

**ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA,
SHRI RAM NATH KOVIND
ON THE OCCASION OF CALL ON BY THE INDIAN FOREST
SERVICE PROBATIONERS**

Rashtrapati Bhavan, July 23, 2018

1. I welcome you all to Rashtrapati Bhavan and congratulate you for your selection to the Indian Forest Service. All of you have worked very hard to win a place in this premier service and I wish you a successful career.
2. Your service is unique. Its fundamental 'call for action' falls in the very genesis of life itself. Can we imagine life without forests, without trees, plants, birds, animals? It is difficult to even imagine this very building, the Rashtrapati Bhavan, and the President's Estate without its lush green trees, beautiful peacocks, and greenery. Forests are fundamental to the very existence of life on our planet.
3. वनों के साथ हम भारतवासियों की आत्मीयता सदियों से बनी हुई है। हमारी सभ्यता को उसकी बौद्धिक और आध्यात्मिक शक्ति वनों से प्राप्त हुई है। हमारे लिए वन कोई संसाधन मात्र नहीं हैं बल्कि हमारी सांस्कृतिक, आध्यात्मिक और बौद्धिक विरासत का हिस्सा हैं। फिर भी, हमें इस बात पर विचार करना चाहिए कि अपनी वन संपदा को क्या हम यथोचित संरक्षण, सम्मान और देखभाल रहे पा कर प्रदान भाल-? हमें, केवल वन संपदा के हित में वनों की संरक्षा की जरूरत नहीं है बल्कि अपने स्वयं के हित के लिए और इस धरती पर बसे सभी जीवधारियों के लिए वनों की रक्षा हम सब को करनी होगी।
[Here in India, we have civilisational links to our forests. Our civilisation has derived its intellectual and spiritual strength from forests. For us, forests are not merely a resource but they form part of our cultural, spiritual and intellectual heritage. Yet, we must ponder whether we give our forests the due protection, respect and care that they deserve. We need

to do this not for the sake of forests but for our sake and the sake of life on the planet.]

4. Over the past few decades, the world has realised the existential threats posed by environmental degradation, depletion in forest cover, and above all global warming leading to climate change. Environmental protection has become a key concern for the 21st century. And forests are an integral part of the solution.
5. Forests, being a potential carbon sink, could help us reduce greenhouse gases in the atmosphere and the threat of global warming. Forests can play a critical role in mitigating the adverse effects of climate change. Watersheds with good forest cover insulate areas from droughts and enhance productivity of agriculture. Mangroves protect coastal areas from cyclones and tsunamis. And, forests on the hill slopes protect the soil and prevent landslides and flash floods.
6. Forest protection, especially in India, must invoke participation and support of those whose livelihoods depend of forests. A large number of very poor people, including tribals, live in and around the forests of our country. It is through forests that they fulfil their basic needs of food, fuel-wood, and fodder. These people are simple and hardworking - and they are very wise. They respect forests as part of their traditions and beliefs. Any measures to protect forests should be sensitive to the basic needs of these people and involve them as partners. These communities can be your ears and eyes against poaching and illegal logging. You need to guide them and reassure them about their forest rights and their safety.
7. The joint forest management model that we have adopted is based on the “care and share” principle. It envisages a partnership with local people and communities in the management of forests. You must involve these people and communities in forest management and apply the scientific principles of forestry with a human and compassionate face.

This alone will provide solutions that are sustainable and effective.

8. All of you shall be responsible for environmental and ecological conservation. This is a supremely important objective. Your actions and your work will leave an imprint for generations to come and influence how our civilisation evolves. As bearers of public trust, discharge your duties with utmost diligence, honesty and integrity. Your success will be judged by the way you conduct yourself in your long career.
9. India is one of the fastest growing economies in the world and we have set ourselves for rapid economic progress. However, what we seek is 'sustainable development'. While, this may not always be an easy task, I am confident that you would emerge as solution providers who shall help our country achieve the fine balance between conservation needs and development goals.
10. Once again, I wish you all a long and fulfilling career.

Jai Hind!