

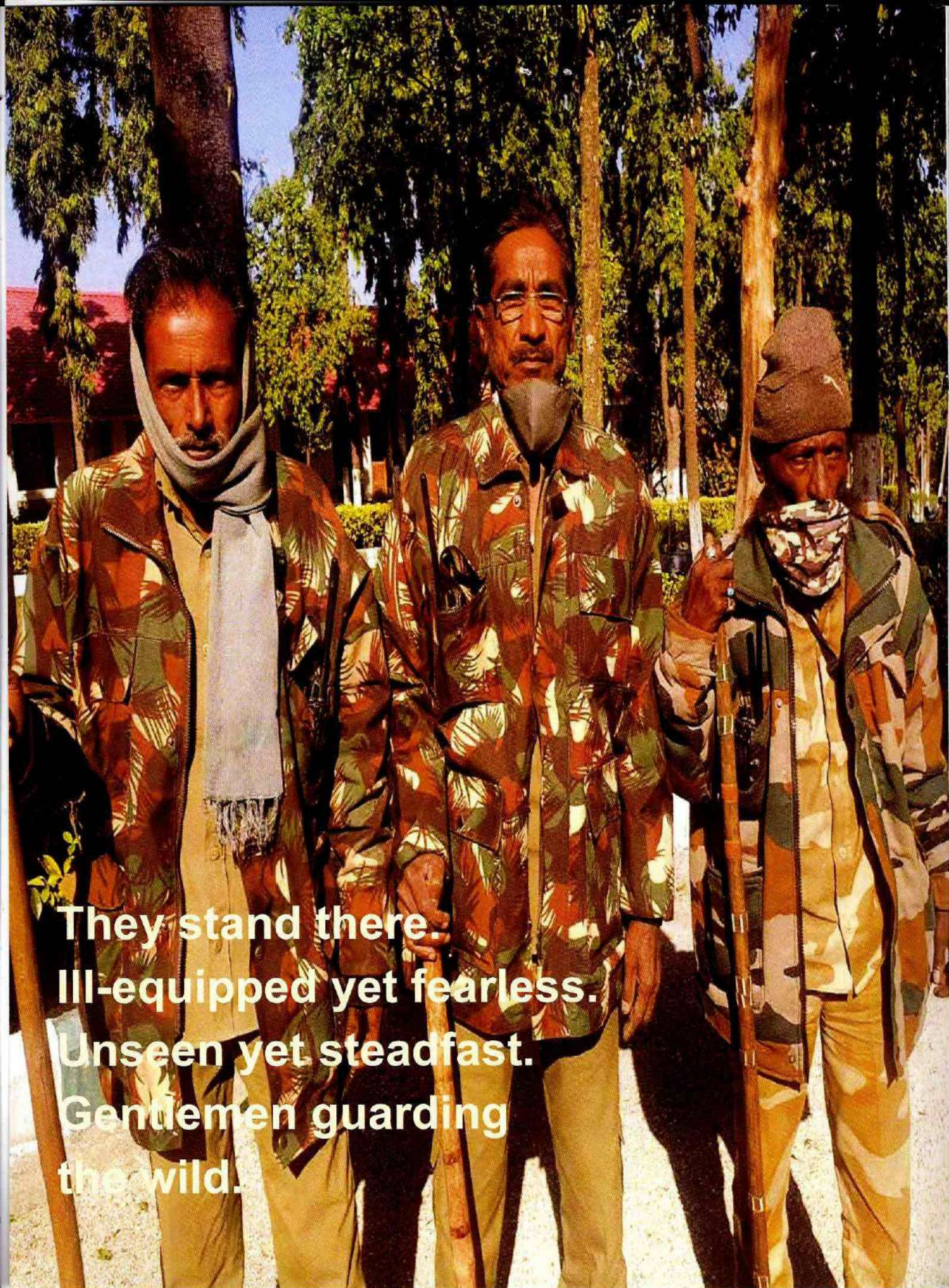
A full-page photograph of a man in a military uniform, wearing a camouflage cap and holding a rifle. The image is the background for the entire page. The text is overlaid on a semi-transparent dark rectangle in the lower-left quadrant.

**Committee Report on
Improving and Strengthening
Working Conditions
of Forest Frontline Staff**

**To the Indian Forest Service
By Ruskin Bond**

*You are the quiet men who do not boast
Although you've done much more than most
To make this land a sea of green
From here to far Cape Comorin.
Without some help to Nature's thrust.
Our land would be a bowl of dust;
For land which has no forest wealth
Most suffer in its natural health,
As herbs and plants all need green cover
Before they help the sick recover.
And we need trees to hold together
Beasts, and birds of every feather;
And leaves, so that the air stays sweet-
All this and more is no mean feat.
Dear foresters.
You have not toiled for fame or favour,
Yours has been a love of labour.
Our thanks! Instead of desert sand
You've given us this green and growing land.*





They stand there.
Ill-equipped yet fearless.
Unseen yet steadfast.
Gentlemen guarding
the wild.

Message from the Chairman of Committee

The report is finally ready to be submitted to the Government. I am certain that it will receive a strong endorsement both at the Government and the State level.

We have had long deliberations with staff both individuals and associations across the country, from areas as remote as Munshiari, Dachigaon to the Andaman Islands and Gujarat and Kaziranga. This report is an expression of their hopes and aspirations. It gives me a tremendous sense of accomplishment to have received and to have incorporated inputs from all of them.

The following recommendations require special mention:

1. Equipping the Range Office as a state-of-the-art cutting-edge unit, to reinforce the efforts of the forest frontline staff.
2. Providing special focus to unique ecosystems such as the Himalayas, Coastal areas and Mangrove Forests along with urban areas.
3. Creating an official uniform not only at the range officers' level but right up to the position of Directorate General. This practice exists across the world and India should not be an exception in this regard. However, two of the committee members have recorded their dissent.

I appreciate the feeling of partnership that emerged when we engaged with the States and with the senior officers of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, especially Dr. S.P Yadav and Mr. Amit Mallick. I would like to convey my thanks to Dr. Rajesh Gopal and his team. Finally, I would like to give due credit to the team at Ogilvy and Mather for editing the report to perfection. It feels and reads differently.

Forest frontline personnel in India protect some of the world's most valuable ecosystems and the last refuges of various threatened species. It is truly a measure of passionate dedication and commitment of the forest officials and staff that true wilderness has survived where sight of iconic species such as the tiger and other big cats, elephants, rhinos and diverse bird species can still be enjoyed.

As a nation, we need to celebrate and salute these nature warriors.

Ironically, however, forest department officials and staff have always been on the defensive and are seen as anti-development. Their heroic attempts to save India's unique and fast depleting natural resources have hardly been appreciated.

Before the content, here's some context

Anthropogenic pressures on wildlife are mounting because of unabated demand for wildlife products and derivatives. This has led to poaching and illegal wildlife trade. Moreover, **unsustainable, unplanned, rapid and intense urbanization, and the growing demand for forest land for infrastructure developmental activities has been depleting the forests**, paving the way for concrete jungles

in unhealthy and inefficient cities. To compound this tragedy further, we have the ten most polluted and toxic urban environments on earth. They contribute to habitat fragmentation and exacerbate the problem of climate change through global warming. A third of India's urban population is surviving

in a veritable gas chamber. According to the World Bank (2013) **environmental degradation costs India about \$80 billion, equivalent to 5.7% of the country's gross domestic product (GDP), on an annual basis. In 2019, deaths and disabilities caused due to air pollution have resulted in a GDP loss of 1.36%, valued at \$36.8 billion.** This environmental degradation is closely linked to the frequency of natural disasters in India.



Frontline staff are the first line of defence against such irreversible damage to the environment. It is in this context that we need to understand the evolving roles and responsibilities of the forest personnel.

The conservation of forest resources lies in increasing the "boots on the ground" coupled with efficient management and improving the working conditions of the front line forest staff. The foresters need to enhance and diversify their roles by building professional capacities and upgrading their skills to international standards.

The subject 'forests and wildlife' is in the 'Concurrent List' of the Constitution of India. The Central and State Governments are trying their best to provide them with amenities and resources for their services. However, a lot more needs to be done to ensure that their contribution to the nation is recognized and the current emerging concerns are addressed.

As a step in this direction, the MoEFCC constituted a committee under the chairmanship of Mr. Keshav Saran Varma,

Vide number O.M No.17-20/2008-RT dated 15/09/2020 to look into various issues for 'improving and strengthening the working conditions of the forest frontline staff and commemorating forest martyrs (given as Annexure-I)' and making recommendations.

