk</b>	Unarmed offenders, minor forest offences	Verbal Command, detention, Seizure
<b>Level-1 Moderate Risk</b>	Repeat Offenders, aggressive behaviour, possibility of arms	Team deployment, police intimation
<b>Level-1 High Risk</b>	Armed Criminals, Organized gangs, past violent history	Joint operation with police, armed escort
<b>Level-1 Extreme Risk</b>	Known killers, insurgent-linked groups	Police/ paramilitary lead, forest staff in support role

assessment, team deployment, and coordination with police authorities, particularly when dealing with known armed offenders. Lone or poorly planned operations against organised criminal groups significantly increase the risk to life and expose officers to legal vulnerability.

During operations, SOPs emphasise graduated use of force, beginning with identification, verbal warnings, and attempts at de-escalation wherever circumstances permit. However, SOPs must also recognise that forest encounters often occur suddenly, at night, or in ambush situations where advance warnings are neither safe nor feasible.

Equally important are post-incident procedures: securing the scene, rendering medical aid, preserving evidence, promptly reporting to senior authorities and the police, and fully cooperating with any inquiry. Courts have consistently viewed procedural transparency as a key indicator of good faith.

**1. PURPOSE & SCOPE**

These SOPs aim to: ensure the safety of forest staff, provide clear rules of engagement, ensure legal defensibility of actions taken, prevent misuse of force and align field actions with BNSS, 2023, IPC, Forest & Wildlife laws

### 3. PRE-OPERATION SOP

**3.1 Intelligence & Planning:** Gather intelligence on criminal background, prior violent incidents, weapons used; map the terrain and escape routes; and designate team leader, armed cover, communication officer, and first aid responder.

### 3.2 Mandatory Intimations

Before high-risk operations: Inform DFO District SP / SHO Control room and record time, personnel deployed, and arms issued.

### 4. SOP ON CARRYING & USE OF FIREARMS

**4.1 Authorization:** Firearms shall be issued only by trained staff who are authorized under a valid Arms Act and with entry in arms register

### 4.2 Rules of Engagement:

1. Firearms are a last resort
2. Use only when: There is an imminent threat to life. No alternative means available
3. Follow graduated force principle: Verbal warning, Show of force, Firing in air (if feasible), Targeted fire only to neutralise threat

### 4.3 Prohibited Actions:

- Firing at fleeing unarmed suspects
- Retaliatory or revenge firing
- Firing without command except in self-defence

### 5. SOP DURING ENCOUNTER:

#### 5.1 If Confronted by Armed Criminals:

- Take cover immediately
- Communicate the threat to the team
- Attempt containment and withdrawal if

possible

- Fire only to: Defend life, Prevent grievous injury

#### 5.2 If the Criminal is Killed

- Cease fire immediately
- Secure the weapon of the deceased
- Ensure the safety of the team
- Provide medical aid if possible
- Inform: DFO Police Magistrate

### 6. POST-INCIDENT SOP (MOST CRITICAL LEGAL SAFEGUARD)

**6.1 Scene Management:** Do not disturb the scene except for safety. Mark positions of: Forest staff, Deceased/injured, and Weapons and Photograph/video if possible.

#### 6.2 Mandatory Reporting:

Within 24 hours, the team leader who fired must submit a detailed written report, including threat perception, warning issued, reason for firing, distance, and sequence of events.

### 7. LEGAL SAFEGUARDS UNDER BNSS, 2023

#### 7.1 Protection During Investigation

- BNSS mandates: Fair inquiry, Judicial oversight, Protection of witnesses (Section 398)

#### 7.2 Key Legal Shields for Forest Staff

Forest staff is protected when actions are:

1. In the discharge of official duty
2. In good faith
3. Within the right of private defence (IPC 96–106)

**7.3 Arrest of Forest Staff**

- No automatic arrest
- Arrest only if: Prima facie evidence of excess force, Magistrate approval as per BNSS principles

- Good faith
- Absence of malice

(Derived from multiple SC rulings on self-defence and encounter jurisprudence)

**8. IMPORTANT JUDICIAL PRINCIPLES (FOR DEFENCE OF FOREST STAFF)**

**8.1 Right of Private Defence**

**Courts have held:**

- Exact calculation of force is not expected in life-threatening situations
- The decision must be judged from the perspective of the officer at that moment

**Key Supreme Court Principles**

- Imminence of threat
- Proportionality

**9. SOP FOR DEPARTMENTAL SUPPORT TO STAFF**

**9.1 Legal Support**

- Government Advocate to be appointed immediately
- Department to bear legal expenses

**9.2 Psychological & Family Support**

- Counselling for involved staff
- Financial & administrative support to the family if injured/killed

**10. TRAINING & CAPACITY BUILDING (MANDATORY)**

**Table 2: Training Modules**

Module	Frequency
Firearms handling and judgment shooting	Annual
Legal Awareness (BNSS, IPC)	Annual
Stress & Conflict Management	Bi-Annual
Joint exercises with Police	Annual

**11. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Separate Armed Forest Protection Cadre
2. Statutory immunity clause similar to police protection laws
3. Fast-track inquiry mechanism for forest encounter cases

4. Body-worn cameras for enforcement teams
5. Dedicated Wildlife Crime Courts

**12. CONCLUSION:**

Forest staff today face criminal threats comparable to armed policing but without equivalent legal clarity or protection. SOP-based engagement, backed by BNSS safeguards and judicial doctrines of private

defence, is essential to protect both human life and the rule of law.

A clear SOP framework: Protects honest officers, prevents misuse, enhances morale, and strengthens forest governance

### III. Judicial Interpretation of Section 197 CrPC in Law-Enforcement Contexts: Implications for Forest Officers

#### Introduction:

Section 197 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973, occupies a critical position in India's criminal justice architecture governing public servants. It creates a procedural safeguard by requiring prior sanction of the appropriate government before a court can take cognizance of offences alleged to have been committed by a public servant while acting or purporting to act in the discharge of official duty. Though frequently invoked in cases involving police officers, armed forces, and revenue officials, the principles laid down by courts apply with equal force to forest officers, whose statutory duties increasingly involve coercive enforcement and exposure to violent criminal resistance.

This section examines how Indian courts have interpreted Section 197 CrPC in enforcement contexts and how these interpretations protect forest staff who use force, including firearms, during official operations.

#### Object and Rationale of Section 197 CrPC:

The Supreme Court has repeatedly clarified that Section 197 is not designed to shield corrupt or criminal conduct, but to protect honest public servants from vexatious litigation arising out of bona fide discharge of official duties.

In *Matajog Dobey v. H.C. Bhari* (AIR 1956 SC 44), a Constitution Bench explained that the object of

sanction is to ensure that public servants are not exposed to harassment for acts done in the course of their official functions. The Court emphasised that without such protection, officials performing sensitive duties would be constantly under the fear of prosecution, leading to administrative paralysis.

This rationale applies squarely to forest officers who must make rapid decisions in volatile situations involving armed offenders.

#### The "Reasonable Nexus" Test:

The central judicial test under Section 197 is whether there exists a reasonable nexus between the act complained of and the official duty of the public servant.

In *Shreekantiah Ramayya Munipalli v. State of Bombay* (AIR 1955 SC 287), the Supreme Court held that even if the act is in excess of duty or performed irregularly, a sanction is required as long as it is directly connected with official functions. The Court cautioned against a narrow interpretation that would defeat the provision's protective purpose.

Applied to forest enforcement, actions such as firing during anti-poaching patrols, raids against timber smugglers, or armed encounters during seizure operations are intrinsically linked to official duty, even if the outcome is tragic.

#### Use of Force and Alleged Excess: Protection Still Applies:

A critical question often arises when death or grievous injury is caused: Does alleged excess remove the protection of Section 197?

The Supreme Court answered this decisively in *P. Arulswami v. State of Madras* (AIR 1967 SC 776), holding that the need for sanction does not vanish merely because the act is alleged to be excessive

or illegal. What matters is the official character of the act, not its legality at the threshold stage.

Similarly, in *State of Orissa v. Ganesh Chandra Jew* (2004) 8 SCC 40, the Court held that even the use of force resulting in death, if connected to official duty, attracts Section 197 protection, and the question of excess can be examined only after a sanction is granted.

For forest officers, this jurisprudence is crucial: firing in self-defence or in protection of team members during enforcement remains protected at the cognizance stage.

### **Section 197 and Police / Armed Enforcement Cases: Analogous Application to Forest Staff:**

Courts have consistently extended Section 197 protection to police officers involved in encounters, raids, and arrests.

In *Devinder Singh v. State of Punjab* (2016) 12 SCC 87, the Supreme Court reiterated that when an act is inseparably connected with an official duty, sanction is mandatory, and courts cannot bypass this requirement by prematurely examining the merits.

In *D. Devaraja v. Owais Sabeer Hussain* (2020) 7 SCC 695, involving alleged custodial violence, the Court held that even serious allegations require prior sanction if the act complained of has a reasonable connection with official duty. The Court warned against using criminal process as a weapon against enforcement officers.

These principles apply mutatis mutandis to forest officers exercising statutory enforcement powers under forest and wildlife laws.

### **High Court Decisions Involving Forest and Revenue Enforcement:**

High Courts have explicitly applied Section 197 to

forest and allied enforcement officials.

In *Sukumaran v. State of Kerala* (2007 SCC OnLine Ker 369), the Kerala High Court held that forest officers exercising statutory powers of seizure and arrest are public servants performing sovereign functions. Any prosecution arising out of such enforcement actions requires a sanction under Section 197.

The Madhya Pradesh High Court in *Keshavlal v. State of M.P.* (1996 SCC OnLine MP 258) observed that forest officers combating timber smuggling and forest offences operate in dangerous conditions, and their actions, even when force is used, are protected by sanction provisions so long as they are linked to official duty.

### **Stage at Which Sanction Is Required:**

The Supreme Court has clarified that a sanction under Section 197 is required at the stage of cognizance, not necessarily at the time of filing the FIR.

In *N.K. Ganguly v. CBI* (2016) 2 SCC 143, the Court held that the absence of a sanction bars the court from taking cognizance, and proceedings without a sanction are void.

This has practical significance for forest officers: registering an FIR does not automatically mean that prosecution can proceed. Without a sanction, courts cannot legally try the officer.

### **Interaction with BharatiyaNagrik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023:**

Although CrPC has been replaced by BNSS, 2023, the principle of prosecution sanction for public servants has been retained. Judicial interpretations of Section 197 CrPC remain relevant, as BNSS provisions are substantially similar in intent and structure.

Thus, the rich body of case law developed over decades continues to guide courts in protecting honest enforcement officers, including forest staff.

### Implications for Forest Officers:

From the above jurisprudence, the following principles clearly emerge:

1. Forest officers are public servants performing sovereign enforcement functions
2. Use of force during forest and wildlife operations has a direct nexus with official duty
3. Allegations of excess do not nullify Section 197 protection at the threshold
4. Prior government sanction is a jurisdictional requirement
5. Courts cannot bypass sanction by prematurely assessing merits

These principles provide a strong procedural shield against frivolous or retaliatory prosecution.

### Conclusion:

Judicial interpretation of Section 197 CrPC reflects a consistent and pragmatic understanding of enforcement realities. Courts have recognised that public servants engaged in hazardous duties — including forest officers — must be protected from criminal prosecution for acts done in good faith during official operations.

For forest staff confronting armed criminals, Section 197 and its BNSS successor are not mere technical provisions but essential guarantees of institutional trust. Without such protection, effective forest governance and wildlife protection would be impossible.

### IV. One-page “field card” format

A one-page “field card” format of the SOP checklist,

designed for quick reference by forest guards and rangers during patrols. It's concise, visual, and action-oriented, so it can be laminated and carried in the field:

### SOP Field Card: Forest Staff vs. Mining Mafias

#### Mission

Protect staff lives, enforce law, and dismantle mafia operations safely and legally.

**Before Operation:** Gather intelligence (locals, informants, drones, GPS), share info with police/district administration, classify risk: Low / Medium / High. If High risk, police/paramilitary support is mandatory. Get written authorisation from DFO.

**Safety & Equipment:** Always carry wireless/cell phones, helmets, first-aid kits, and firearms only for trained staff; follow rules of engagement.

**During Patrols/Raids:** Always move in teams, never alone. Approach cautiously, maintain cover. Avoid direct confrontation unless backed by armed support.

