



Indian Forest Service Association

(Central Unit), New Delhi

Reg.No.: 9821/78 under Act No. XXI of 1860

Arihantam, 3rd Floor, 200, Jor Bagh,
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No.: IFS Central/Misc.

02 September, 2020

To

**Shri Prakash Javadekar,
Hon'ble Minister,
Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change
Government of India
Indira Paryavaran Bhawan
Jor Bagh, New Delhi 110003**

Subject: Improving working conditions of forest field staff and strengthening social security for their dependent family members - reg.

Sir,

During his historic Independence Day speech, it was heartening to hear Hon'ble PM speaking proudly about the remarkable achievements of the country in the field of forest protection and biodiversity conservation, with special mention to unprecedented successes in conservation of Tigers, Lions and Elephants. It was also encouraging to see him emphatically reiterate India's commitment towards protection of nature and natural resources.

2. We the officers of Indian Forest Service, along with the dedicated team of field staff, stand fully committed and devoted in the efforts to achieve environmental conservation targets spelled out by Hon'ble Prime Minister during his speech and by you on several such occasions.

3. As you are aware, the prime force, behind achieving these conservation successes is the committed field staff of the state Forest Departments. Working in the remotest areas of the country, quite often far away from their families as well as the comforts of the modern amenities, they devotedly execute the policies of government and contribute towards ensuring the ecological security of the nation, even at high personal costs. They not only protect our nation's natural resources from encroachers, timber smugglers, mining mafias and organized poachers, but also stand as an unwavering wall of defence between the helpless villagers and the wild animals, whenever such situation arises.

4. Incidentally, all such activities make them highly vulnerable towards the dangers of losing their life or limbs. The recent unfortunate incidence of a Range Officer being trampled by an elephant in Panna Tiger Reserve and the gruesome attack on forest team by encroachers in Burhanpur Forest Division (M.P.) are chilling reminders of the dangers faced by these brave warriors of nature.

5. Every year several green soldiers make supreme sacrifices in the line of duty, while several others become disabled for life, thus impacting their ability to provide a sustained future for their family members. **Unfortunately, India holds the inglorious reputation of being the 'deadliest country for Rangers' at the global level, where highest number of 'on-duty' forest staff lose their life. According to International Ranger Federation, 162 foresters lost their life in India while on duty from 2012 to 2017. This is highest in the world and accounts for as high as 31% of total ranger (forest frontline) deaths across the world during that period.**

6. The MoEF&CC has notified 11 September as Forest Martyr's Day in 2013, however nothing concrete has been done for the welfare of the frontline staff.

7. Although state governments are continuously trying to improve the working conditions of the field staff, it is time that urgent efforts are made to provide safer working conditions to these protectors of nature, as well as to extend an improved social security cover to these green soldiers, who are sacrificing their present for our future by coming out with **National Policy** and general guidelines for States on it.

8. **In this regard, on behalf of the dutiful field staff, we humbly request you to kindly consider the following:**

i. In case of unnatural death while performing their duty, an assured ex-gratia support to the nearest family to be fixed at a minimum of Rs. 25 lakhs.

ii. The family of the deceased staff should be entitled to get the full salary till the time the deceased person would have worked in the department, so as to ensure that the family can lead a secure life, even in his absence.

iii. The PM scholarship scheme, as implemented for the children of the deceased soldiers of the armed forces, should be extended to the children of deceased green soldiers as well.

iv. Constitution of **President's Green Gallantry Medal**, in the lines of the ones being given to the members of Police, for the foresters making supreme sacrifice or showing exemplary bravery while protecting our nation's ecological security.

v. Improving the working conditions of the forest field staff by ensuring minimum standards like better field accommodation facilities equipped with necessary amenities like toilets, bathrooms, supply of potable water, electricity, first aid facilities and high-quality field gears.

vi. Equipping them with firearms and necessary protection equipment along with protection under provisions of IPC & CrPC.

vii. Making necessary arrangements for providing immediate medical support to the injured staff member and making provisions to bear the entire cost of their treatment.

Sir, having witnessed your love and compassion towards the hardworking field staff, we are confident that you will provide the necessary guidance to the Ministry, so as to formulate the required National Policy and guidelines to fulfill the above-requested interventions. These steps are likely to benefit at least 50,000 field foresters and their family members across the country and will motivate them to work enthusiastically towards achieving the national conservation targets, set out by the Government.

Sincerely



(S. P. Yadav)

Secretary General

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Copy to:

1. Sr PPS to Secretary, MoEF&CC.
2. Sr PPS to DGF&SS, MoEF&CC.