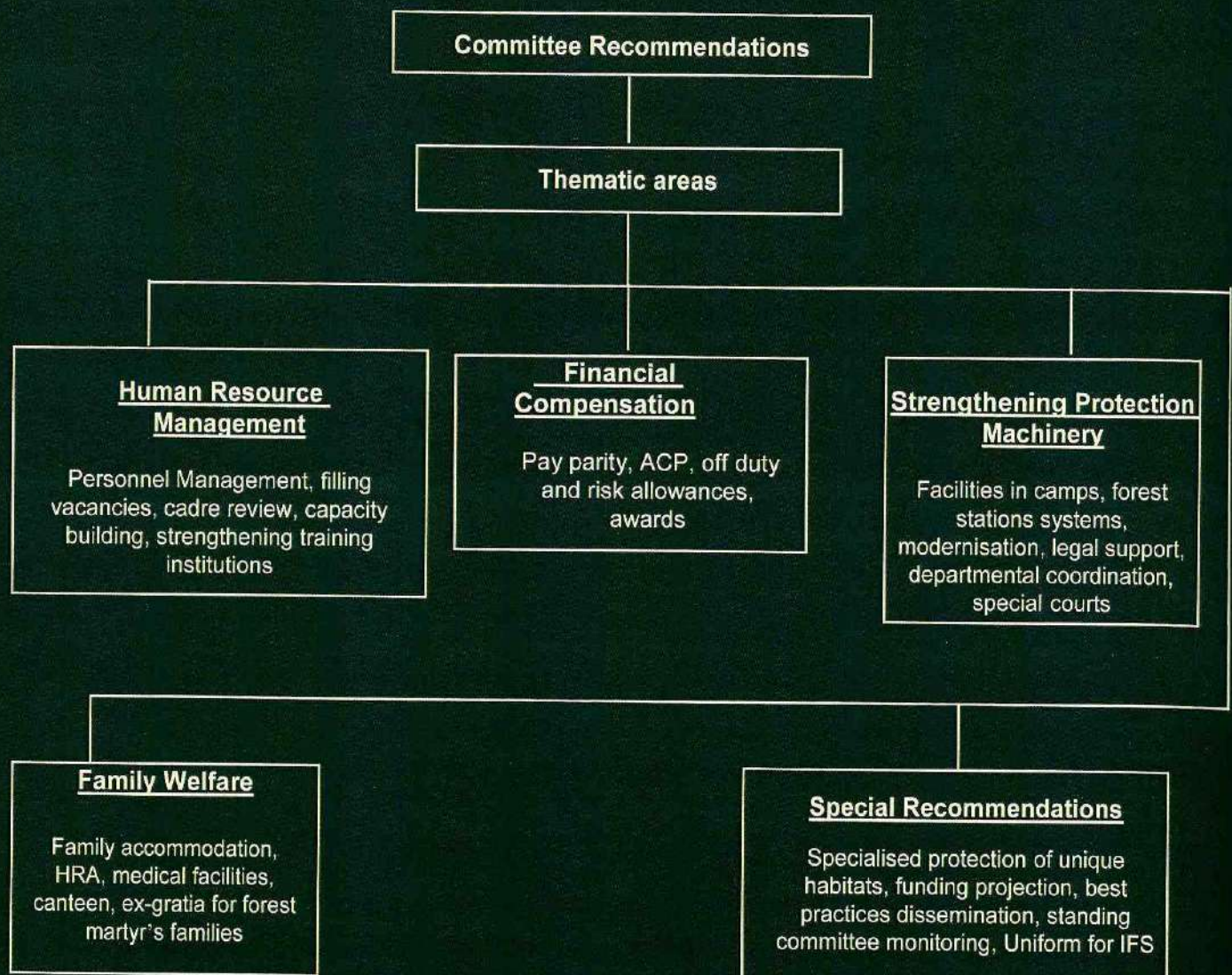
The details of the meetings held are given in Annexure-II. The recommendations of the committee aim to enhance expertise and modernize forest management.

These recommendations need the support of the Central and the State Governments for effective implementation towards a paradigm shift.



Recommendations of the Committee vis-à-vis Focus Thematic Areas

The main objective is to optimize the professional capacity and enhance the output to align the cadres to meet the emerging challenges. The recommendations are provided under the following major heads:





**In the face of
danger, they can be
ready; if, and only if,
their preparation
is sure and steady.**

Committee Recommendations

Part-I Human Resource Management

Personnel Management

Filling Vacancies

The challenges in forest and wildlife management have increased manifold over the last four decades and need a proportionate increase in the number of frontline staff to tackle these emergent challenges. None of the states/UTs have an adequate number of sanctioned posts for the field staff. Even filling up the existing vacancies of the frontline forest staff has always been an issue at various levels in the states as well as in the central government. In some cases, the Hon'ble courts have emphasized on the need to fill up the vacancies in the wildlife and other conservation priority areas and even barred the district administration from requisitioning their services for other duties like elections, census-survey, etc. Yet, because of the large number of vacancies at various levels, the existing field staff is given additional duties outside their jurisdiction without any extra remuneration. Added to this, the constraints such as inadequate mobility in remote areas, combating forest fires, encroachment, illegal mining, etc., all take a massive physical and mental toll on the frontline staff.

Recommendations

- (i) The SFDs and or the state governments must initiate and complete action for filling the existing vacancies within a period of three years, depending on the powers delegated.
- (ii) Streamline the recruitment process in a manner that action is initiated by the concerned level at least six months in advance of the anticipated vacancies.
- (iii) The states may also consider having a waiting list of qualified candidates with a validity of six months to one year for filling the vacancies arising due to promotions and unforeseen circumstances like resignations or deaths, etc.
- (iv) For the frontline staff, there are different nomenclatures in use in the states with differences in responsibilities. There is a need to harmonize and standardize the cadre structures related to general forest governance.
- (v) The MoEFCC must work with the state governments to standardize the eligibility and recruitment procedures across all SFDs.

(Action: SFDs, State Governments, MoEFCC)

Streamlining Direct Recruitment and Promotion Policies

Every state should go through the process of **cadre review to rationalize the human resources**. To ensure a combination of youth and experienced field-staff in the department, creating space for knowledge upgradation and training workshops is a must. This can be addressed through clearly defined direct recruitment and open minded promotion policies.

Recommendations

Different states have fixed different quota for recruitment through direct and promotional channels, which requires a standardized set of guidelines. The committee recommends the following percentages for two types of recruitment methods:

Frontline Forest Staff	Direct Recruitment	Promotions
Forest Guards(FG)	90%	10% (promotions from forest watchers' cadre)
Foresters	35%	65%
Deputy Rangers (DFRO) ¹	20%	80%
Range Officers (RO)	50% (40% through open competition and 10% through department examination for FG, Foresters, DFRO) with well-defined eligibility criteria/experience)	50%

(Action: State Governments, SFDs)

Regularization of Contractual and Temporary Work Force and Career Progression

In a few states, appointments to some posts at the level of forest watchers and FGs are made against temporary vacancies where they continue for long periods without being absorbed against the permanent vacancies. This creates uncertainty among the temporary appointees and may demotivate an individual, who when compared to the other regular employees discharging the same type of duties, is not adequately compensated, coupled with further delay in disbursement of wages.

¹There exist slight variations in the levels and designations of posts too. For example, there are no posts of deputy range officers in Tamil Nadu.

The committee, after interactions with the states, has observed that **the contractual and daily wagers play a crucial role in forest management and protection**, in abetting high worth crimes (HWC) and improving interface with communities but their efforts go unrecognized, and they tend to continue in ad-hoc positions for decades. Appointment on a contractual basis, however, can be mainly for technical activities (computing, measurement, digitization, office assistance, etc.) who will not form the cadre of frontline staff.

For example, in Gir forests, the local community trackers deal with lion and leopard (HWI), while in Kashmir (Dachigam) bear-human conflict is also being dealt with by the local communities. **It is thus, understood that members of local communities form an integral part of the frontline forest force** contributing through their local knowledge. But the extreme insecurity about livelihood opportunities has created an extremely unhappy situation amongst the local community trackers. The resultant vacancies are affecting the forest and the protected areas adversely.

It has been generally observed that promotional avenues for frontline staff are very low. Whenever there is stagnation, **there should be at least an assured career progression scheme³** under which the staff gets into a higher pay scale after completion of a particular number of years of service.

Recommendations

- (i) The temporary and contractual workers should be made progressively eligible for regular benefits on the completion of 10 years of engagement through the creation of new posts/filling up vacancies, wherever necessary. This may be done within a period of six months, with appropriate diligence and ombudsman reports.
- (ii) The State Governments that do not offer assured career progress schemes, must launch the same within the next one year.
- (iii) Also, there must be synchronization of promotions in different wings of the department such as the territorial, wildlife, working plans and research, and soil conservation, etc., which may be an issue in some states/UTs like JK.