**Emergency Response:** Prioritize safety, retreat if overwhelmed. Call for police reinforcement immediately. Evacuate injured staff via designated medical channels.

**Documentation:** Incident report within 24 hrs. Take Photos, videos, and witness statements. Lodge an FIR under IPC (murder, attempt to murder, organized crime).

**Legal Protection:** Invoke CrPC 197 for immunity in duty actions. If criminal killed → magisterial inquiry + post mortem and document circumstances (self-defence, lawful duty).

**Firearms Rules:** Use only in self-defence or defence of colleagues. Fire warning shots before direct engagement. Every discharge is

documented and reported.

**Action on Mafia:** Prepare dossiers containing evidence of organised crime and submit them to the District Magistrate for preventive detention under the NSA 1980. Coordinate with police/intelligence agencies.

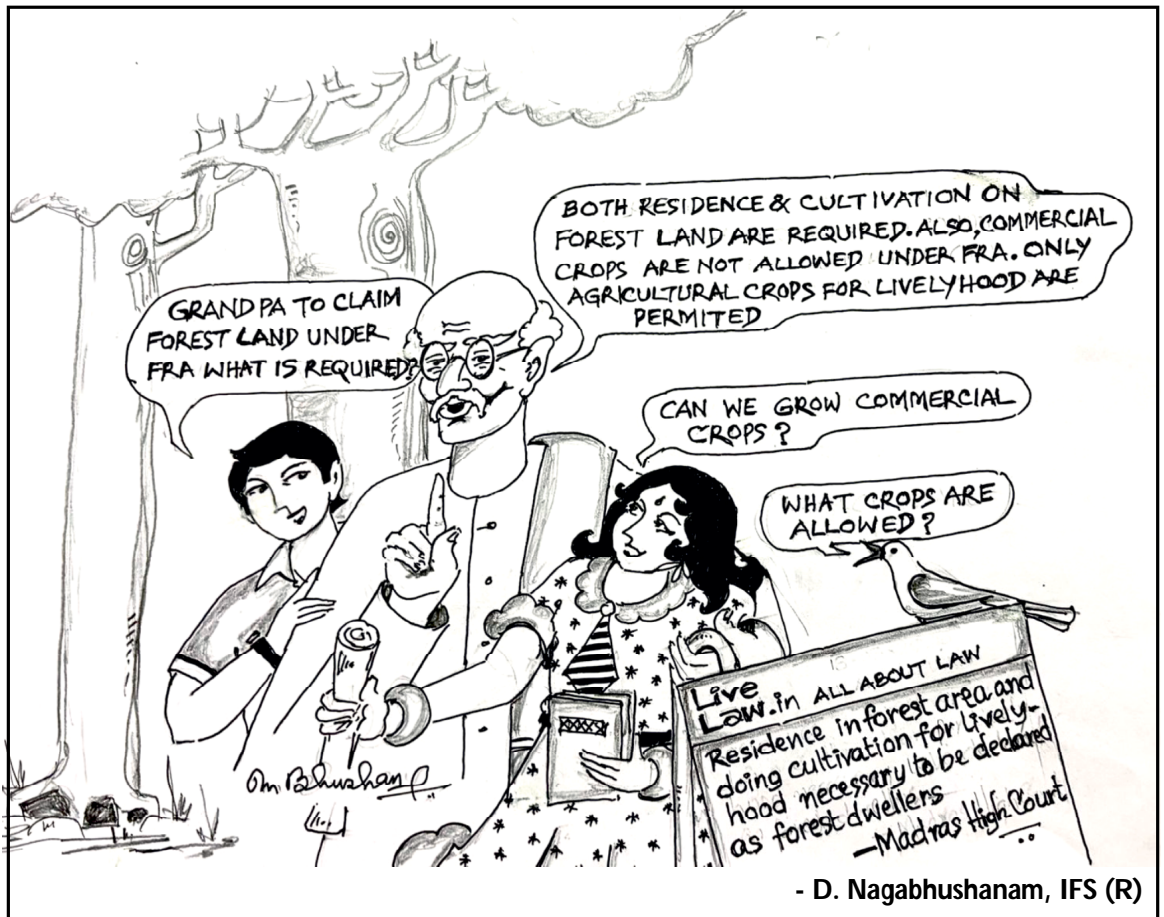
**Training & Community:** Training on self-defense, firearms handling, and crisis drills. Refresher

courses on CrPC 197, IPC, NSA build trust with locals and anonymous reporting channels. Awareness campaigns on ecological impacts help in getting information from the public.

**Motto: "Safety First, Lawful Action Always, Zero Tolerance for Mafias."**

This field card version is designed for lamination and pocket use — quick, clear, and actionable.

*The author is a retired PCCF of UP Cadre/Member REC Chandigarh/Member Expert Committee CZA. M-94157 86586, Email:hравivarapu@yahoo.com*



- D. Nagabhushanam, IFS (R)



## Enforcement of Forest and Wildlife Laws and Confrontation with Other Departments: Challenges and Legal Perspectives

Dr. Akula Kishan

### 1. Introduction

Forests and wildlife constitute an essential part of India's ecological security and environmental sustainability. They regulate climate, conserve biodiversity, maintain water resources, and support the livelihoods of millions of people. Recognizing their importance, India has enacted several laws to protect forests and wildlife. However, the effective enforcement of these laws often brings the Forest Department into confrontation with other government departments whose activities intersect with forest lands or wildlife habitats.

Such confrontations are not merely administrative disagreements; they arise due to conflicting mandates between environmental protection and developmental objectives. Forest officers are legally obligated to enforce forest and wildlife laws, while other departments such as revenue, mining, irrigation, and local administration pursue development, infrastructure, or land management goals. This intersection frequently leads to jurisdictional conflicts.

### 2. Legal Framework Governing Forest and Wildlife Protection

The enforcement of forest and wildlife laws in India is governed by several important statutes.

#### 2.1 Indian Forest Act, 1927

This is one of the oldest laws regulating forests in India. It provides the legal framework for:

- Declaration of reserved forests, protected forests, and village forests

- Regulation of forest produce
- Prevention of forest offences

Forest officers under this Act have powers to:

- Seize forest produce and tools used in offences
- Arrest offenders
- Initiate prosecution
- Compound certain forest offences

#### 2.2 Wildlife Protection Act, 1972

This Act provides comprehensive protection for wildlife and establishes a system of protected areas such as national parks, wildlife sanctuaries, conservation reserves, and community reserves.

Important provisions include:

- Prohibition of hunting of wild animals
- Regulation of trade in wildlife articles
- Powers of search, seizure, and arrest by wildlife officers
- Strict penalties for wildlife offences

#### 2.3 Forest Conservation Act, 1980

This Act is a major tool for preventing the diversion of forest land for non-forest purposes without approval of the Central Government.

Under this Act:

- State governments cannot divert forest land without prior approval from the Central Government.

- Development projects such as roads, mining, dams, and power lines require forest clearance.

### 2.4 Forest Rights Act,2006

The Act is brought in by Ministry of Tribal Welfare for taking care of interests of Tribals living within forest areas, but without any legal right. The Act has a cutoff date of 13.12.2005 for determining the whether the applicant is eligible for recognizing his Forest rights. But the Act is more for utilizing the available forest land for granting "patta" to certain persons, and in the process the Forest Officer has no say, and is mute spectator when forest land is being given away without much scrutiny.

### 3. Role of the Forest Department in Law Enforcement

The Forest Department is the primary agency responsible for enforcing forest and wildlife laws. Officers ranging from Forest Guards to Divisional Forest Officers and higher authorities are vested with statutory powers to protect forests and wildlife. Their responsibilities include:

- Preventing illegal felling of trees
- Controlling wildlife poaching
- Preventing encroachments on forest land
- Monitoring compliance with forest clearance conditions
- Regulating the transport and trade of forest produce
- Protecting wildlife habitats and biodiversity

In many cases, forest officers are supposed to act quickly to stop illegal activities, which may involve seizure of property, arrest of offenders, or halting unauthorized projects. In doing so the Forest Officers invite wrath of locals as well as other departments, and getting branded as anti-

development department.

### 4. Nature of Inter-Departmental Confrontations

Despite clear legal mandates, the enforcement of forest and wildlife laws often results in confrontation with other departments due to overlapping administrative responsibilities.

These confrontations generally arise in the following situations:

- Land ownership disputes
- Development projects in forest areas
- Mining activities near forest land
- Encroachment regularization schemes
- Infrastructure development affecting wildlife habitats

### 5. Conflict with Revenue Department

One of the most common conflicts faced by forest officers is with the Revenue Department.

The revenue authorities maintain land records and are responsible for land administration. However, in many cases:

- Land classified as revenue land may actually fall within forest areas.
- Encroachments on forest land are sometimes regularized under revenue policies.
- Land assignments or pattas may be granted in areas claimed by the Forest Department.
- Abnormal delay in getting a land notified under preliminary notification of final notification declaring the said land as Reserved Forest. In High Court of Andhra Pradesh, WP(PIL) No.143/2024 is filed on this aspect as there are 2061 forest blocks with an extent of 36,98,907.95 ha, , out of which 191 blocks are notified under Section 4 of Andhra Pradesh Forest Act,1967 spread over an area of

5,15,221.81 ha, and 1701 Blocks are declared as Reserved Forests with an area of 31,24,658.96 ha; 169 Blocks are notified under Section 24 of the Act, with an area of 59,027.18 ha, 166 blocks are not notified under any Section of Forest Act, with an extent of 23,681.93 ha, and still 333 Forest Blocks of Compensatory Afforestation area given by user agencies. with an extent of 19,434.62 ha is still to be notified under Section 24 of the Act.

- One of the oldest notification pertains to Pulluru West RL, with an area 7299.7 ha notified u/s 4 of the Act vide G.O.No.2410 F&A (For.III) Dept. dated 02.12.1955 of Chittoor East/Tirupati Forest Division. And as the notification is old by three generations, and records may or may not be available. And the status of land remains as forest but enforcement cannot be done in the absence of records, and thus conflict arises with other departments.

Though the landmark judicial intervention by the Apex Court, in T.N. GodavarmanThirumulpad v. Union of India, has made policy planners to ponder on diverting forest land for non-forestry purposes, confrontations still keep going.

## 6. Conflict with Police Department

Although forest officers possess statutory powers of investigation and seizure under forest and wildlife laws, conflicts sometimes arise with the police regarding:

- Registration of cases
- Custody of seized property
- Investigation authority

As the Police and Forest Officers have concurrent jurisdiction, in certain cases the conflict of jurisdiction depending on local factors.

The Forest Officers are not Police Officers (E.C.

Richard vs Forest Range Officer -1958CrILJ52 =<http://indiankanoon.org/doc/962222>) and statements made to Forest Officers are admissible under section 25 of Indian Evidence Act,1872 which is replaced by Section 23 of BharatiyaSakshyaAdhiniyam, 2023.

Another issue is when assistance of Police is sought, mostly it is not provided citing the Law and Order or bandobust, and Forest Officers are exposed to the armed smugglers, and thus forest officials get injured or killed, and their sacrifice is hardly remembered and commensurate compensation on par with Police officials is not provided.

Though Forest Officers are vested with powers of Police to deal with forest offences by using firearms for self-protection and protection of forest property to the extent of killing the offender vide G.O.Ms.No.182 EFES&T(For.III) Department dated 24.07.1991, there are no suitable firearms with forest officials and they have to necessarily seek the assistance of local police to protect Forest Resources for posterity.

## 7. Conflict with Mining Department

Mining activities often overlap with forest areas, leading to environmental damage and disputes between the Forest Department and the Mining Department.

### Typical issues include:

- Mining leases granted near forest areas
- Illegal quarrying within forest boundaries
- Environmental degradation affecting wildlife habitats

A significant judicial intervention occurred in the case of SamajParivartanaSamudaya&Orsvs State Of Karnataka &Ors. (AIR 2013 SUPREME

COURT 3217=2013 (8) SCC 154 ) where the Apex Court dealt illegal mining.

### **8. Conflict with Infrastructure and Development Departments**

Departments responsible for infrastructure development—such as irrigation, roads, electricity, and public works—frequently require forest land for their projects.

Projects like:

- Roads and highways
- Irrigation canals and dams
- Transmission lines
- Pipelines

require prior forest clearance under the Forest Conservation Act.