(Action: State Governments, SFDs)

Timely Disbursal of Daily Wages

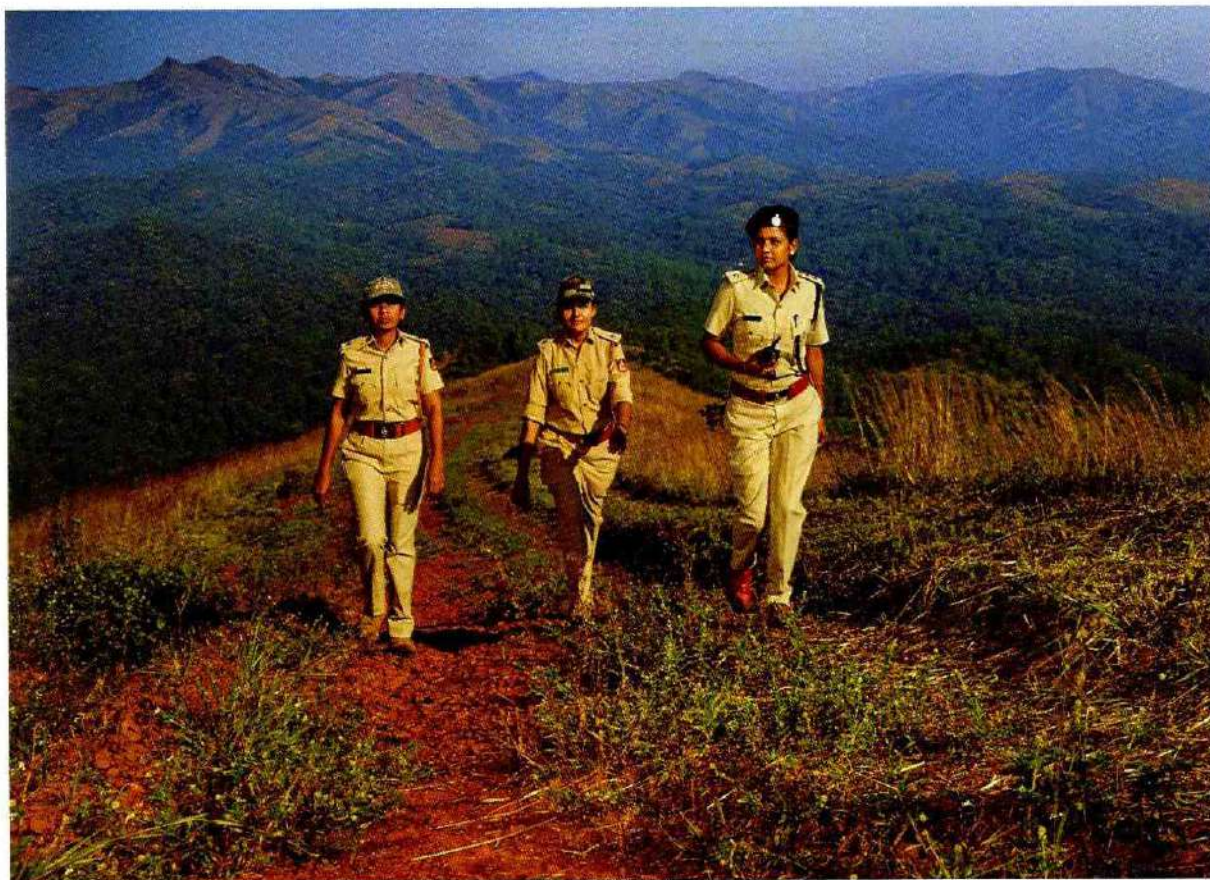
This has to be remedied within six months and compliance registered with the Chief Secretary through well-laid out procedures.

(Action: State Governments, SFDs)

Rationalization of Administrative/Functional Units, **Requirements of staff and enhancing mobility**

The size of administrative/functional units and requirements of the staff in a forest division, range, section or beat and corresponding infrastructure in a territorial/wildlife or a functional division such as working plan, social forestry, research, flying squad, etc., would depend on several factors. The factors may include the sensitive nature of a range from the point of view of terrain (hilly/plains/remoteness), road network, biotic interferences like poaching of wild animals, illicit felling of trees, encroachments, ganja cultivation, fire-proneness, nearness to human habitations, grazing, etc. Developmental activities would also require interactions with the local people for getting necessary permissions like cutting of trees from private land.

Hence, it may not be possible to suggest an ideal size for these administrative units.



However, based on the criteria mentioned above, a broad range of sizes and frontline staff requirements have been suggested:

Presently, the average extent of territorial jurisdiction of a beat varies from 10 km² to 15km², depending on the type of terrain and varying from state to state. A lot of changes have taken place in the policy perspective of the country from 1970s onwards like the creation of forest corporations, launch of social forestry and undertaking plantations outside forests, regulating felling of trees in private lands through Tree Acts. Greater thrust on wildlife conservation and creation of large PAN, enforcement of FCA, has increased

pressure on forest lands for their diversion for non-forestry purposes; the recognition of the concept of joint forest management, regulation of saw mills and wood-based industries, technological advancements and enforcement of new environment laws. The frontline staff is under immense pressure to manage all these multifarious activities within their areas of jurisdiction including maintaining close contact with the local people, soliciting their cooperation in combating forest fires, apprehending poachers and timber smuggling; evicting forest encroachers, addressing human-animal conflict issues, regulating eco-tourism and the implementation of welfare programmes for the tribals and other forest dwellers.

Hence, depending on the load of multifarious activities, there is an urgent need to rationalize the jurisdiction of beats, sections and ranges so that the staff gets adequate time to pay attention to all the activities required to be performed by them.

Recommendations

Beat Size and Threat Monitoring

- (i) The state governments may set up committee store view and rationalize the territorial jurisdiction of each field unit and make recommendations for increasing the number of posts proportionately.
- (ii) A range can be classified into: Very Sensitive, Sensitive, Moderate and Normal

The following sizes and requirements for frontline staff have been suggested as follows:

Territorial/Wildlife Forest Range

(size in km²)

S. No.	Nature of range	Suggested size of a range	Size and number of Sections in a range	Size and number of forest beats in a section	Frontline staff in a range including reserves**
1	Very Sensitive	Upto 100km ²	Upto 24 X 3-4	Upto 8 X 2-3	DFRO:1-3 FO:5-8 FG:13-18 Watchers:12-16
2	Sensitive	Upto 160km ²	Above 35 to 40 X 3-4	Above 8 to 12 X 2-3	DFRO:1-3 FO:5-8 FG:13-18 Watchers:12-16
3	Moderate	Upto 200km ²	Above 50 to 60 X 3-4	Above 12 to 15 X 2-3	DFRO:1-3 FO:5-8 FG:13-18 Watchers:12-16
4	Normal*	Upto 300km ²	Above 60 to 70 X 4-5	---	FO:5-8 Labour force as required

Note: "Other than the staff in-charge of each beat and section, additional staff is required for manning the check-posts (at least two FGs and a forester), nurseries (one forester, FG and watcher plus labourers), timber depots (depending on the volume of timber and other materials stored in the depot (can be manned by a Deputy RO, with one forester and two FGs apart from 2-3 watchers and 2-3 labourers), officials for court duty (forester or a FG), tree cutting permission from private areas (one FG) and one Dy. RO or forester and a FG for range headquarters duties including inspection of saw mills/wood based industries, wherever available. There is need to have at least 10% staff as leave and training reserves so that the activities don't suffer when the officials are on long leave or under training."

*Recommended mainly for functional ranges which are mandated to discharge specialised functions such as preparation of working plans, undertaking research, plantation activities, enquiries, etc., and not performing multiple functions like in territorial or wildlife ranges. Generally, these ranges will not have beats but would need adequate staff for completing the various assignments in time.

**The requirement will also depend on number of check-posts, nurseries, timber depots, mining activities, etc.

- (iii) All the FROs should be provided with a jeep and other frontline staff with official vehicles, depending on the requirements of each area. The types of vehicles may include jeeps, MUVs or motorcycles.
- (iv) State-of-the-art rapid response teams need to be deployed across a forest range/ division/ Circle headquarter with high human-wildlife interface conflict zones and sensitive Timber smuggling areas.
- (v) Specially designed ATV s and high-powered speed boats need to be deployed in areas with such requirements, such as deserts and riverine habitats.
- (vi) Recruitment of research and technical officers to be posted at the offices of FROs to help maintain continuous field research data management coupled with analysis would help support monitoring efforts on an adaptive and dynamic basis.

Capacity Building

Capacity building and training efforts need to be addressed based on the evolving nature of threats in conservation. There is an urgent need for field-based training and frequent mock drills coupled with regular review and upgradation of curricula to ensure better preparedness. This includes identification of site-specific threats using GIS tools and ranking the threat levels into three categories (high, medium and low). In this regard, it is necessary to have standardized training modules, alongside special modules accounting for variations in challenges and socio-economic conditions unique to each state and landscape.