However, in some instances, departments begin work without obtaining the necessary approvals. In such situations, forest officers are legally obligated to stop the work and report violations, which may lead to confrontation.

### **9. Conflict with Local Bodies and Panchayats**

Local government institutions sometimes authorize activities such as:

- Sand mining
- Quarrying
- Construction in forest areas
- Grazing permissions

These permissions may conflict with forest and wildlife laws, particularly when activities occur within protected areas or forest land.

Forest officers are duty bound to intervene to prevent illegal activities, which can create friction with local authorities.

### **10. Practical Challenges Faced by Forest Officers**

Forest officers face numerous challenges in enforcing forest and wildlife laws, including:

- Pressure from political or local interests
- Conflicting departmental policies
- Incomplete or inaccurate land records
- Limited manpower and resources
- Hostile conditions in remote forest areas
- Organized wildlife crime networks

Despite these challenges, forest officers are expected to maintain strict enforcement to protect ecological resources.

### **11. Judicial Support for Forest Protection**

Indian courts have played a crucial role in strengthening forest and wildlife protection. The Supreme Court has repeatedly emphasized that environmental protection is part of the constitutional right to life under Article 21 of the Constitution of India. Through various judgments, the judiciary has reinforced:

- Strict protection of forests
- Control over illegal mining
- Protection of wildlife habitats
- Accountability of government agencies

### **12. Way Ahead**

Foresters are entrusted with protection of natural resources for future generations by protecting and conserving in the present generation. The Foresters are made to enforce the Forest and Wildlife laws, by facing all the constraints possible by way of biotic interference, political interference and conflict with other departments.

Contd.. on page No.33

111th General Body Meeting held on 08th March 2026 at Aranyabhavan



Release of Sri J.V.Sharma's Book by Sri S.D.Mukherji, PCCF, Retd.



Felicitation to Sri K.Murali Krishna Rao, SFS, Retd on completion of 85 years.



Felicitation to Sri D.S.Rao, IFS, Retd, Kerala Cadre on completion of 75 years.



Inviting Sri Y.Babu Rao, IFS, Retd & Sri Ramalingam, IFS., Retd, as members to the Association.



Felicitation to Sri S.M.Selvaraj, IFS.,Retd. one of the Hosts of the Lunch.



Ladies & Members at the meeting.



Sri M.Padmanabha Reddy, IFS., Retd, making a point



Felicitations to Dr. A.Vijay Pratap, BAMS, MD (Ayurveda) Chief Guest.

## Treepies of India



white-bellied treepie



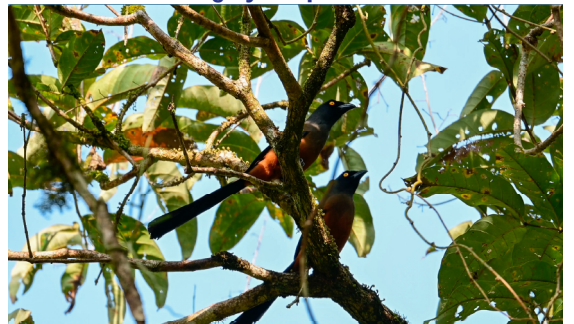
rufous treepie



grey treepie



collared treepie



andaman treepie

Photo Credit: Sri K. Praveen Rao, IFS (Retd.)

## Ranthambore National Park — Where Stone Remembers and Forests Breathe



Photo Credit: Dr. Geetika Mathur

పర్యావరణహితం  
**సింగరేణి అభిమతం**



డోర్లీ ఓసీ డంపువై పెరిగిన ఫ్లాంటేషన్



బ్లాక్ ఫ్లాంటేషన్



సింగరేణి ఆధ్వర్యంలో నిర్మించిన చెరువులు



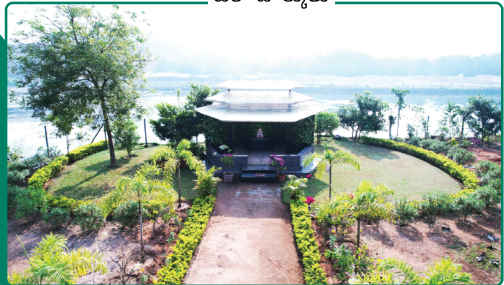
అవెన్యూ ఫ్లాంటేషన్



ఎకో పార్కులు



**సింగరేణి**  
 కాలరీస్ కంపెనీ లిమిటెడ్  
 (ప్రభుత్వ రంగ సంస్థ)



Continuation from page No. 28

Forests can be protected and conserved not only by Foresters but with combined efforts by all concerned departments. Section 66 of the Indian Forest Act, 1927 provides that every Forest Officer and Police Officer shall prevent, and may interfere for the purpose of preventing the commission of any forest offence. The responsibility may be expanded to include all other Government departments, especially Revenue, Tribal Welfare Departments, so that protection would be responsibility of all Government departments, not only of Forest Department.

Provisions of Section 79 of Indian Forest Act, 1927 read with Section 76 of the Act may be utilised to make rules by the States by prescribing rules for making all the concerned departments responsible for protection, propagation of forests and wildlife apart from prevention of forest offences.

It might have to be considered to introduce punitive measures on the villages and habitations in forest areas by stopping all Government

programmes to such villages/habitations for some time, so that the culprits are dissuaded from damaging the Forest and Wildlife resources.

According to Section 48 of the Andhra Pradesh Panchayat Raj Act, 1994 or Section 53 of the Telangana Panchayat Raj Act, 2018, the management of forests within Panchayat limits may be transferred to Gram Panchayats for Protection, conservation and sustainable use of resources.

Pending the introduction of legal provisions as suggested above, it is desirable to record the violations, incidents where the Forest Officers are aware of the same but cannot take action due to extraneous reasons, and such records may be shared with concerned Departments in Central and State Governments for taking suitable action.

Ultimately, protecting forests and wildlife is not merely the responsibility of a single department. It requires cooperation among all government agencies and a shared commitment to sustainable development and ecological preservation.

*The author is a retired IFS officer/CF, Telangana cadre. He authored many books on Forest Act and Allied Acts, the Forest Code and drafted various amendments. He is a practicing advocate in APTG High Courts. M-70930 06261.*

**Thank You: Show your child that you are a person who is truly grateful for the simple, good things in life, a sunset, rain, insects, birds, children laughing or a kind gesture... Appreciative people are happy; they see the beauty in life while others miss it**

**- Richard Carlson**



## GREEN WARRIORS

### NATIONAL AWARDS TO FORESTERS AND OTHERS

K. Buchiram Reddy

National Awards are presented by GOVT of INDIA to people because of their special services or for good performance or because of their special service or good performance in various fields; they are: '1. CIVILIAN AWARDS, 2. GALLANTRY AWARDS, 3. NATIONAL SPORTS AWARDS, and 4. LITERATURE AWARDS'.

National Awards in India are prestigious honors presented by Government of India to recognize extra-ordinary contribution, merit and excellence across various fields like sports, public services etc.

#### **CIVILIAN AWARDS:**

Among these, the highest position considered for civilian awards is Bharath Ratna and the others are Padma awards viz. Padma Vibhushan, Padma Bhushan, and Padma Shri. Padma Vibhushan is awarded for exceptional performance in field of art, science, and public service. Padma Bhushan is awarded for different services in any field. Padma Shri is awarded for outstanding acts of heroism or self-sacrifice.

#### **PADMA SHRI AWARD TO FORESTER:**

Shri P.K. Sen. IFS of Bihar cadre and the former Palamau Tiger Reserve Director was honored with Padma Shri in the year 2011. He was a member of the National Tiger Conservation Authority. He dedicated his life for conserving big cats. He was former Director of Project Tiger. He is known for tackling timber mafia. Padma Shri was awarded to him for his life-long service for wildlife conservation. He prefers to be a denizen of wilderness and liked

to socialize with big cats rather than live in urban jungle where red tapism is prevalent.

#### **PADMA SHRI AWARD TO OTHERS:**

**Salumarada Thimmakka:** She is known as 'Mother of Trees'. She was illiterate and childless. She planned to grow trees as her children with the consent and cooperation of her husband. The death of her husband did not deter her mission. She was decorated with Padma Shri award in 2019 for her extra-ordinary environmental improvement work by planting 8,000 trees including 385 Banyan trees along 4 Km stretch in Karnataka. She nurtured these trees over 30 years transforming a 4.5 Km stretch highway into a nationwide recognition conservation of environment. She worked as a casual labourer. She passed away on 14.11.2025.

**Tulsi Gowda:** A 72 year old tribal woman from Karnataka. She was conferred Padma Shri award for protection of environment. She was always bare footed and with traditional attire. She belonged to Halukki, an indigenous tribe and grew up in a poor family, uneducated but known as Encyclopedia of the forest. She has the knowledge of the diverse species of plants, and shrubs. She was offered a job in the Forest Department. Even at the advanced age she continues to nurture plants.

**Devaki Amma:** A 92 year old Environmentalist from Muthukulam, Alapuzha district in Kerala was awarded the Padma Shri in 2026 for her remarkable self-taught, four decade long effort in transforming 4.5 to 5 acres barren land into a thriving biodiversity rich forest named "Tapo Vanam", featuring over

3,000 trees; 200 varieties of trees including medicinal plants, shrubs and rare species.

**Sri Chaitram Deochand Pawar:** An eminent social worker from Maharashtra known for his works for the tribal welfare and environment protection. Born in 1967, he is a P.G. in Commerce and belongs to tribal background. While participating in various programmes of development of tribals, he tried to stop cutting of forest in his village and took up forest conservation and development to a new level. He was awarded Padma Shri in 2025.

**Daripalli Ramaiah:** Fondly known as "Vana Jeevi" or "Chetla Ramaiah" was a celebrated environmentalist hailing from Khammam district of Telangana. He planted over one crore saplings over a period of five decades, earning the Padma Shri award in 2017 for his immense contribution to afforestation. He propagated the sanctity underlying the noble words, "Vruksho Rakshati Rakshitah". Protect trees and they will protect you.

**Himatram Bhambhu:** As a child, he was inspired by his grandmother planting a peepal tree. As he grew up in his age, he also saw the Pipal tree growing. In Nagaur district of Rajasthan, over a number of years, he planted three lakh trees. For the selfless endeavour, he took loan to purchase 34 Bighas of land in his village Harima which is a drought prone area and planted in it 16,000 native trees. The area to which he belonged, poaching of wild animals was rampant. He helped the Forest Department in apprehending the accused. His grandmother gave a message to him: there is nothing more virtuous than planting trees. He was awarded Padma Shri in 2021.

### GALLANTRY AWARDS:

Gallantry Awards ordinarily are given to Defense Personnel and also to Police Officers for their acts of bravery, valour and dedication to duty. There

are instances when the Gallantry Award to forest officers and others were awarded. Three such cases are recounted here.

**M. Kamal Naidu:** An Agriculture graduate, he was in the composite Andhra Pradesh cadre of Indian Forest Service. He won Shourya Chakra Award in 1988 for saving two lion cubs in the Delhi Zoo where he was working as its Director. It is the third highest gallantry award in 1988. He was the first non-defense personnel to be awarded so and it came about only after the personal interference of the then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. A 6 ½ feet long black Cobra entered the lion's enclosure and two cubs were in danger. He picked the snake by the tail and while trying to hold its neck, the cobra bit him. It was a miracle that he was saved from the threshold of death.

The same Kama Naidu was ambushed while he was on duty as DFO, Palvancha division in 1972. He was warned not to obstruct people who encroached a huge area in forest but that did not deter him to protect forest. Naxalites shot at him. The first bullet hit him in the mouth. He was then smashed with rifle butt that went through his arm followed by a blow on the head. He was confined to the Singareni Hospital for three and a half months. Despite the bravery shown, the State Government noted: "Service appreciated, does not merit any reward." Kamal Naidu suffered severe injury and to add insult to injury there was this unkind remark by State Government.

**P. Srinivas:** He was an Indian Forest Service officer of 1979 batch borne on Karnataka cadre. He was brutally murdered by the notorious sandalwood smuggler Veerappan on November 10, 1991. As Dy.C.F. he was known for his Sathanveshan (Truth seeking) approach aiming to reform villagers and win their trust. He was posthumously honored

with the KirithiChakra , India's second highest peacetime gallantry award, on January 26,1992.

On November 9, 1991, he received a message at MM Hills indicating Veerappan was ready to surrender if met unarmed and alone. Trusting the message, 37 year old Srinivas went to meet him but was ambushed and killed by Veerappan near village Gopinatham in the Chamarajanagardistrict in Karnataka.

Known as Abhimanyu of Karnataka Forest Department "he was the only officer ever to successfully arrest Veerappan in 1986 before his martyrdom. He believed in the ideology of "Birth for forest, Life for forest and Death for forest."

**Kala Chand Sarkar:** He received Shourya Chakra award in April 1989. He was a grass cutter and the award was given to him for his selfless display of valour when he saved the life of a colleague who was a mahout by fighting off a tiger in the Bansburi Range. The award of Shourya Chakra was lost in history. Shri Ramesh Pandey, a senior IFS officer of Assam cadre, has unearthed the forgotten story of the grass cutter receiving Shourya Chakra in 1989.

**Sri H. Basavanni:** A Shourya Chakra awardee of 1991. He was instrumental in bringing to book a number of sandalwood smugglers at grave personal risk and ultimately at the cost of his life. On 29.10.1989 at about 1.00 p.m. in ShiralaKoppa Range, he prepared himself to apprehend the sandalwood smugglers. When the car of the smugglers was proceeding towards ChakkaraJambur, Basavanni fired a warning shot to stop the car. But the desperate smugglers would not stop. This bravery of ShriH. Basavanni did not help, as the smugglers dashed through the road block and ran over him. ShriBasavanni succumbed to his injuries in the hospital on 6th November 1989.

ShriBasavanni displayed exemplary courage and extreme devotion to duty at the cost of his life. The Shourya Chakra was posthumously awarded by the President of India and the widow of Basawani received the award.

#### **MEN WHO DESERVED AWARD:**

**Sridhar, Dy.R.O. Tirumala & Beat Officer David:** Over 200 red sanders smugglers who are suspected to be from Tamil Nadu, brutally hacked two forest officers to death and seriously wounded two others in the dense Seshachalam forest in December 2013. The two officers ventured into the forest along with 9 officials and two smugglers who were arrested the day before. When they arrived at Kanchibanda near ParvathiMandapam , they were ambushed by 200 odd smugglers who were lying in wait in the bushes and on trees. The smugglers stoned the officials from all sides and attacked them with axes. One of the officer's hand was chopped.

**Sonaullah Zargar:** A 30 year old activist, who was dedicated to protecting the Sukhnag forest in Budgam of J&K was found dead in a valley. His body was found in the valley near a stream week ago. Initially Zargar's death was passed off as an accident. But the police suspect that timber mafia as well as corrupt forest staff to be behind the death. The Block Forest Officer Abdul Ghani War and three timber smugglers have been already arrested by the police. He used to directly report to the higher officials of the Forest Department and lower rung officials were not happy with his activities. He curbed timber smuggling in the area.

**Peerla Rama Swamy:** He was a Forest Guard in Karimnagar East division. He detected a case of felling teak trees and preparing bullock cart wheels long time ago. He caught them all red handed and booked a case against them. This has angered the Naxalites and they killed him by strangulating

with the fibre of *Bauainiaracemosa* near GaddenapalliCheruvu of Kanakanuru Beat and Azamnagar Range. He became an unsung Hero. His son is appointed as F.G. on compassionate ground.

**Keshavulu,F.G. &Somaiah and Panchalaiah,F. Ws.:** They weredone to death in 1939. Their names are chiseled on a rock in Compt. No. 1054 in Chitvel R.F. under Chitvel Beat. They left for heavenly abode and their names etched on a rock in the forest,for which theylived and loved.

**DusharlaSatyanarayana:** A68yearoldenvironmen-  
talist from Raghavapuram in Suryapet district, a Graduate in Agriculture, has transformed 70 acres of his ancestral land into a dense private forest over six decades. He nurtured his biodiversity hot-spot featuring over 5 crore trees, seven ponds and numerous bird speciesdedicating his life to nature without using fence.

Gangaiah: He was a Forest Range Officer of Indalwai Range in erstwhile Kamareddy division underNizamabad district.In trying to prevent an organized encroachment in Nallavelli forest, he set out in jeep along with some forest staff. The information was that the encroachment was organized in a big way with a large number of men and women and engaged tractors for ploughing the forest land. As he approached the scene of offence, the jeep got stuck in a muddy pond. In the meantime, the culprits-women with Chilli powder and men withLathis and axes-attacked the Range Officer. Women started sprinkling mirchi powder on the face of the Range Officer, men started beating

the R.O with sticks.Gangaiah succumbed to the injuries. The Police registered a case for murder and the accused were convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment.

**Ch. SrinivasaRao:** Sri Rao was the Range Officer at Chandrugonda in BhadradriKothagudem district. He was brutally killed by GuttikoyaAdivasis with axes and sickles in Errabodu forest area. The horrific incident took place in November 2022. On information SrinivasaRao rushed to a place called Bendalapudi, where the tribals were damaging plantation raised by the Forest Department. As soon as the Range officer arrived at the scene, two men with axes attacked him from behind. He sustained serious injuries. The staff rushed him to hospital but he could not be saved. He succumbed to the injuries. The mortal remains of the slain officer were cremated at his native village with full state honours.

#### **INDIRA PRIYADARSHINI VRUKSHA MITRA AWARD:**

The scheme of IPVM Awards was instituted in 1982 by the Ministry of Environment and Forests to recognize exceptional contribution to afforestation and wasteland development. The award is presented annually to individuals and Institutions. The award includes a Rs. 2,50,000 cash prize , a medal and a citation for pioneering environmental efforts. It is considered as a National Award.Among the individuals, Forest Officers Sri M. Padmanabha Reddy and Sri N. Ramakrishna Rao; and Institutions, The TirupatiTirumalaDevasthanam(late Sri.P.S.Shankar Reddy) received the award.

---

*The author is a Dy.C.F.in Indian Forest Service retired in July 1990 as Joint Director in the Anti-Corruption Bureau of Andhra Pradesh. He is on Phone No: 966 609 7788 and Email ID: keesarabuchiram@gmail.com*



## Ranthambore National Park — Where Stone Remembers and Forests Breathe

Dr. Padam Parkash Bhojvaid

Ranthambore lies cradled between the ancient ribs of the Aravalli and Vindhya hills near Sawai Madhopur — a terrain where Rajasthan's rugged earth softens into a living manuscript of forests, lakes, and ruins. It is not merely a national park; it is a confluence of epochs. Here, history does not stand apart from wilderness — it leans into it, like an old warrior resting his sword against a tree. Every trail seems to carry the remembered hoof beats of kings alongside the unrecorded, delicate steps of deer.

The land rises and dips through rocky escarpments, dry deciduous woods, and open meadows, as though nature has assembled a mosaic from dust, stone, and monsoon memory. Dhok trees (*Anogeissus pendula*) (Warrior of the Aravallis) twist upward like ascetics in meditation, their sparse foliage tempering the sunlight into a stern glow. Ranthambore does not dazzle with lush abundance; instead, it compels through contrast — stone against leaf, silence against birdsong, and ruin alongside resurgence.

Presiding over this theatre of wilderness stands the formidable Ranthambore Fort, its ramparts stretched across a hilltop like a weathered crown. Built in the 10th century by the Chauhan rulers and strengthened under Hammir Dev Chauhan, the fort once guarded a thriving

settlement that bore its name. In the 13th and early 14th centuries, it became the arena of fierce struggles for supremacy — most notably the siege by Alauddin Khalji in 1301, when Rajput defiance confronted imperial ambition in a battle that still lingers in regional lore. Later, Emperor Akbar brought the fort into the Mughal fold, absorbing its strength into a larger imperial design.

Yet the fort does not merely recount conquest; it endures. Its gateways scarred but steadfast, appear less like relics and more like vigilant sentinels who have exchanged armies for antelope and cannon smoke for birdsong. To walk through these portals is to turn the pages of a chronicle inscribed in stone — each courtyard a paragraph, each bastion a deliberate pause in the long sentence of time.

Within these ancient walls stands the revered Trinetra Ganesh Temple, where faith flows seamlessly into history. The idol of Lord Ganesha, depicted with Riddhi, Siddhi, Shubh, and Labh, symbolizes completeness — prosperity tempered by wisdom, beginnings anchored in grace. Pilgrims ascend the steep pathway bearing offerings and private hopes. A cherished tradition endures: families send the first wedding invitation here, entrusting their unions to divine blessing. In this way, a fortress once shaped

by conflict now shelters devotion, and battlements echo with prayer rather than war cries.

From the fort's height, the park spreads outward like an immense tapestry stitched with silver lakes — Padam, Rajbagh, Malik — their surfaces reflecting sky and ruin alike. Water is the quiet architect of life here. Around these shimmering reservoirs gather herds of chital, their white-spotted flanks glimmering like moving constellations. Sambar linger at twilight in contemplative stillness; wild boar root along the muddy margins, indifferent to the history beneath their hooves. Langurs spring across broken pavilions, reclaiming abandoned arches with effortless agility, blurring the line between decay and renewal.

Birdlife adds its own music to this layered landscape. Egrets rise in sudden flurries of white; kingfishers flash electric blue along the water's edge; storks and migratory visitors trace invisible routes across the sky. At dawn, mist drifts upward from the lakes like the breath of an ancient storyteller, and the chorus of wings transforms silence into song. The forest speaks in many voices, and its birds are among its most eloquent narrators.

And then, as if to anchor this entire composition, there is the tiger. In Ranthambore, the great cat is not always a distant rumour. It may emerge from tall grass with unhurried grace, its stripes burnished by amber light, its gaze steady with an authority older than fort or empire. A sighting here feels less like triumph and more like privilege — as though the

forest briefly acknowledges the patient observer. The tiger is neither spectacle nor trophy; it is the living emblem of the land's resilience.

Reaching Ranthambore is itself a gentle prelude to its experience. The nearest railhead is Sawai Madhopur, well connected to Delhi, Jaipur, and Mumbai. Jaipur International Airport, about 180 kilometres away, serves as the closest major air gateway, from where the road journey gradually trades urban rhythm for rural quietude. By road, the drive from Jaipur or Kota passes mustard fields, small hamlets, and the slow unfolding of Rajasthan's interior landscapes — a transition that prepares the mind for stillness.

The park remains open from October to June, with each season offering its own character. The winter months from November to February are crisp and pleasant, ideal for unhurried safaris and exploration of the fort. As summer deepens from March to June, the heat intensifies but wildlife sightings often improve, as animals gather near water bodies in the thinning foliage. The monsoon months bring renewal but the core zones remain closed, allowing the forest to rest and regenerate.

Not far away, the Chambal River extends this wilderness into ravines sculpted like bold brushstrokes across the earth. Its slow currents shelter gharials and marsh crocodiles, creatures that seem to belong to another geological age. A quiet boat ride upon these waters carries the same

contemplative stillness one senses atop the fort — a reminder that in this region, time moves in broad, unhurried arcs.

Yet with recognition comes responsibility. Ranthambore's growing popularity has brought an influx of safari vehicles and eager visitors. Dust clouds sometimes rise where silence once reigned. Conservation here demands restraint — an understanding that admiration must never eclipse respect. The forest reveals its truths only to those willing to listen more than they look.

To spend a few days in Ranthambore is to inhabit a carefully composed chapter: dawn safaris through golden grasslands, temple bells drifting across stone ramparts, deer grazing beneath crumbling arches, and perhaps the

fleeting silhouette of a tiger dissolving into reeds. History here does not compete with nature; it is absorbed by it. The stones remember sieges and sovereignty, but the forest reclaims them gently, with leaf and shadow.

In the end, Ranthambore is not simply a destination marked on a map. It is a conversation — between Chauhan courage and Mughal ambition, between pilgrim and predator, between stone that remembers and forest that forgives. One arrives seeking wildlife and departs carrying something deeper: the quiet awareness that memory has texture, that faith and ferocity can share the same horizon, and that in this meeting ground of ruin and renewal, time itself continues to breathe.