Keeping in mind, the emerging challenges, the strengthening of the infrastructure of the training institutions is of utmost importance. Advanced technology and adequate equipment must be at the disposal of the training institutions to ensure that the desired inputs are provided to the frontline staff in the most effective ways. Further, more, it is imperative to post well-trained, willing faculty and other staff to impart quality training.

Induction Training

Before joining any profession, it is essential for one to have a basic knowledge of its objectives and mandate so that it becomes easier to understand the complexities of that profession while performing the various assigned works. Hence, just after recruitment to the service, the staff should be mandatorily required to undergo induction training before being appointed on a job

assignment. Whereas in many states, the induction training is mandatory, this practice is not being followed uniformly all the states.

Recommendations

- (i) The newly recruited personnel must mandatorily undergo formal induction training before being posted to the field assignments. On the basis of training needs analysis, a model syllabi must be prepared by the MoEFCC for the training of FGs, Foresters and DFROs which can be adopted by all the training institutes across states after making certain modifications, based on state-specific requirements.
- (ii) The MoEFCC, in consultation with the state governments, must also fix the duration of induction training for each level of staff which should not be less than six months.
- (iii) Currently, the induction training of forest guards, foresters and deputy range officers is not uniform across the country with respect to its duration and curriculum. It needs to be standardized, also keeping in view the state specific variations related to ecosystems, protection challenges and other socio-economic issues. The training of forest range officers in India is over a hundred years old. It was being imparted centrally till 1978 through the following Rangers Colleges:

- Forest Training Institute and Rangers College, Sunder Nagar (Himachal Pradesh)
- Gujarat Forest Rangers College, Rajpipla (Gujarat)
- Karnataka State Forest Academy, Dharwad (Karnataka)
- Kundal Academy of Development Administration and Management, Kundal (Maharashtra)
- Odisha Forest Rangers College, Angul (Odisha)
- Tamil Nadu Forest Academy, Coimbatore (Tamil Nadu)
- Telangana State Forest Academy, Hyderabad (Andhra Pradesh)
- Uttarakhand Forestry Training Academy, Haldwani (Uttarakhand)

The induction training for FROs is currently technically controlled by the Directorate of Forest Education, Dehradun and executed through eight different state-owned forest rangers' colleges.

In-service Training

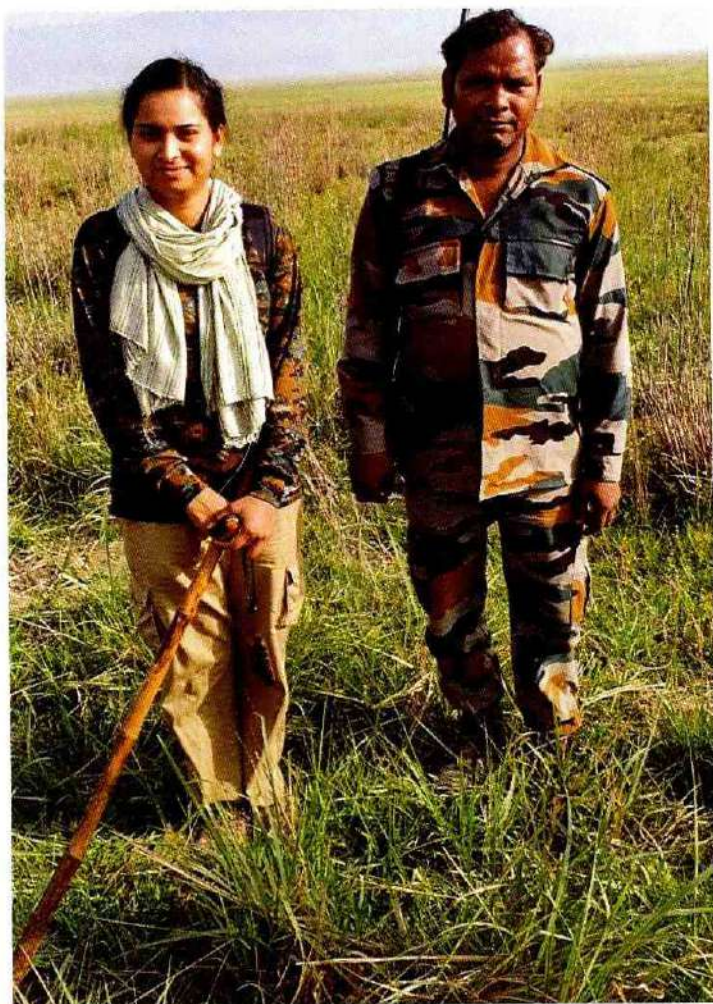
Civil society is changing fast as also the challenges to the government to meet the changing developmental, socio-economic, cultural, religious, and political demands. Hence, frequent upgradation of knowledge and skills of the personnel through regular capacity building courses to meet the challenges of natural resources management and changing aspirations of the society, is the need of the hour. Some states do organize a few of such training courses and the MoEFCC has also been sponsoring some such courses since 2004. Currently, on an average, only 30-50 personnel from a state get an opportunity to undergo such training courses.

Recommendations

- (i) The in-service courses should also include exchange visits to other states in order to learning good practices and adopt them appropriately.
- (ii) There is a need to mainstream the in-service training courses into the HR policy of the state for the forestry personnel. In a year, the frontline staff must undergo such training for a duration of at least one-week. Apart from learning new skills and gaining new knowledge,

this will also take them away from the routine and refreshes their minds.

- (iii) Many a times, it has been observed that even the nominated personnel avoid attending refresher courses on one pretext or the other. Participation in some of such short-term skill upgradation training courses may be made mandatory and linked with promotion to higher ranks as in the case of All India Services.
- (iv) Subsequently, each year, the frontline staff should undergo in-service training for duration of at least one-week.
- (v) Capacity building through short-term courses along standard operating procedures for some protection matters may include:
 - a. *Rescuing wild animals from human habitations, a task for which wild life staff is often summoned in the villages, towns and cities*
 - b. *Combating wildfires*
 - c. *handling poachers, smugglers of timber, ganja cultivation and sand mafia*
 - d. *soliciting cooperation of the people living in the nearby forests, in emergencies like wildfires, floods, attacks by wild animals, crop-raiding ,etc.*
 - e. *basic knowledge about the applicable laws and how to write a first information report quoting all relevant provisions of laws*



- f. *management of eco-tourism sites*
- g. *Forest stations/van chowki system*

(Action: SFDs to be coordinated by MoEFCC)

Promotion Linked Training of Frontline Staff

The duration of in-service training for promotion to higher levels should be as follows:

- Deputy Range officer to Range Officer- six months
- Forester to Deputy Range Officer- three months
- Forest Guard to Forester- three months
- Forest Watcher to Forest Guard- three months

(Action: SFDs, State Governments)

Avenues for Upgradation of Skills and Knowledge

The foresters must keep pace with the changing dynamics of the society and advancements in the scientific management of the natural resources. It is generally not possible to find adequate time for such updates while discharging one's official responsibilities. This is possible only if one is allowed sabbaticals in one's career. It would help in rejuvenating the personnel in finding inspiration for new ways to grow, in focusing on personal goals and in being encouraged to put in one's best performance.

Recommendations

Like in the case of IFS/SFS/FROs, the qualified frontline staff should also be allowed at least one sabbatical and provided with opportunities to undergo diploma and PG courses in advanced technologies in the field of forestry, wildlife, environmental sciences and social sciences based on their interests and aptitude.

(Action: SFDs and State Governments)

Capacity Building in Urban Forest Management

The rising levels of land transformation and expansion of urban centers are adding to the problems of pollution, turning cities to 'veritable gas chambers'. It would be complacency on the part of policy makers to consider urban development as separate from natural resource management, as it is an inevitable part of economic development.

The issue should be addressed by equipping the forestry personnel and other officers working in urban areas with specific knowledge of management of urban ecosystems including provided ecological services.

Recommendations

The forestry and other personnel like from horticulture posted in urban areas charged with the responsibility of biodiversity management must undergo special course in urban ecosystem management for a duration of 2-3 months. These personnel would ensure the management of city biodiversity spaces and related natural lands working in coordination with the respective SFDs where those are not administered by the SFDs.

Review of Curriculum and more Thrust on Practical Aspects

In some states there is periodic review of the course curricula for various levels of initial and in-service courses keeping in view the latest developments in the forestry sector and technological advancements and experience gained in the implementation of various activities in the field.

Recommendations

A periodic review of the course curricula for various levels must be undertaken for induction training and in-service training courses, with major thrust on practical aspects and hands-on experience in learning an activity.

Ensuring Physical Fitness and Mandatory Annual Medical Checkup

As the frontline staff is required to perambulate in difficult and remote terrains for long durations at a stretch, they have to be physically and mentally strong with good stamina. There is need to inculcate the culture of keeping themselves fit and healthy with periodic mandatory health check-ups.