---

*The author is a former PCCF (HoFF), Haryana. M-70879 56657*

**Did someone tell you that you had no talent? Not true! Only, the talents we have, are different. To celebrate life we need to celebrate the talent that we have. Some use their talent and some don't, because they are not sufficiently aware that the gifts of life they have, are to be traded for other talents. The musician looks at life's beauty through sound; the artist through visuals; the writer through words; the thinker through concepts and abstractions; the chef through culinary delights; the economist through statistics; the believer through faith; the unbeliever, perhaps, through ideals. There is a whole world out there full of beauty and life that we are not privy to; because, in life, we cannot be super at everything**

**- Janina Gomes.**



In commemoration of International Tiger Day (July 29):

## To minimise the human-wildlife conflicts, a 'go-by' to certain long-held beliefs!

"Abundant water and prey push numbers beyond capacity & cause conflicts."

Dr B Raghotham Rao Desai

### The background:

Way back, while commemorating the occasion similarly, I had written earlier a couple of articles (and caused them published in Forestry Journals), regarding the sanctity & rationale behind providing water-holes in our wildlife sanctuaries, getting the appreciative-responses from a couple of the then Wildlife Wardens (who manned the Wildlife Wing during its formative years and superannuated in the early eighties of the century gone by) when I was associated with the affairs of Hunsur Territorial Forest Division (known earlier as 'South Coorg Forest Division', Hunsur), with Nagarahole Reserve under Bale cove Range (as part of its territorial jurisdiction).

**We need to challenge presently some long-held notions and beliefs, if we hope to reduce human-wildlife conflicts substantially** having already dug thousands of waterholes & lakhs of percolation-pits, followed by installation of numerous solar-pumps (under an assumption that wildlife is leaving the forests where they lived all along, due to lack of water or sufficient fodder). If those inferences were true, the human-wildlife conflicts should have been reduced considerably in Bandipur and Nagarahole & at least not increased (as we experience now). The same argument goes for the problem of weed removal - if weeds were severely limiting the growth & spread of fodder, how come that the prey-species continue to be increasing? If the deer depended mainly on agricultural crops, lakhs of chitals (spotted deer) would be moving outside the forests! Aren't 'apex-predators' destined to die naturally or migrate

to regulate their population? We'd better not bother to treat naturally-injured-wildlife inside the protected areas (got injured by fights, falls) by adopting methods we treat our pets or animals in the zoos and precisely think scientifically, rather than bow to social-media-pressures of a few.

### Fact file:

The recent spurt in human-deaths, caused by tigers, and the consequent farmer-protests in the 'Bandipur Tiger Reserve' have once again brought human-wildlife conflict into sharp-focus- resulting in the Forest Department capturing more than a dozen tigers (in response to public protest): both people and wildlife suffering clearly from the said unfortunate incidents. As had been come-across, elephants, leopards, and tigers are the three species most commonly involved in fatal conflicts in Karnataka- but as the focus here being tigers: the solutions we propose to suggest differ from species to species, and even vary geographically.

The steady rise in tiger-numbers had been in the State due to providing ideal tiger habitats and implementing for the past four decades, of strong protection-efforts (at Nagarahole, Bandipur, and three other tiger reserver) aiming intensive habitat manipulations to support large tiger-populations, including digging waterholes (to ensure year-round water availability), constructing check-dams, and creating artificial grasslands (to increase fodder for prey-species). As a result, chitals tigers' preferred prey have increased in abundance (being mostly feeding on grass and their fate of survival & reproduction abilities improving

under the conditions of abundance of fodder & water). This, in turn, results in an increase in the proliferation of the tiger population. But while tiger numbers are growing, forest covers are proportionately not resulting in the inability to support more tigers than the forest-covers' ecological-carrying-capacity: tigers themselves having no natural predators, their population is regulated the only way with infights, conflicts with their kinds and then getting fatally injured, due to resource-scarcity, such natural factors helping to keep their numbers to an extent within the ecological carrying-capacity of the environs.

### **Conclusion:**

When the water and the prey are abundantly made available (either by nature or on account of departmental efforts), the wildlife populations are bound to exceed the desirable limits intended by nature - and as a consequence, the predators start wandering even outside their habitats (into adjacent farmlands, neighbouring plantations, and nearby riverine patches & landscapes (human-dominated or other wise): not because there exists any scarcity of resources in their habitats

to push them out but due to overabundance of the resources and as they have nothing else to do! A lay reason why Tiger numbers are seen on sharp rise especially in Bandipur and Nagarahole is because of tourism

not because it is directly enhancing their protection, but because of the substantial revenue it is generating (around 40 crore per annum), which is retained and spent within those protected areas only (as per an amendment to the Wildlife Protection Act in 2006 mandating it): much of which goes into digging waterholes, building check-dams, constructing arches, and other cement-and-concrete activities local communities living around these forests bearing the brunt of rising wildlife numbers (their crops getting raided by Wild-pigs, elephants, chital, and peafowls; their livestock preyed upon by tigers and leopards). Hence, this pattern of spending lavishly by the wildlife wing perhaps needs an early rethinking by redirecting a substantial percentage of tourism-revenue towards community-development, awarding, quick-compensation for conflict-losses, and many welfare measures.

*The author is a retired IFS officer of Karnataka cadre and the Chief Editor of 'VanaVikas', a quarterly magazine of the retired forest officers of Karnataka. M-9886157158.*

**Good Leaders: Enlightened Leadership is spiritual if we understand spirituality...as the domain of awareness where we experience values like truth, goodness, beauty, love and compassion, and also intuition, creativity, insight and focussed attention**

**-Deepak Chopra**



## Siltation in Tungabhadra Reservoir

(Causes, Threat & Solutions)

B M T Rajeev

The Tungabhadra Reservoir/Dam (also known as Pampa Sagar) is a major multipurpose dam in Karnataka, India, built across the Tungabhadra River (a tributary of the Krishna River). It's located near Hosapete (Hospet) in Vijayanagara district (formerly part of Bellary district), at the Hospet-Koppal confluence, about 10-15 km from the famous Hampi ruins (Ruins of the Vijayanagar Empire of 14-16 CE).

### Key Facts and Features



**Pic: Tungabhadra Reservoir**

- **Construction history** -The project began in 1949 as a joint venture between the erstwhile Madras Presidency and Hyderabad State. It was completed in 1953, shortly after India's independence, and is now managed as an inter-state project between Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh under the Tungabhadra Board.

- **Structure** -This is a composite dam (stone masonry with earthen sections), approximately 2,449 meters long and 49.50 meters wide. It features 33 crest gates (spillway gates) for water release.

- **Reservoir capacity**- Gross storage is around 132 TMCft (thousand million cubic feet),

with live/active storage of about 101-117 TMCft at full reservoir level (FRL around 498 m MSL). It covers a large water spread area of roughly 378 sq km. (Storage capacity is feared to have reduced to 100 TMCft due to siltation of the tank bed from the silt load from the upstream.)

- **Purposes**- Primarily irrigation dam (irrigating over 2 lakh hectares in districts like Ballary, Raichur, Koppal, and parts of Andhra Pradesh), plus hydroelectric power generation (powerhouse with capacity around 36-72 MW from multiple units), flood control, and drinking water supply to cities in the command area.

- **Tourism and attractions** - It's a popular spot near Hampi with scenic views, well-maintained gardens and parks in the downstream, and it's a biodiversity hotspot (especially for birds on reservoir islands). Visitors often combine it with Hampi trips.

**i.The Water Basin:** The catchment area of the Tungabhadra Reservoir is 28,177 km<sup>2</sup> or 28,180 km<sup>2</sup> and falls within the Karnataka State.

**Causes for Siltation of the Dam & Threat:** The Tungabhadra River is the confluence of **Tunga and Bhadra Rivers which take birth in Western Ghats (WGs)**. The Tunga and Bhadra rivers too have dams across them in Shivamogga district. The natural high forests in these river basins in the WGs are under stress due to forest encroachments for cultivation, plantations and mines; and subjected for degradation due to smuggling, forest fires and invasion by exotic weed- Lantana which is killing the regeneration of trees and grasses. This zone too dispatches loads of silt with the run-

off floods, but such silt load is trapped in the above dams posing the problem of siltation to them.

**After WGs, the Tungabhadra dam basin up to the Reservoir is in the plains** under dry deciduous/scrubs and under dry land farming and a part it is under irrigation. The natural forests in the dry zone are overused and degraded, farming under rain fed and the active mines are exposed for soil erosion and such areas dispatch heavy silt load during rains along with run-off to the river course and on to the dam and cause siltation of reservoir reducing its storage capacity. **It is already feared about 21-30 TMC ft storage capacity of the Reservoir has lost due to siltation.** The Karnataka Government is already planning to build a new dam with a higher storage capacity in the lower riparian site of TB dam. A critical situation within the period of 100 years of the dam's construction; scientifically RCC & masonry dams & buildings are expected to serve more than 100 years/ a century. This dam has completed just 73 years as of 2026 and it is under threat of siltation.

Still the Reservoir has life and to build alternative dam, it takes years and this dam has to be protected from further siltation and should be made to slow down its siltation rate by initiating measures to stop the soil erosion/silt load from its upper catchment areas with **SMCs (Soil & Moisture Conservation) measures and trees planting-programs in the watershed basis.**

**Solutions to Stop Siltation:** Karnataka State is the first in developing a model of **watershed treatments** as early as in 1983 forming **DLDB** (Dry Land Development Boards) at every Revenue divisions and implementation on watersheds (WS) basis from ridge to discharge point of Micro WS to Mini-WS and to major WS by involving soil & moisture conservation model by the Agriculture,

Horticulture and Forestry Departments under a single Umbrella-WS Project. It is in progress still under the name-**WS Development Department** in each district under the **PRI** (Panchayat Raj Institution- **ZP** (ZillaPanchayat). In spite of it, this TB dam has been allowed to sink in its storage capacity is not a sign of success in WS development programmes. The GoK has to give special attention to stop the silt load to TB dam by gearing up WSD Programs in the TB dam's water basin with huge funds.

**There is huge scope for WSDP in this catchment area** in the districts of Shivamogga, Chickamagaluru, Haveri, Chitradurga, Davangere, Vijayapura, Bellary, Koppal with special fund allocations. This program should also include the forest areas in the catchment- for which funds should be diverted to the Forest department for implementation with technical knowhow from the WSDP.

\*There are scopes for tackling the affected/ degraded forest areas in the **upper basin of the TB River in the WGs belt** on watershed basis to reduce the soil erosion with SMC measures with tree planting to reduce the silt loads with run-off. The exotic weed- Lantana needs to be controlled in the portion with uprooting of it and intensive tree planting limited to Chickmagaluru&Shivamogga districts.

\*The TB dam's water basin after the WG is **dry zone** in the districts like Haveri, Davanagere, Chitradurga, Davangere, Vijayanagara , Bellary and Koppal need a different treatment with WSD programmes. **The treatment for tree planting should be with a technique of contour trench & mound (TM) method without half refilling for tree planting- (trenches should be left open) so that the open trenches will intercept the runoff/ silt and allow rain water to percolate in earth**

and recharge the UGWT for longer period in addition to retaining moisture & silt for the trees planted to grow and develop. Care should be taken to plant trees not browsed /attractive to the cattle like-**Jamunn, Aeglemarmelos, Anogeisus, Terminaliaspp, Wrightiatinctoria, Ac.lucophlea, Prosopis cineraria** etc since this zone is exposed for heavy cattle grazing/browsing.

**Absence of tree planting & SMCs programs in the TB dam's watershed has resulted in the silting up of the TB Reservoir to the tune of 21-30 TMC ft.** If the catchment area's treatment is further neglected, it will continue to silt up the dam causing reduction in its water storage capacity.

ii.The **FRL/FTL** is 497.74 m above MSL. The dam is designed with **FRL** (Full reservoir level) **coinciding with FTL** (Full tank level), meaning there is typically no significant permanent difference between normal full storage and the level for flood handling-the spillway (with 33 crest gates) handles excess flows.

The area **between HFL** (High flood level) and **FTL** is therefore minimal or negligible in normal operations for TB Reservoir, unlike some smaller tanks/lakes where a clear buffer or drawdown zone exists.

**The foreshore tree planting** to a belt of 10.0m wide @ espacement 2m x 2m in pits good tree seedlings has a very good potential to rise green belt over a distance of over 100 km or more means over 2.00-3.00 lakh trees and also on the spurs along the foreshore too can be planted and the benefits of this planting is immense with inundation tolerant trees of the locality like Arjun, Jamun, Bael, Sissoo, Ficus varieties, Babhuletc

**Advantages:** It will avoid encroachments when the dam's water storage capacity goes down causing receding of water fast after rains. It creates a

green belt around the reservoir. Now, TB dam is a water birds sanctuary attracting inland and foreign visiting birds in huge numbers...the trees will provide shelter to water birds and den with fruits and nectar to the local birds, small animals and to crocodiles/otters. It will improve the ecology and greenery of the reservoir/locality and resilience with the ecosystem. In the long run, it yields good timber to the state. It will be an act towards beating climate change.

**iii.TB River course:** Absence of upkeep of the river course with protection of its banks from erosion, sand mining and encroachment etc will cause a severe damage to Reservoir in the lower reach of the river. Sand mafia is very strong in the present era which will change even the river course itself causing soil erosion by damaging the river banks and even cause meandering of the river during high floods. It is wise to have tree planting along the bank of the river on either side with creation of tree groves wherever low lying blocks are available to keep the health of the river course, create green belt and shelter/food to birds and small animals.

**\*\*Budget: Finance** for the above important ecological restoration program is a problem in the present era of development with major emphasis on education, health, communication-travel/transportation on roads/in air, mass media communications, development of-cities/villages and new projects of dams and space innovations, defense and freebies in the name of socio-economic upliftment of the society etc but, least consideration for ecological restoration projects in spite of the threat of global warming, climate change and scarcity of water for irrigation and drinking.

We see the advertisements of bottled water for RS 10 -15 per liter sold everywhere in the guise of safe

drinking water. Now, most of the surface waters in the mainland except in the upper regions of WGs, Himalayas & its NE Ghats, none dare enough to drink any water without being subject to RO filtering...that is the situation of pollution of rivers/ underground waters. The underground water is over exploited for farming and residential use ... .and the old rich storage is depleting fast with caution to use it less and conserve it by harvesting rain water & recharging it into the underground water table (UGWT).

With the above scenarios, **the government should have a regular plan to treat and maintain the ecological health and resilience of the catchment area of the dam** without exposing it for degradation and soil erosion to cause siltation of the dams across the Rivers. This important job has to be taken care of by the dam authorities or the Irrigation Department.

There should be a provision up to Rs 5,000 per sqkm per year of the catchment as a pool to continue the job of maintaining the ecological balance of catchments. Means annual fund of **Rs 15.00 crore should be made available for the treatment of the watershed of the TB dam.**

**Responsibility:** The responsibility of maintaining the dam free from siltation rests with the govt.-means the **“Tungabhadra Board”** and **“Command Area Development Authorities-CADA** of the TB Dams or River. But unfortunately **the TB Board and the CADA are headed by the Civil Engineers who are involved in building the dam, creation of all the infrastructures and distribution system of canals for irrigation etc.** They are looking after the maintenance and operations of them systematically and technically and are unaware of the maintenance of the ecological health of the Water basin/catchment of the River/dam against soil erosion and silt load pumping into the dam reducing its storage capacity. There was a TRVP project in the beginning years of the dam; I have seen its works of tree planting in Bellary district in the forest department in the 1970s as SMC works; after its stoppage the TB dam basin has been left to nature-the root cause for the siltation of TB dam.

**Now, the Tungabhadra Board should wake up against the threat of siltation of the TB dam and plan to fund the ecological restoration of its water basin through watershed treatments as envisaged in the WSD Department.**

*Author is a Retired Forest Officer and freelance Columnist on forests, wildlife and environment, Bengaluru. Mob: 96327 81811*

**Answers to Green Quiz:** 1.Meliponiculture, 2.HALO Trust, 3.Guryul Ravines at Khanmoh, 4.The Magnolias, 5.Sikkim Sundari, 6.The Shompens, 7.Vikram Sarabhai Space Center, Thiruvananthapuram, 8.ShakuntalaBhagat; 9. Force Majeure, 10. Tagatose sugar.

**For School Students:** 1.Karnataka, Dakshina Kannada in Mangalore city, 2. Renfield, 3. SaraswathaNikethan library in Vetapalem, Prakasham district,4. Switzerland with 3,70,000 bunkers, 5. Monocarpic



## Treepies of India

K. Praveen Rao

Treepies are the birds belonging to the family Corvidae, the family to which crows belong. Corvidae is a cosmopolitan family to which Crows, Ravens, Magpies, Jays, Nutcrackers, Treepies, Choughs etc belong. In general terminology it is called crow family or corvids.

Corvids are very intelligent animals. The mirror test and in using tools they are experts. The mirror test is that technique to evaluate physiological and cognitive self-awareness. In mirror test the animal is anesthetized and then a mark is placed on the body like a red spot on the forehead which it cannot see. Then a mirror is placed in front of the animal. Looking at the mirror, if it touches its red spot, it means the animal recognizes the reflection as its own and not another animal, it indicates the intelligence level of the animal. The corvids are known to have the brain to body ratio equal to that of Great apes.

Regarding using of tools, we all as students of primary school have learnt a lesson of 'EkKauvvyasatha, Jug me thodapanitha, KauvalayaPathar, Paaniaayaoopar'. This tells about the intelligence level of the crows. Which belong to the family Corvidae.

Treepies belong to the sub family cypsininae of family corvidae. Hence are also known as cypsinines. There are 12 species of Treepies in the world of which 5 species of treepies are found in India. All these five species of treepies belong to the genus Dendrocitta. These are long tailed Passerine birds. Their generic name is derived from the Greek word dendron means tree kitta means magpie. Their plumages are black, grey and rufous in colour. These are highly arboreal in

nature. The five species of Treepies that are found in India are

1. Rufoustreepie – Dendrocittavagabanda
2. Grey treepie – Dendrocittaformosae
3. Collared treepie–Dendrocittafrontalis
4. White–belliedtreepie–Dendrocittaleucogastra
5. Andaman treepie – Dendrocittabeylei

**Rufous treepie** - It is native to Indian sub-continent and south-east Asia. Its loud musical call makes it conspicuous. It has a black head and rufous body, graduated tail with a black tip. Both the sexes look alike. It is an omnivorous bird feeding on small reptiles, invertebrates, eggs, young birds, fruits and seeds. They have symbiotic relation with some herbivore species like deer. These are seen feeding on the ectoparasites of Sambar deer.

**Grey treepie** – It is also called Himalayan treepie. The bird is widely distributed in the foot hills of Himalayas in Indian Sub-continent, Nepal, China and Taiwan, Bangladesh, Myanmar and Thailand. They are arboreal in nature and are omnivorous in their diet. They feed on insects, invertebrates, berries, nectar, seeds, small reptiles, eggs and nestlings. They are found in wide variety of habitats like forest, cultivation and human habitation. Their voice is harsh.

**Collared treepie** –It is also called Black-faced treepie or Black-browed treepie. Its face and bib are black whereas neck, chest and shoulders are light silvery. Back and underparts are brown. It is found in Northeast Indian Himalayas, and in the hill forests of Nepal, Myanmar, Bangladesh. Omnivorous in diet. Feeds on invertebrates, and

hawks for termites. Loves fruits and berries.

**White-bellied treepie** – It is endemic to the forests of Southern India especially western Ghats and Goa. It has White head, neck and underparts. Beak, Throat, breast and thighs are black. Tail silvery grey and ending in black. Omnivorous in diet feeding on fruits, seeds, invertebrates, rodents, eggs and nestlings.

**Andaman treepie** – It is endemic to Andaman Islands. Inhabits tropical and moist lowland forests. These are omnivorous in diet. Feeds on insects, seeds, fruits, invertebrates, mantises. They are very skilled to move through high level canopies and thick shrubs. They are shy and elusive compared to other treepies.

*The Author is a former Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Uttar Pradesh and presently Chairman, Committee on Materials, NBA, Chennai, M-94110 52235*



## Birthday Greetings

We wish the following born on the dates mentioned

**“A VERY HAPPY BIRTH DAY”**



S.No. Name of the Member/ Retired officer	D.O.B.	S.No. Name of the Serving Officers	D.O.B.
<b>Sarva Sri</b>		<b>Sarva Sri</b>	
1. S. Mahadev	10-04-1951	1. Ms. Nandani Salaria	06-04-1988
2. R.M. Dobriyal	10-04-1965	2. Dr. Shanthi Priya Pandey	08-04-1972
3. S. Krishnaiah	15-04-1952	3. G. Kista Goud	08-04-1974
4. J.V.K.T. Prabhakar Rao	15-04-1953	4. Bora Raja Rao	12-04-1965
5. S. Veerabhadram	17-04-1950	5. R. Jagannath Singh	18-04-1985
6. Leli Bheemaiah	17-04-1963	6. B.N.N. Murthy	19-04-1979
7. S.V.Kumar	21-04-1953	7. M. Siva Prasad	20-04-1981
8. M.J. Akbar	26-04-1962	8. B. Sunil Kumar Reddy	22-04-1989
9. P. Bhushanam	01-05-1949	9. K. Rajasekhara Rao	20-04-1968
10. B. Nagaraju	01-05-1963	10. C. Sridhara Rao	24-04-1965
11. K. Prabhu Prasad	02-05-1946	11. Bolleddu Vijay Kumar	24-04-1968
12. G. Prabhakar Reddy	02-05-1952	12. C. Selvam	24-04-1986
13. Kallol Biswas	04-05-1964	13. N. Sangeetha	28-04-1977
14. P. Kanaka Ratnam	05-05-1949	14. Padal Sagar	03-05-1964
15. G. Satya Narayana	05-05-1950	15. Maddela Joji	04-05-1967
		16. Tadepalli Sreenivasa Rao	04-05-1969
		<b>- Secretary</b>	

Any Omissions and Commissions in the Names / Dates may kindly be informed to the Editor over WhatsApp or Email.



## Why executing a will is an imperative need?

V.V.Hari Prasad

It is imperative to execute a will for all in general and for the senior citizens in particular. "Imperative need" refers to an urgent, crucial, and absolutely essential requirement that demands immediate attention or action. It signifies a situation where something is indispensable—a "must-have"—often to avoid negative consequences or to achieve a critical goal.

### Key Aspects of Imperative Need:

- ✓ **Urgency & Importance:** It is not just a preference; it is a vital, pressing demand.
- ✓ **Compulsory Action:** It signifies a situation that is unavoidable, essential, or mandatory.
- ✓ **Context:** Commonly used in formal, business, or critical situations to highlight a high-priority issue, such as an **"imperative need for medical supplies"**.

**Caselaw example:** When **VANAJA** in her late forties lost her husband, she and her young daughter had to grapple with more than just the emotional trauma. Vanaja's husband had not left a Will. With other family members staking claim to the deceased's property, legal wrangles compounded her misery. Presence of a Will would have ensured certainty and definiteness in not merely determining entitlement but also in the location and identification of the assets.

**What is a will:** A Will is a vital document. It ensures that one's loved ones inherit what is rightfully theirs. **It is a misconception that the property is automatically passed on to the spouse, given children and, at times, even relatives stake a claim to it.** The rules for writing a will are determined by the Indian Succession Act.

When a person drafts a will, one has to make sure that it is complete and specific. A Will usually starts with a declaration by the maker stating that it is being

drafted of his/her own volition, in the right mental state and without pressure. One needs to include his full name, his age and residential address. Then, a list of all his assets—real estate, bank accounts and fixed deposits, postal investments, mutual funds, share certificates, etc. is to be made clear specifying where these documents are kept. One has to write the Will clearly and shall not use jargon. One must also mention who should own these assets and in what proportion. Likewise, if one nominates a minor as a beneficiary, he must appoint a custodian for his assets till the minor becomes an adult. If a person has many assets or if he frequently keeps churning his assets, he has to ensure that he has clearly mentioned a nominee or a second / joint holder for each of his investments. A person can make a statement in the Will that all his movable and immovable assets are bequeathed to the nominee or the second/joint holder of the asset.

**If a person dies without having made a Will—intestate—then his/her assets will be divided as per the applicable Succession Act or personal law. Normally, a nominee or a second / joint holder of an asset is only a trustee / caretaker of the asset and, in the absence of a Will, he/she will have to distribute the asset in accordance with one's personal law. A Will, however, will specify to whom the assets will be bequeathed.**

### Steps to make a "Will Without A Lawyer"

#### Step 1: List Your Assets and Beneficiaries

Create a comprehensive estate plan by listing:

- ✓ **Real estate** (homes, land, properties)
- ✓ **Financial accounts** (bank accounts, investments, mutual funds)
- ✓ **Life insurance policies**

- ✓ **Personal property** (jewellery, cars, heirlooms)
- ✓ **Digital assets** (cryptocurrency, online accounts)
- ✓ **Other family members'** inheritance wishes

### Step 2: Choose an Executor

An **Executor** is the person responsible for carrying out the **Will's validity** and **probate process**. This should be a **trusted individual** with **financial expertise** or a responsible adult child.