Recommendations

- (i) Upgrading and diversifying local medical facilities
- (ii) There should be mandatory passing of physical endurance test at frequent intervals, say, every 3-4 years. The staff who fails to clear the test, should be given chance to improve their health. If still fail to clear after availing three chances, they should not be awarded next increment. This should be in-built in the Rules governing their service conditions.
- (iii) Routine health checks of the staff posted at outposts/camps in remote areas should be conducted regularly. Further, there should be free annual medical checkups after they attain the age of 40 years as has been introduced in the All-India Services and Central Services.
- (iv) Wherever, adequate health infrastructure is not available, the state governments must consider providing group health insurance to all the frontline staff which would be economical to the government as the health facilities are required to be provided by the state government free of cost.

(Action: State Governments, SFDs)

Strengthening of Training Institutions

Recommendations

- (i) The SFTIs that were left out of the externally aided project implemented by the MoEFCC should be taken up for infrastructure development along similar lines.
- (ii) In order to motivate the officers and other staff to serve in the SFTIs, adequate incentives

In the form of training allowance, (i.e. 30% increase in compensation) along the lines of similar Provisions in the national academies of the GoI, should be uniformly put in place in all the states.

(Action: MoEFCC, State Governments, SFDs)

Part-II Financial Compensation

Need for parity with police service in the state and forest officers of other states

The disparity in terms of the pay, allowances and other facilities of the frontline staff in comparison to similarly placed personnel of other departments (Police, Excise, Fire Fighting, Health, etc.) and also between forest officers of other States are one of the major issues are a major cause for agitation and the lowering of the morale of the forest frontline staff for the last several decades. The police and the forest frontline staff are the two major uniformed services in a state required to remain on duty 24x7 and are under pressure to keep anti-social elements under check. Apart from protection duty, the forest officials execute developmental works along with communicating and partnering with the local people and soliciting their cooperation. However, the state governments give more importance to the police service, than to the forest service. Thus the creation of parity with the police service and getting the same status, public recognition, pay scales, allowances and working conditions could act as a motivating factor.

Recommendations

- (i) There is need to build consensus at the highest political level and neutralize all the resistance from various quarters in the states. Hence, it is recommended that a very powerful message must go to all the Chief Ministers/Administrators of the states/UTs from the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India and the Hon'ble Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change for taking logical action which may necessitate the constitution of committees at the Central and state levels including the obtaining of concurrence of state finance departments.
- (ii) The proposed Standing Committee in the MoEFCC may also deliberate on the issue of parity in pay scales and allowances among the states and arrive at some consensus. This work may be completed within a period of one year.

Risky and Hard Area Financial Compensation

Recommendations

- (i) The staff should be provided risky and hard area allowances as financial compensation. The state governments should identify such areas and notify the same within next six months. In case of serious injuries while on duty; and in the situation of becoming incapacitated for work in field assignments, he/she should be sanctioned a lump-sum monetary assistance and should be given suitable assignments suited to his/her physical capacities.

(Action: State Governments, SFDs)

Off-duty compensation allowance

Recommendations

- (i) The state governments must fill up all the vacant posts so that all the staff may get their well-deserved weekly offs.
- (ii) Whenever, there is an acute shortage of staff, and weekly offs are restricted, they should at least be compensated through an allowance in lieu of weekly offs.



Incentives for Merit and Professional Excellence

Under the Indian Forest Service (Regulation of Seniority) Rules, 1997, the marks obtained in UPSC examination, at the Indira Gandhi National Forest Academy, Dehradun and Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration, Mussoorie are taken into consideration for regulation and fixation of inter-se seniority of the IFS officers within the same batch. Such provisions do not exist in most of the states for regulation of inter-se seniority in the cases of SFS officers and the frontline staff which is must for recognition of merit and for developing a keen interest in learning the complexities of the profession.

Recommendations

The rules relating to direct recruitment, recruitment by promotion or recruitment to higher posts by limited departmental examinations should be uniform for the forest officers of different States and should include appropriate provisions for regulation of inter-se seniority scales within the State giving due weightage to the marks obtained in the competitive examinations and induction training.

Installation of awards for exemplary services

Rewarding the performers not only boosts the morale of the personnel who work with dedication and sincerity but also encourages them to improve performance and prove their mettle. It also motivates others to prove themselves so that they may also get recognition. In almost all fields of administration and governance, awards have played a significant role in the recognition of the exceptional performance of individuals thus boosting their morale to perform still better and to motivate others too. Presently, only a few states have institutionalized such awards for various gallantry achievements by the frontline staff while some states do so on a case-by-case basis without any formal system of awards.

Recommendations

- (i) Like in the police services, the MoEFCC must work to recognize the exemplary work put in by the forest officials, especially by the frontline staff, through the installation of "The President's Medal for Forestry Personnel".
- (ii) At least five such awards may be granted in each of the fields such forest protection (nabbing the hardened timber smugglers and poachers), wildlife management, outstanding performance in execution of forestry and wildlife programmes, in the investigation of offences resulting in prosecution, afforestation, joint forest management (JFM) and in forestry and wildlife research. Once approval is given in principle, the MoEFCC in consultation with the state governments may frame detailed guidelines for such awards.
- (iii) These awards maybe presented while celebrating important national and international days like Republic Day, World Forestry Day, International Biodiversity Day, Wildlife Week and World Environment Day.

(Action: MoEFCC, State Governments, SFDs)

Part-III Strengthening Protection Machinery

Adoption of Forest Stations System

The 'Forest Stations' system was launched by the Kerala Forest Department (KFD) as early as 1988 along the lines of police stations, to handle major protection issues relating to organized timber smuggling, poaching, ganja cultivation in hilly areas and encroachments in forests. Overall, it was quite successful in bringing down the number of offences and improved the execution of forestry operations.

Recommendations

- (i) Replicating the model adopted by KFD as it gave a big boost to improving forest protection activities. The model helped to raise the number of forest staff under a DFRO to about 15-20

personnel (forest watchers, foresters and FGs), in setting up a forest station building and dormitory for the staff, and well laid standard operating procedures, vehicles, wireless communication system for patrolling in the forest areas, dealing with emergency situations, maintenance of records of offences, tour diaries, among others.

- (ii) The forest stations may be categorized into very difficult and ordinary with staff strength varying from 13 to 25, consisting of a DFRO, foresters and forest guards, keeping in view the remoteness, accessibility, nature of terrain, gravity of threat of smugglers and poachers, density of wild animals, quantum of forestry works, man-animal conflicts, participatory forest management, eco-tourism activities and other statutory activities in revenue areas(like permission to fell trees and the regulation of saw mills etc.,).
- (iii) As the creation of an adequate infrastructure and increasing the number of posts would involve a good amount of expenditure by the states, financial help by the MoEFCC will be necessary.

(Action: State Governments, MoEFCC)

Facilities in Forest Outposts and Camps

The forest outposts and camps like anti-poaching camps, field survey camps, chowkis, etc., are situated in remote areas deep within the forests, accessible only on foot; it is imperative to provide such outposts and camps with adequate and necessary food supplies and other essentials at regular intervals based on the number of staff deployed there.



The Forest station system in Kerala can be adopted for improving the monitoring and infrastructure capacity of Range Offices, especially in sensitive landscapes.

Recommendations

- i) All such anti-poaching camps, chowkis, check-posts and outposts should be provided with facilities of a make-shift kitchen (equipped with LPG and solar cookers, green cook stoves), washrooms (separate for women and men), solar power, wherever normal electric connection is not feasible, clean drinking water, first aid kit and basic medicines (listed with details in Annexure III), communication and resting facilities. These facilities should be available for both permanent and casual staff.
- ii) Uniform camp facility should be promoted through an architectural code on the lines of practices being implemented across other security and enforcement agencies.

(Action: State Governments, SFDs)

Equipping Range Officers with modern technology and well -trained staff

The field staff has to depend on the ministerial staff in the offices of the FRO and DFO (and also in some cases in the offices of CF and CCF) for dealing with their establishment matters like proper maintenance of service books, grant of increments, timely promotions, withdrawal from the general provident fund (GPF), completion of disciplinary proceedings, leave account, sanction of leave, etc. It has been observed that very often, their establishment issues are not attended to in time, and they are forced to take leave for pursuing their cases at controlling offices which should have been settled in the normal course without the need of their camping at those offices.

Further a range office, being the most important office at the field level, has to deal with routine establishment issues of the staff, forestry works and other matters relating to JFM and forest offences, providing transit timber passes to the public for removal of timber from their private areas and NOCs or other tree crop related approvals. It is observed that in most of the cases, with a few exceptions, these offices are not provided with adequate ministerial staff. As a result, the already overburdened field staff is forced to help the range office in undertaking clerical work too like maintenance of stock registers, budget and accounts and in the establishment related documents, etc.