### Step 3: Name a Guardian for Minor Children

If you have minor children, designate a legal guardian to take care of them. This ensures they are looked after in case of an unfortunate event.

### Step 4: Draft the Will

Write your Will in clear, simple language, avoiding ambiguity. Include:

- ✓ Your full name and address
- ✓ Declaration that you are of sound mind and making the Will voluntarily
- ✓ Names of Beneficiaries and their assigned assets
- ✓ Name of the Executor
- ✓ Signature and date

### Step 5: Sign the Will in the Presence of Witnesses

Your Will must be signed by two Witnesses who are not Beneficiaries. They must also sign in your presence.

### Step 6: Attach a Self-Proving Affidavit (Optional)

A self-proving affidavit can simplify the probate process by confirming the authenticity of the Will. This is especially useful for avoiding legal disputes.

### Step 7: Keep the Will Safe and Updated

Store the original Will in a safe location. Update it as needed, especially when a major life event occurs, such as:

- ✓ Marriage or divorce
- ✓ Birth of a child or adult child reaching legal age
- ✓ Acquiring new assets

- ✓ Death of a Beneficiary or Executor

### Joint Wills vs Separate Wills

You can choose between:

✓ **Joint wills:** A single Will shared by both you and your spouse.

✓ **Separate wills:** Individual Wills for each person.

**Most experts recommend separate Wills as they allow greater flexibility in case of future changes.**

### When Does A Will Require Probate?

**According to Section 2 of the Indian Succession Act, 1925, Probate means "the copy of a Will certified under the seal of a court of competent jurisdiction with a grant of administration of the estate of the testator". It is nothing but a decree passed by a competent court declaring the legality/correctness and genuineness of the Will of the deceased**

The **probate court** oversees the **probate process**, which is necessary when:

- ✓ The **Will's validity** is contested
- ✓ There are **disputes** among **family members**
- ✓ The **estate** involves significant **financial assets**

### Making a Will without a lawyer

In India is a straightforward process if you follow the required **legal steps**. By carefully drafting your **Will**, signing it with **two Witnesses**, and securely storing the **original document**, you can ensure that your **final wishes** are honoured. While an **estate planning attorney** can provide additional legal insights, a **self-made Will** can still be **legally valid** and serve as a comprehensive **estate plan**. Regular updates and proper documentation will ensure a **smooth process** for your **familymembers** when the time comes.

When property-holding parents die intestate (without a valid will), their assets—including land, houses, bank accounts, and investments—are distributed among their legal heirs according to personal laws governing their religion

**Key Aspects of Intestate Succession:**

- ✓ **Law of the Land:** The distribution of property is decided by law, not by the wishes of the deceased.
- ✓ **Religion-Based Laws:**
  - o **Hindu Succession Act, 1956:** Applies to Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs, and Jains.
  - o **Indian Succession Act, 1925:** Applies to Christians and Parsis.
  - o **Sharia Law:** Applies to Muslims.
- ✓ **Legal Heir Certificates:** Heirs must obtain a "legal heir certificate" or a "succession certificate" from a local authority or court to formally claim the property.
- ✓ **Mutation of Records:** After the legal process, heirs must update property records (mutation) with the local municipal or revenue department.

**Scenario 1: Hindu Male Dies Intestate**

Property passes to Class I heirs, which include the wife, children (sons and daughters), and mother.

- ✓ Each Class I heir receives an equal share.
- ✓ Under the 2005 amendment, married daughters have equal rights to the property as sons.
- ✓ If a son/daughter has predeceased the parent, their children (grandchildren) take their share.
- ✓ If no Class I heirs exist, the property passes to Class II heirs (father, siblings, etc.).

**Scenario 2: Hindu Female Dies Intestate**

**Property is inherited primarily by her children and husband, with specific rules governing inheritance based on the source of the property (i.e., whether inherited from parents or husband). A legal heir certificate is essential for transferring property, assets, and dues of a deceased person who died intestate (without a will) to their rightful heirs. It establishes the relationship between the deceased and legal heirs, often required for transferring bank accounts, immovable property, or government benefits. The process involves applying to the Mandal/Tehsildar office,**

**submitting a death certificate, and providing affidavits of kinship.**

**Key Aspects of Obtaining a Legal Heir Certificate:**

- v Purpose: To claim rights over the deceased person's property, assets, and to manage bank accounts, insurance, and service benefits.
- v Essential Documents:
  - o Death Certificate (original).
  - o Identity/Address proof of all legal heirs (Aadhar card, etc.).
  - o Proof of birth for all legal heirs.
  - o Self-undertaking affidavit.
  - o Application form submitted to the Mandal Office/Tahasildar.
- v **Procedure:**
  - o Application: Submit documents to the local municipal office or Tahasildar.
  - o Verification: Revenue officials conduct an investigation.
  - o Issuance: The certificate is issued after successful verification.
- v **Alternative for Complex Cases:** For complex, disputed, or high-value assets, a Succession Certificate from a civil court may be required instead of a legal heir certificate.
- v **What is a Succession Certificate?**
- v **A succession certificate** is a certificate given to the successor of a deceased person who has not prepared a will. This certificate is given to the successor of a deceased person who has not prepared a will in order to establish the authenticity of the successor.
  - v The succession certificate also gives the certificate holder authority over the deceased person's debts and securities. The payment of debts of the deceased person and also the transfer of the securities of the deceased person can be made by the certificate holder.
- v **Obtaining a Succession Certificate**

v A succession certificate is issued by the district judge of the relevant jurisdiction. To obtain a succession certificate, a petition should be prepared and filed in the relevant district court.

v The petition to obtain a succession certificate should be filed in the jurisdiction of the district court where the deceased person ordinarily resided at the time of his death. If no such place is available, the relevant district court would be within which any property belonging to the deceased may be found.

Step-by-Step Procedure to Obtain a Succession Certificate:

v **1. Identify the Court:** File the petition with the District Judge's Court in the area where the deceased resided or, if they had no fixed residence, where their property is located.

v **2. Prepare and File the Petition:** Engage a lawyer to prepare a petition detailing:

- ✓ Date, time, and place of death.
- ✓ Details of all legal heirs.
- ✓ A list of assets (securities, debts, bank accounts) for which the certificate is required.
- ✓ Relevant documents (death certificate, legal heir certificate, proof of relationship).

v **3. Preliminary Hearing & Notice:** The court will schedule a preliminary hearing. If the petition is admitted, the court will issue a notice to all relevant parties and publish a notice in local newspapers inviting objections.

v **4. Final Hearing:** If no objections are raised during the notice period (usually 45 days), the court will conduct a final hearing to verify the claims and, if satisfied, grant the certificate.

v **5. Execution of Bond:** Before issuance, the court may require the applicant to submit a bond with sureties to secure against future misuse of the certificate.

### Key Details:

v **Cost:** Court fees are generally calculated as a percentage of the total value of the assets. In some states like West Bengal, this is around 3%.

v **Purpose:** It is essential for transferring movable properties like bank accounts, shares, and securities.

v **Challenge:** If objections are raised, the court will resolve them before granting the certificate. **For specific procedures in Telangana, the petition can be filed in the local Civil Court, which will handle the process in a manner similar to the steps described**

A succession certificate is required to prove that you are the successor of a deceased person. When you have a succession certificate, you have the authority over the deceased person's debts and securities.

v **Key Highlights:** When a person expires without writing a will, it is necessary to apply for succession certificate. The succession certificate is issued by a district court.

v The successor in the succession certificate will get the interest/ dividend on the securities held by a deceased person.

**Conclusion:** Probate of a Will when granted, establishes the genuineness of Will from the death of the testator and renders valid all intermediate acts of the Executor as such. If the Will which is required to be probated, under the Act, if not probated, has no legal sanctity and binding force. There is no limitation for grant of letters of administration or probate. Where the estate is in the possession of administrator there is no question of the Probate Court delivering the possession to him but the probate will be decisive only with regard to the genuineness of the Will propounded and the right of the executor to represent the estate. Principal Court of Original Jurisdiction as per the local City Civil Court Act. The High Court also enjoys concurrent jurisdiction to grant probate of the Will.

*(The author is a retired Dy.CF and a practicing Advocate who rendered legal assistance to a number of retired Officers free of charge and he can be reached at vvhp53@gmail.com or 7893673767)*



## Black and Brown Bears Invading Human Habitats - Changes in Behaviour of Bears

C. Ramakrisna Reddy

### 1-0. INTRODUCTION :

Black bears and brown bears are behaving more aggressively and their encounters with humans are spiking in places as far apart as the middle Himalayas, Japan and Canada. This is happening across the northern hemisphere. This is definitely an unusual and unsettling trend of behaviour of bears that is confronting the wild life agencies and biologists.

### 1-1.ECOLOGICAL SIGNAL:

Bears' behavioral pattern seem to be changing due to climate anomalies, altered food cycles and expanding human activity inside wild life habitats.

**(i) CANADA :** In Canada a grizzly bear attacked three elementary school students and an adult, causing temporary closure of school in November 2025 which resulted in the issue of fresh safety protocols for residents in Bella Coola Valley locality.

**(ii) JAPAN :** Japan is facing an even sharper crisis. About a dozen people have been killed so far and around 100 injured by black and brown bear attack. This prompted the Government to relax shooting norms, deploy army in affected prefectures. Bears are entering super markets, school zones and rural homes in AKITA Prefecture. The Japan Government is considering hiring hunters to cull bears. This is all because of food scarcity in forests and depopulated villages is driving bears farther into human habitats and spaces as per officials view.

**(iii) UTTARKHAND :** Uttarkhand has recorded seven deaths, the highest since 2000 and more than 70 injuries during 2025. To face the mounting

problem, the forest department authorized "Problem Bears" to be shot if they could not be trapped. The surge in bear attacks has left villagers terrified.

**(iv) KASHMIR :** Kashmir recorded over 2500 bear attacks between 2000 and 2020 (of which 95% resulted in injuries to humans) as per the study by an NGO wildlife SOS. Bears are increasingly being sighted near towns.

### 1-2:WILD LIFE RESEARCHERS' OPINION:

(i) Wild life researchers point to a mix of ecological and human – driven disruptions. The bears' pre – hibernation phase or hyperphagia has been unusually intense during 2025. They have been aggressively foraging to build fat reserves. But because prolonged rainfall, warmer autumns, and delayed winter onset have changed fruiting cycles, the forest buffet they rely on – acorns, seeds, nuts, berries – has been inconsistent.

(ii) When traditional forage has been scarce bears shift to livestock or garbage when their natural diet drops as per the view of Pauri Divisional Forest Officer Abhimanyu Singh.

(iii) YASH VEER BHATNAGAR, IUCN India representative, said climate change and food stress form the "Primary Matrix" which may explain the global spike since both these factors are present in areas where bear attacks have risen.

(iv) Former Wild Life Institute (WII) dean Y.V.Jhala added that black bears typically maul, instead of killing, and rarely prey on large animals. "If they are attacking livestock or causing multiple injuries, it suggests nutritional stress but shooting every bear

Contd.. on page No.56



## The Last Watch: Honouring India's Forgotten Forest Guardians

R.K.Sapra

In January 2026, in Dholpur district in Rajasthan, a Forest Guard named Jitendra Singh Shekhawat did what he was trained to do. He stood his ground against a gang of illegal sand miners — men who had grown powerful on the proceeds of systematic plunder — and paid for his courage with his life after getting fatally injured. He left behind a family. He left behind debt. He left behind grief with no institutional cushion to fall on.

His story is not exceptional. That is precisely the tragedy.

Across India's vast and remote forest landscape — home to tigers, elephants, rivers, and an irreplaceable ecological inheritance — tens of thousands of frontline forest personnel work in conditions that most of us will never have to imagine. They trek through dense jungle in extreme heat. They confront armed poachers, illegal loggers, and sand mining mafias — often with little more than a uniform and a lathi. They operate in remote areas where the nearest medical facility may be hours away, and where mobile networks are a luxury. And even today's technological advancements in forestry management have failed to reach there.