Recommendations

- (i) Upgrading the range office headquarters into state-of-the-art protection and monitoring office; fully equipped with latest technology for communication and patrolling to augment the field enforcement activities by the frontline forest staff.
- (ii) Adequate training of the frontline staff in adoption of modern tools and technology with periodic advancement of their knowledge and skills through in-service courses.
- (iii) Integrated Management System: Control Room for monitoring encroachments, forest fires, poaching, illicit felling and mining activities.
- (iv) Computerization of the range offices, digitization of records, development of various software applications, encouraging the public to apply for permits online and providing them with adequate

computer-savvy ministerial support would be a major step in improving the administration of the range offices. This work should be completed within a period of two years in all the states.

- (v) The procedures for dealing with establishment matters of the staff like sanction of various types of leave and advances, annual increments, fixation of pay, inviting applications for deputation, etc., should be simplified and most of the records be digitized and made available online. The facilitation of online applications and approvals including development of mobile apps should be introduced to the greatest extent possible. This work should be completed within a period of one year in all the states.
- (vi) The above can be institutionalized through a Forest Management Information System (as a Decision Support Tool) established by the center and states.
- (vii) All the FROs and staff, depending on the need, must be provided modern equipment with latest technologies like smart mobile phones under "Common User Group" facility with customized software applications for smart patrolling (e-eye), maps clearly showing the jurisdiction of each staff with location coordinates, checks on movements of staff, capturing of videos, photos and other data, drones, satellite imageries, efficient use of GIS applications, forest fire management system and generation of real time fire alerts, reporting forest offences, personal details of the staff, establishment matters, various orders and leave sanctions.
- (viii) For monitoring, the staff should be provided with forensic testing kits including water poisoning analysis kit, metal detectors to check for the presence of wire-snare and traps and volta meters to check for an electrical wire laid around farms in fringe forest areas.
- (ix) State of the art technology for prevention and control measures should be deployed, along with a dedicated forest fire mitigation and training center for fire-prone divisions at the state level.

Provision for Modern Arms and Ammunition

In sensitive areas with valuable natural forests and plantations which are vulnerable to threats from smugglers, poachers and ganja cultivators, the forest staff should be provided with weapons like rifles and pistols for self-defense.

Recommendations

- (i) Adequate provision of trained staff akin to an artillery unit at circle level should be made with requisite weapons and deployment of trained personnel at division level for routine maintenance and minor repairs.
- (ii) In sensitive areas, where it is not immediately possible to provide arms and ammunition to the frontline staff, the state government must make a provision for issuing licenses on priority to the staff willing to possess personal fire arms like rifles and pistols (like 7.62 SLRs and .32 revolvers) for self-defense.
- (iii) Regular and periodic weapon training and firing practice should invariably be conducted with the help of armed police camps or training ranges.

(Action: State Governments)

Contingency Fund with Forest Range Officer

Very often the FRO has to incur expenditure for unforeseen works/activities for which it would not be possible to make proposals, get the sanctions and draw funds. For example, engaging labourers to dispose off dead animals, removal of blockages in the forests caused due to fallen trees, immediate medical aid to employees or labourers hurt while on duty, etc. Although in some of the states, the FROs are sanctioned a certain amount of funds to meet such contingencies, the same is not available in other states.

Recommendations

The states, where provision of contingency fund for the FRO doesn't exist, must provide the same with detailed guidelines for incurring expenditure for smooth functioning of ranges. This may be done within a period of six months, with appropriate due diligence and ombudsman reports.

Inter departmental support and coordination with police and paramilitary forces

The job responsibilities of the forest staff involve considerable risks to their lives from anti-social



The committee recognizes the Range Office as an administrative unit that needs streamlining and rationalization. A cutting-edge institution can enhance the impact of the conservation and protection efforts of the frontline staff.

elements, who mostly outnumber the forest staff and are better equipped to attack. There have been numerous instances of the field staff being attacked and several of them losing their lives due to such attacks or becoming incapacitated and unable to earn their livelihoods. It has also been observed that the police department, at times, fails to provide adequate timely support to the forest officials to prevent grave law and order situations which are often politically instigated, especially during eviction of forest encroachments or illegal mining activities.

Recommendations

- (i) In sensitive areas, keeping in view the gravity of the threat from smugglers, poachers, encroachers of forest land and ganja cultivators, etc., a police party consisting of one assistant sub-inspector and at least 5-6 constables with a vehicle, arms and adequate communication equipment should be posted in a Forest Division on a permanent basis which can be deployed at short notice for confronting the mafias or poachers or tackling a law and order issue in any forest range under the division or even in a nearby range under another forest division on a specific request. This practice is already in place in several areas but needs to be uniformly promoted and implemented.
- (ii) In other areas, the district administration should be able to provide the required police strength on prior intimation. For eviction of encroachments, well-coordinated and planned action is needed with sufficient police and forest force to carry out evictions and thwart any worsening law and order situation.
- (iii) Human-wildlife conflict has become a major issue across several states, and the district administration should be able to provide adequate support for mob control and maintaining law and order during a situation warranting urgent interventions, such as saving human lives or wild life rescue operations.
- (iv) Building supporting communication networks with police and paramilitary forces to ensure immediate coordination during an emergency.
- (v) The Divisional forest officer of the territorial division at district headquarters should be the focal point for coordination with district officials of different departments and the different forest divisions within the districts.

(Action: State Governments, SFDs)

Establishment of Special Courts for dealing with environment/ forest related cases

Like many other fields, the litigation on matters relating to forests, wildlife and environment require different skill sets for the advocates as well as the judiciary. Establishment of special courts to deal with such offences on a priority basis would help in expediting the litigation process and the conclusion of cases which often go on for decades due to heavy pendency of cases and low priority being given to this sector.

Recommendations

- (i) The state governments may consider setting up Forest Tribunals for expeditiously dealing with forests, wildlife, and environment related cases.
- (ii) GoI may explore possibilities of setting up more benches of National Green Tribunal.

A special bench for wild life cases may be set up at district level for areas with a high number of wildlife trafficking cases.

(Action: State Governments)

Providing Legal Assistance to Frontline Staff in Filing Charge-sheets

Track-record of the SFDs in pursuing litigation is poor as only a miniscule percentage of the offences which reach the courts result in some sort of conviction after a protracted litigation process. There are several reasons for this poor performance viz., lack of adequate knowledge about the various legal provisions and procedures for investigation and proper filing and charging of cases in the courts and poor legal help or no help for preparation of affidavits. Providing legal support to the FROs and other frontline staff is of outmost importance which would not only help in prosecuting the forest offenders but also act as a deterrent against violations of forest laws.

Recommendations

- (i) Each Forest Circle should be provided with a legal support cell to assist the divisions with at least two-three advocates, depending on the legal workload. They should help the DFOs/FROs in preparation of affidavits, proper filing and charging of cases in the courts. The state government should plan for this within a period of 18 months or so.
- (ii) Until regular appointments are made, arrangements must be made for hiring the legal staff on a contractual basis.
- (iii) The knowledge of frontline staff should also be regularly updated on relevant legal issues through one or two day orientation courses so that they are better equipped to deal with forest offences.

(Action: State Governments, SFDs)

Part-IV Family Welfare Activities for Frontline Staff

Welfare Measures for Families of Frontline Staff

The frontline staff would be able to devote full attention to job responsibilities once sure that their family members are comfortable, and they would be able to manage the day-to-day affairs without much problem without his/her required support. Hence, the government must ensure that adequate facilities be provided to the employees who are required to stay away from their families for days together. Although forest colonies are available in many states at several places for accommodating the families of the frontline staff, in majority of those cases, the staff is also posted there and may not be camping for long durations in remote areas.

Family Accommodation

Family quarters of appropriate sizes based on the eligibility of each level, need to be constructed in nearby town/suburbs of the city in clusters. About 15-20 families can stay together in a cluster and can cooperate with each other by lending a helping hand to sort out their immediate issues.

Eligibility for HRA-Declaration of Temporary and Permanent Headquarters

The eligibility of a government official to receive house rent allowance is based on the categorization of posting headquarters for this purpose which varies from location to location (big cities, small towns, villages, and remote areas, etc.) When the posting is in a remote area, that place of posting is declared as the headquarters of the frontline staff where the eligibility for HRA based on the location, is the minimum. However, they are forced to locate their families at reasonably comfortable places (either division or range headquarters) where basic civic amenities and facilities of education for the children, health, etc., are available. In the absence of having government accommodation, they are constrained to hire family accommodation at much higher amounts than they are eligible to receive.

Recommendations

- (i) The frontline staff when posted in remote areas should be provided with appropriate free family accommodation in a nearby town in a Forest Complex where the appropriate facilities for children's education and health are available. For this, the SFD may build cluster housing facilities for the staff where they can stay together in a colony. Keeping in view that the proposal may have larger financial implications, this work can be completed in the period of the next 3-4 years and funding may be made available from different sources including funds under the Compensatory Afforestation Fund.
- (ii) In all other cases, till family accommodation is made available to them, their headquarters for the purpose of availing HRA should be declared as that of the forest division or the forest range office so that they are able to hire accommodation for their families at a suitable place.