When they die—and too many do—the state mourns briefly, if at all. An announcement is made. A cheque,

sometimes, is promised but never reaches. And then silence descends on families who must find a way to survive without the person who was their provider, protector, and anchor.

### A Trust Born of Tragedy, Tested by Time

The Indian Forest Service Benevolent and Welfare Trust was born out of exactly such a moment of loss. In 2008, the untimely death of an IFS officer — leaving his family in severe financial distress — stirred a group of colleagues at MoEF&CC in New Delhi into action. They registered the Trust under the Registration Act, 1908, with a founding mission of providing financial assistance to families of IFS officers who died in harness.

For about a year, it worked. Then the founders were transferred to their respective state cadres, as IFS officers routinely are, and the Trust fell dormant. Good intentions had run up against the norm of transfers and postings.

For over fifteen years, the Trust lay quietly registered but inactive.

### January 2026: A Second Beginning

The death of ShriJitendra Singh Shekhawat changed things. It was the kind of incident — a brave man, a brutal end, a grieving family — that makes abstraction impossible. Those who had long thought of reviving the Trust found

in his sacrifice the urgency they needed.

The Trust was reconstituted in January 2026, this time with a mandate that reflects the full, hard truth of who actually bears the maximum burden of forest protection in India. The revised scope now covers not just IFS officers, but State Forest Service officers, Range officers, and every frontline forestry personnel down to the level of forest watchers — the ground-level sentinels who face the greatest danger and receive the least recognition.

The logic is both moral and empirical. The overwhelming majority of casualties and serious injuries in India's forests occur among frontline personnel, not officers. These are individuals who earn modest salaries, live in remote postings, and are often the sole earning members of their households. When they fall, the economic devastation for their families is immediate and severe.

From Vision to Institution: Two Months of Quiet Work

What the Trust's trustees have accomplished in just two months is a testament to determined, methodical effort. An amended Trust Deed with revised objectives has been registered with the Sub-Registrar at Kashmiri Gate, New Delhi. A governing body has been constituted, along with specialist committees for coordination, and for the scrutiny and evaluation of assistance requests received from states and beneficiary families. Three governing body meetings have already been convened. A chartered accountant has

been appointed, a PAN obtained, and operational infrastructure — including a logo, tagline, vision and mission statements, and a QR code for donations — put firmly in place.

A dedicated website, [www.foresttrust.in](http://www.foresttrust.in), now serves as the public face of the institution, carrying full information about the Trust's objectives, governance structure, and channels for support.

Most meaningfully, the Trust has already acted. Financial assistance of ₹1.35 lakh has been disbursed to the bereaved family of the late ShriJitendra Singh Shekhawat — a tangible, if modest, first step in honouring a promise made to India's forest frontline warriors.

How It Works

The Trust operates through two distinct but complementary channels. The first is direct assistance drawn from the Trust's growing corpus, evaluated through a rigorous committee process to ensure that support reaches those who need it most. The second is a facilitative platform for donors who wish to contribute to specific cases—in these instances, donations are passed directly to the beneficiary family, with the Trust serving as a transparent intermediary.

This dual architecture is important. It allows for both systematic, needs-based support and the kind of targeted, story-driven giving that moves individual donors to act.

What India Owes Its Forest Guardians

There is something quietly extraordinary about the work of the country's frontline

forestry field personnel. In a country where so much of public life rewards visibility, they choose the opposite — walking into darkness, into jungle, into danger, far from cameras and commendations. They do it because the forests, and the wildlife within them, cannot speak for themselves.

The least we owe them is the assurance that if they fall, their families will not fall with them.

The Indian Forest Service Benevolent

and Welfare Trust will not solve, by itself, the systemic gaps in welfare and compensation that plague the country's forest services. But it is a beginning — a voluntary, institutional act of solidarity by the IFS officers who have been mandated to conserve India's forestry wealth.

Every contribution to the Trust corpus, of any size, helps build that assurance into something real.

To support the Trust or learn more, visit [www.foresttrust.in](http://www.foresttrust.in).

---

*The Author is a retired officer of the Indian Forest Service.M-98762 00784*

---



---

**Continuation from page No.53**

is not a solution. We need targeted responses and public sensitization". Added to this one should bear in mind that the Asiatic black bear is listed as "Vulnerable" on the IUCN Red List. Shooting of Bears must be used sparingly and only in most dangerous situations as per experts esteemed opinion.

1-3: Other scientists including Will's VinetDubey and ShagunThakur, describe broader shifts – erratic monsoon delaying seed maturation, warmer winters shortening hibernation, and expanding roads and tourism corridors creating "food-conditioned" bears accustomed to garbage dumps and farm crops.

1-4: "Their (Bears) sense of smell is extraordinary. Garbage can draw bears from long distance said Ranjan Mishra head of Forest Force, Uttarkhand

adding that villagers are being urged to clear waste, move in groups, avoid forests at dawn and dusk and report repeated sightings. Authorities have also deployed AI based intrusion detection systems, drones, camera traps and a dedicated helpline (1926).

**2-0: ASIATIC BLACK BEAR POPULATION – NOT ESTIMATED :**

Researchers say India has no consolidated scientific estimate of the Asiatic Black Bear population, no study on hibernation in the wild, and limited radio telemetry data – gaps that hinder long-term planning. "Until we understand how bears are changing migration will remain guess work, Jhala said.

---

*The author is a Retd. DFO of composite Andhra Pradesh and an aluminous of Madras Forest College Coimbatore (1952-54 Batch of Forest Apprentices).*

*Contact Mobile No. 9347593393 / 8125325399.*



## Green Quiz – April 2026

Quiz Master: Dr. K. Tirupataiah

1. What is the practice of 'stingless beekeeping' called?
2. Name the World's largest de-mining trust started in 2002 to remove landmines safely.
3. In which ravines near Srinagar, is the 'Great Dying', the extinction that took place around 252 million years ago, discovered?
4. Which trees, planted between 1829 and 1837 in the White House premises are called 'Witness Trees' for their longevity lasting many Presidencies?
5. How is the plant Rheum nobile that flowers just once (first and last) more popularly known in Sikkim?
6. The proposed International container transshipment terminal in the great Nicobar island would affect which 'particularly vulnerable tribal group', other than Nicobarese?
7. Which institute under the ISRO located in Kerala developed a process to produce petroleum products from forest waste such as non-edible oil seeds?
8. She was the daughter of 'the father of bridges' and designer of 'Unishear connector, quadricon modular bridges. Name her.

9. It's a contractual provision that excuses a party from fulfilling its obligations due to extraordinary events beyond its control like war, natural disasters, govt actions or public emergencies. Name it.
10. It is a rare, low-calorie natural sugar occurring in small quantities in milk, apple, pineapple. It has a low glycemic index and suitable for diabetics. Name it.

### For School Students

1. Which South Indian state launched 'Honey at every home' initiative in its coastal district in 2025?
2. Name the servant of Dracula who eats Spiders and Bugs believing that he will absorb their life force?
3. To which library in coastal Andhra Pradesh did Mahatma Gandhi donate his 'walking stick'?
4. Its war time and people are taking shelter in bunkers in Ukraine, Israel, Iran etc. Which country has the highest number of underground bunkers?
5. Taxonomically, by what term is a plant that flowers just once, produces seeds and dies completing its entire life cycle in a single reproductive event called?

Answers on page no :46

**One Idea: Take up one idea. Make that one idea your life-think of it, dream of it, live on that idea. Let the brain, muscles, nerves, every part of your body be full of that idea, and just leave every other idea alone.**

**This is the way to success**

**-Swami Vivekananda**



## LEGAL NOTES

Sri. K. Buchiram Reddy

### Forest Range Officer, Karepally Vs. Durga Auto Financiers & Anr

#### Confiscation of lorry carrying illegal teak timber (Half confiscation not permissible)

During patrolling by special party of Khammam, it was found that a lorry bearing Registration No. APD 3697 was carrying teak timber without permit. The timber, together with the lorry, was seized on 13.12.1991. The seized property was produced before the Authorized Officer (AO) Kammam. The AO, after following the provisions of law, confiscated the timber and the lorry by an order dated 14.08.1998. Against the order of confiscation, the owner of the lorry (R-2) filed an appeal in the District Court at Khammam. The appeal, C.M.A. No. 44 of 1998, was partly allowed on 03.01.2001. It was ordered that half the value of the seized lorry be confiscated.

Dissatisfied by the order of the District Court, Khammam, the Forest Range Officer of Karepally filed Writ Petition which was numbered as W.P.No. 11528 of 2002 and was heard by The Hon'ble Justice L. Narsimha Reddy. The owner of the lorry did not claim the timber. The forest staff seized the timber together with the lorry because there was no valid permit for transport of the timber. Appeal was filed against the confiscation only.

Section 44 (2-A) of the Forest Act is clear in its

purport. It empowers the AO to confiscate timber and the lorry when there is a forest offence. In case the AO was not satisfied about the reason for confiscation, the court ought to have set aside the order of confiscation. No irregularity was found in the order of confiscation. The only reason for the modification of the order was that it was a first offence on the part of the second respondent.

Though Section 44 (2-E), confers power on the District Court to interfere with order of confiscation, pass any order as it thinks fit. Confiscation is upheld but on the other hand its vigour is watered down. The provisions do not contemplate such a situation.

The 2nd respondent ought to come to the witness box, much less, did he prove his lack of knowledge of the illegal use of the vehicle or precaution on his part to ensure that the vehicle is not put to any illicit uses. The order under challenge cannot be sustained in law or on facts.

In the result the writ petition is allowed and the impugned order is set aside.  
Source: 20008(4), ALD, 56K.B.R

*The author is Dy.C.F (Rtd). He is on Phone 966 609 7788; and E-mail ID ; keesrabuchiram@gmail.com*

**Be the Change: Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has**

**-Margaret Mead**



## ANDHRA PRADESH FOREST DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION LTD.

### Plant a Sapling and Protect the Environment



A fully owned, financially well managed State Government Company. Raising and maintaining massive plantations to cater to the needs of the wood based industries.

- Watershed approach adopted for raising plantations, to make them ecologically sustainable, socially acceptable and commercially viable, with the long-term goal to improve the site quality of plantation areas.
- Largest grower of about 32,000 ha. of Eucalyptus Clonal plantations in the country and is harvesting about 2.50 Lakh mt. of Pulpwood every year. Besides this, it has Bamboo, Cashew, Coffee and Teak Plantations over 13,000 ha.
- The Corporation has bagged "**Flavour of India - Fine Cup Awards**" for producing quality coffee during the years 2003, 2005, 2007 to 2016.
- The Corporation has bagged "**CAPEXIL Excellence in Export Awards (Top)**" for export of Red Sanders wood by earning a total foreign exchange of Rs.852.50 crore during the years 2017-18, 2018-19 and 2021-22.
- Diversifying its activities through promotion of Eco-Tourism.

---

Vice Chairman & Managing Director,  
A.P. Forest Development Corporation Ltd.,  
PVS Land Mark, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, Near APIIC Towers,  
Mangalagiri, Guntur District.  
Andhra Pradesh – 522 503. Ph: 08645-297211, 297221  
website: <https://apfdcl.com> e-mail: [vcmd\\_apfdc@yahoo.co.in](mailto:vcmd_apfdc@yahoo.co.in)



@bholasuyal

## Great hornbill

Photo Credit : Sri B.D. Suyal, IFS Retd.

Registered with RNI R.No. Teleng/2000/02185

Postal Regn. No. D/RNP/HCD-1154/2024-2026

Posting at BPC-IV Patrika Channel, Nampally, Hyderabad-500001

To \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

If Undelivered, Please return to: Editor, VANAPREMI, Office of the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Aranya Bhavan, 5th Floor, Room No.514, Saifabad, Hyd - 500 004, T.G.

Date of Publication-26/03/2026; Total Pages: 60; Date of Posting: 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> of Every Month.

Printed & Published by Qamar Mohd. Khan on behalf of Association of Retired Forest Officers,

Printed at Venu Graphics, D.No.2-1-392/1/6, Fever Hospital Signal, Nallakunta, Hyderabad-500044 and

Published from Room No. 514, 5th Floor, Aranya Bhavan, Hyderabad-500004.

RNI Regd. No. Teleng/2000/2185 | Editor: Dr. Kota Tirupataiah, IFS( R) | Email: tirupataiah.tsfa@gmail.com | Ph: 88855 32021

Venu Graphics, Hyderabad. & 92463 32717