Access to subsidized ration and household provisions

The families of the frontline staff should be provided the benefit of ration at subsidized rates in a manner similar to the police canteens and other canteens run by the military and paramilitary forces. The facility of the police canteen can also be extended to the forest staff as the said Infrastructure is already available in all the districts, instead of establishing separate forest canteens.

(Action: State Governments, SFDs)

Forest Staff Welfare Co-operative Society

- (i) Constitution of 'Forestry Personnel Welfare Co-operative Society' for the whole SFD with chapters at the Division level. All the frontline staff should be members of the Society and contribution can be made by the officers too.
- (ii) The registration of the members can be made at the state level through assigning an employee code to each forestry personnel. The deductions for monthly subscription can be made from the salary irrespective of the posting of an employee. The resources so mobilized may be used for various welfare activities of the frontline staff such as financial assistance to the needy staff in case of emergencies, scholarships, etc.
- (iii) The resources of Forest Staff Welfare Co-operative Societies can be utilized to run forest canteens at Division or Circle levels wherever the police canteen facilities are not available.

(Action: SFDs)

Ex-gratia compensation for Forest Martyrs

Frontline staff often sacrifice their lives for the call of duty, fighting against anti-social elements while protecting the country's natural resources which is no less a sacrifice than those who fight at the borders to protect the integrity of our country or of the police dealing with extreme law and order situations or of the fire-fighters who lose their lives while saving precious lives. They also suffer due to vagaries of nature like floods, storms and landslides while discharging their duties and get seriously injured, sometimes even losing their lives. As per records maintained by the ICFRE from 1990 onwards, about 425 forest officials have sacrificed their lives. There is a need to honor the supreme sacrifices made by the officials.

Recommendations

- (i) The MoEFCC should frame detailed guidelines for declaring 'forest martyrs'¹² in consultation with the state governments on the pattern of compensations being awarded to the police personnel, with some modifications, wherever necessary, within a period of one year.
- (ii) The guidelines should also be made applicable to the cases which have occurred in the past too (retrospective effect to be decided in consultation with the states).
- (iii) 12The family of a forest martyr should be sanctioned immediate ex-gratia grant of minimum INR 25 lakh or more, to be paid within a period of one week of such an incidence.
- (iv) At least one family member should be provided immediate employment on compassionate grounds with adequate salary (dying in harness employment). Till that becomes effective, his/her family should be paid full monthly salary along with allowances which the official would have been eligible to receive.

¹²In a recent case of brutal murder of a P.G, the MP government has announced giving him status of a "Martyr", an ex-gratia payment of INR one crore, a job to one of the family members and a house.

- (v) The frontline staff should be covered under group life insurance at the expense of the government.
- (vi) Forest martyrs should be given the guard of honor and commemoration, along the same lines as police personnel.

Part-V Special Recommendations

Specialized Protection for Unique Habitat Types

India is a mega diverse country defined by its natural heritage and habitats and it is our ultimate responsibility to protect these ecosystems. These unique landscapes are broadly comprised of High Altitude Ecosystem/Himalayas, Mangrove Forests, Coastal Ecosystems, Shola Forests, Wetlands and Grasslands.

Himalayas: Glaciers act as the water towers of our country and provide a unique habitat to endangered species like the snow leopard. The riverbeds are being plundered by sand-mafias, further altering the course of the rivers in the landscape, leading to the flooding of adjoining human settlements. Wildlife crime, especially due to porous borders and lack of monitoring in harsh terrains is an additional threat to the landscape. High altitude pastures provide livelihood opportunities to the local fringe forest communities but they too face a threat due to overgrazing.

Coastal Ecosystems: India has a coastline of 3500 km (approx.) which provides a habitat to unique marine species like elasmobranch spp., which are highly endangered and impacted by illegal wildlife trade.

Mangrove Forests: Mangrove forests act as natural barriers against natural calamities and soil erosion and also provide a host of ecosystem services. They therefore require immediate and focused attention by the forest frontline to prevent their decimation due to anthropogenic pressures.

Shola Forests: Shola forests are patches of stunted tropical montane forest found in valleys usually separated from one another by undulating grasslands in the higher montane regions in Kerala, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. The shola-forest and grassland complex, form climatic climax vegetation with forest regeneration and expansion restricted by climatic conditions. These forests shelter rich biodiversity and need a high degree of protection.

Grasslands: The ecosystem that starts with grasses as the primary producers can be called a grassland ecosystem. These are the most important components of any terrestrial ecosystem which provide food to insects, reptiles, grazing animals, birds, rodents, many other herbivores and of course to humans in the form of crops. Not only grasses, but herbs, shrubs and trees are a part of these ecosystems. About 24% of land in India is covered with grasslands.

Wetlands: Wetlands are unique, productive ecosystems and play a critical role in maintaining many natural cycles. They support rich floral and faunal biodiversity and purify and replenish our waters and provide food for crores of people.



Recommendations

- (i) Special forces for patrolling and monitoring (primarily involving local communities) in each of the unique landscapes for preserving their existing knowledge and practice.
- (ii) Specialized teams for monitoring habitats (e.g. hydrologists, GIS experts, wildlife biologists, fisheries experts, sociologists etc.,) and a collaboration with research and specialized institutes to reinforce scientist based monitoring efforts
- (iii) Training forest frontline staff for the identification of medicinal and aromatic plants to combat illegal wildlife trade (especially in high altitude ecosystems).
- (iv) Strengthening the capacity of the wildlife crime control bureau in such landscapes and expanding its capacity to identify and tackle other allied environmental crimes along with illegal wildlife trade

Core team of specialists at division/circle level

For better management of forestry and wildlife resources, the states may consider building core teams of experts at the offices of DFO/CF which may include wildlife biologists, sociologists, economists, business and GIS experts.

Projected expenses for improving the working conditions

Keeping in view the present state of infrastructure and preparedness of the SFDs to deal with hardened and habitual criminals, any amount of funding will not be enough. The committee has proposed a modest amount of INR 2720 crore over a period of five years for the modernization of the working conditions of the frontline staff which has to be an additionally over the regular budget. This cost has to be borne by both the central and state governments. The modalities and ratio of funding on both levels may be decided by the Standing Committee through mutual consultations.

**Projected expenses for a state of the art modernization of the working conditions of
the Forest Department in the Country**

(Rs. In Crore)

S. No.	Activity/Subject	1st Year	2nd Year	3rd Year	4th Year	5th Year	Total
1	Capacity Building HRD Training (Academic/combat/Tradecraft)	100	100	80	70	70	420
2	Fire Management	100	100	80	80	70	430
3	Ex-Gratia support for front line staff	5	5	5	5	5	25
4	Awards (National/State)	100	100	80	70	70	420
5	Strengthening Protection infrastructure (APC/Chowki/Watch Tower/Camps)	100	100	80	80	70	430
6	Vehicles (Rescue/ATV/Fire tender/boats)	100	80	80	70	70	400
7	Weaponry (automatic/deterrent/darting gun)	100	80	80	80	80	420
8	Technical Advancement (IT) MIS/Monitoring and Surveillance System (High definition systems)	100	80	80	70	60	390
9	Research and Management	50	50	40	30	30	200
	Total	656	596	526	486	456	2720

Dissemination of Best Practices

Many states/UTs have undertaken innovative actions in one area or the other for improving the working conditions of the forest frontline staff resulting in better protection of the forest and wildlife resources. Through information sharing, other states/UTs could learn from those initiatives and may consider adopting the same with necessary modifications, if any.

1. Setting up of a national-level Integrated Web Portal for dissemination of best practices for improving the working conditions of the forest frontline staff resulting in better protection of the forest and acts relating to frontline staff in a tabular form with fool-proof mechanisms and mandatory updation within strict timelines.
2. The SFDs may appoint nodal officers for uploading the best practices being adopted by the SFDs. All the SFDs may be given access to upload the best practices and other information in prescribed format for each type of parameter to ensure uniformity.
3. Standardization of forest department practices through SOPs and for bringing uniformity.

(Action: MoEFCC, SFDs)

Constitution of a Standing Committee for monitoring the implementation of recommendations

For ensuring the timely implementation of the recommendations of the Committee as accepted by the government, it would be necessary to have a well-established mechanism to periodically review the progress and remove difficulties, which may arise, if any.

Recommendations

- (i) A Standing Committee under the chairpersonship of Director General of Forests and Special Secretary, MoEFCC with PCCFs (HoFF) and CWLWs as members, should be set up which should meet at quarterly periods at least and review the level of actions already completed by the states. The states which are lagging behind can be managed on an individual basis.
- (ii) The Standing Committee after the completion of the tasks, as suggested in the report, should also meet periodically, say, at least twice a year, and review and suggest changes, if necessary, on various aspects of the management of frontline staff keeping in view the fast changing political and socio-economic fabric of the country.
- (iii) Similar Standing Committees should also be constituted at States/UTs level to review/monitor the progress of actions taken.
- (iv) The MoEFCC/states may broaden/alter the terms of reference of the Standing Committee, as per requirements, for furthering the cause of scientific management of forests and wildlife of the country.



Introduction of a uniform for IFS

A uniform is a piece of cloth that stitches one together in a common purpose

The recommendations provided in the instant document need a common vision and approach, which can be achieved through a standard practice. Taking a cue from other nations, it is observed that all members of forest services across United States, Europe, Central and East Asia wear uniforms.

Uniforms¹², strengthen the structures of any organization, infusing a sense of discipline and camaraderie. Especially, with the dynamic nature of the wildlife crimes in present times, a uniform could help create a sense of awareness, acting as a badge of honor for the Indian Forest Service Officials. The forest service in India has typically been uniformed up to the rank of Forest Range officer level. The officers at the level of

Assistant Conservator of Forests and above do not wear any uniform. The proposal to bring in a uniform for the forest services would necessitate formulating rules. The necessity is essentially felt with the dynamic responsibility entrusted to them. The multifaceted functioning of the foresters with changing times and day-to-day management challenges, demands proper aligning of the structure and protection needs of the Forest force. As forest officers are directly responsible for implementing various acts and are required to perform prudently, it is indeed time to look towards adopting, Uniform Rules,

All the members of the Committee except the chairman have disagreed for incorporation of a recommendation in the report relating to "introduction of uniform for the IFS Officers" due to many reasons including it being beyond the mandate of the Committee. The dissent notes against this recommendation by Mr. A K Goyal, IFS(retd.), Anand Kumar Prabhakar, DIGF, Mr. Rohit Tiwari, IGF and Ms. Madhu Sharma, IFS as given in annexure IV to the report.

Hence the draft proposal for 'The Indian Forest Service (Uniform) Rules, 2021' is to be universally and mandatorily adopted for all the personnel of the Indian Forest Services. The draft proposal for The Indian Forest Service(Uniform) Rules,2021 has been attached subsequently.

Draft-The Indian Forest Service (uniform) Rules, 2021

In exercise of the powers conferred by sub-section(1) of section 3 of the All India Services Act, 1951(LXIof1951), the Central Government, after consultation with the Governments of the States concerned, may make the following rules, namely:-

Short title: These rules may be called the Indian Forest Service (Uniform) Rules, 2021

Definitions: In these rules, unless the context otherwise requires-

Government" in relation to a member of the Service means the Governments of the State on whose cadre such member is borne and in relation to a member of the Service borne on a Joint Cadre, the Government of the Constituent State under which the member of the Service is for the time being serving.

a) 'Service' means the Indian Forest Service.

Specification of Uniform: The uniform to be worn by a member of the Service shall be subject to the provisions of rule 6, be the same as specified in the Schedule to these rules (herein-after referred to as the 'uniform'); Provided that a person who was a member of the Service immediately before the commencement of these rules shall not be required to provide himself. With any article of the uniform, until the corresponding article of his uniform equipment in use at such commencement is worn out or until he receives his next grant for the upkeep of the uniform, whichever is earlier.

Grant for Uniform:

a) Every member of the service shall, on appointment there to, be entitled to receive from the Government an initial grant of twelve thousand five hundred a year interval of two years and thereafter, a renewal grant of six thousand rupees towards the cost of his uniform.

Provided that the Govt. may withhold any such grant from a member of the Service who is due to retire within two years of the date when the grant is due; Provided further that where an officer of a State Forest Service is appointed to the Service and the Government certify that substantially large number of articles constituting the uniform of such officer are common with those prescribed for members of the Service under these rules, such officer shall, on appointment to the Service, be entitled to receive only a sum equal to the difference between the uniform grant admissible under this rule and the uniform grant last drawn by him as an Officer of the State Forest Service and the period of two years for the purpose of the next grant under this rule shall in his case, be computed from the date on which the uniform grant was last drawn by him as such officer.

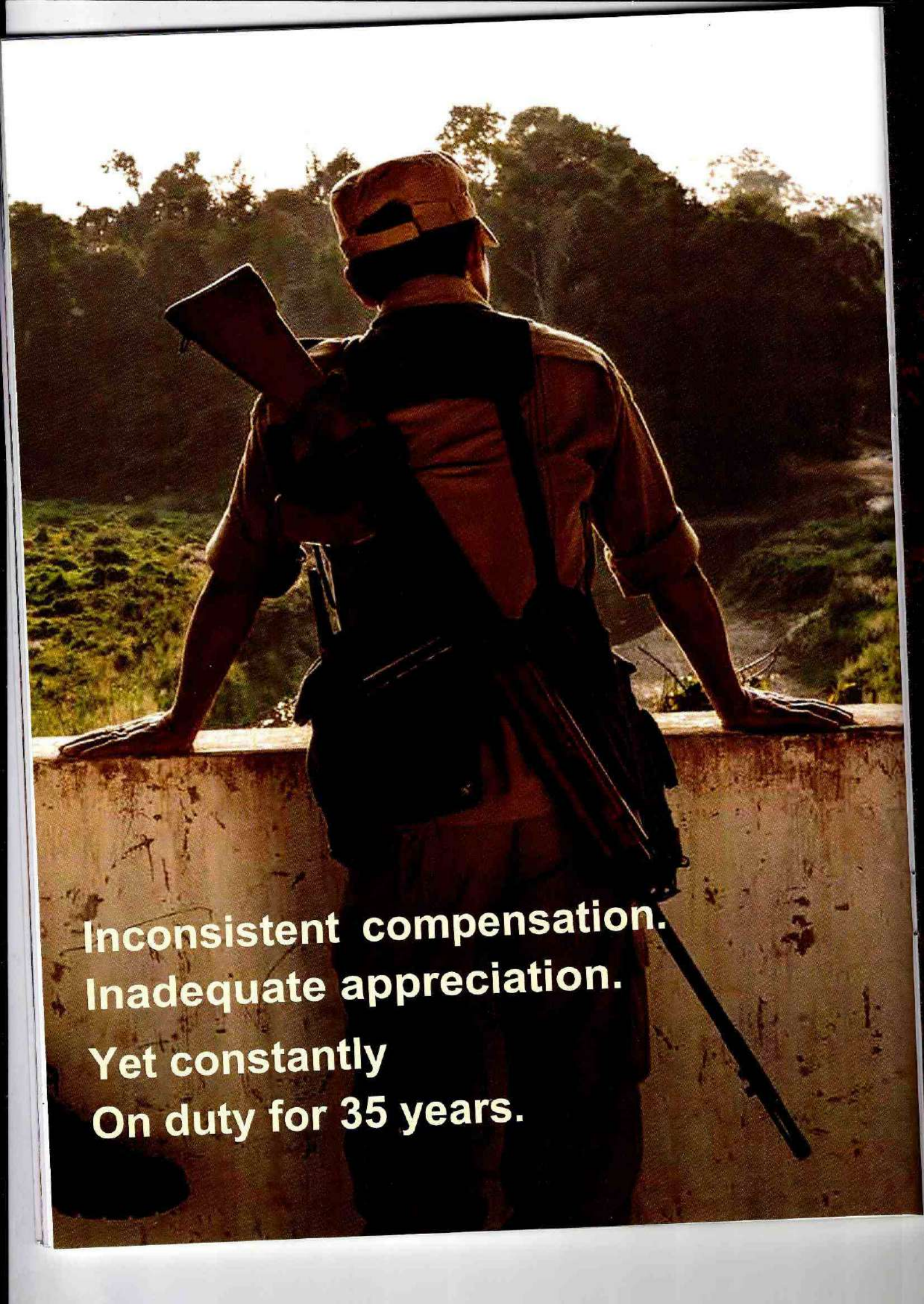
b) The Central Government may at any time, in consultation with the State Governments concerned, alter the amount of uniform grant admissible under this rule.

Kit Maintenance Allowance: Every member of the Service shall be entitled to receive from Government a Kit Maintenance Allowance of one thousand rupees per month.

Modifications in the working dress: The Central Government after consultation with the State Government concerned, may, from time to time, make such modification in the working dress which a member of the Service may wear while engaged in work of an informal character as local circumstances may require.

Interpretation: If any question arises as to the interpretation of these Rules, the Central Government shall decide upon the same.

Repeal and Saving: Any rules corresponding to these rules in force immediately before the commencement of these rules are hereby repealed; Provided that any order made, or action taken under the rules so repealed shall be deemed to have been made or taken under the corresponding provision of these rules

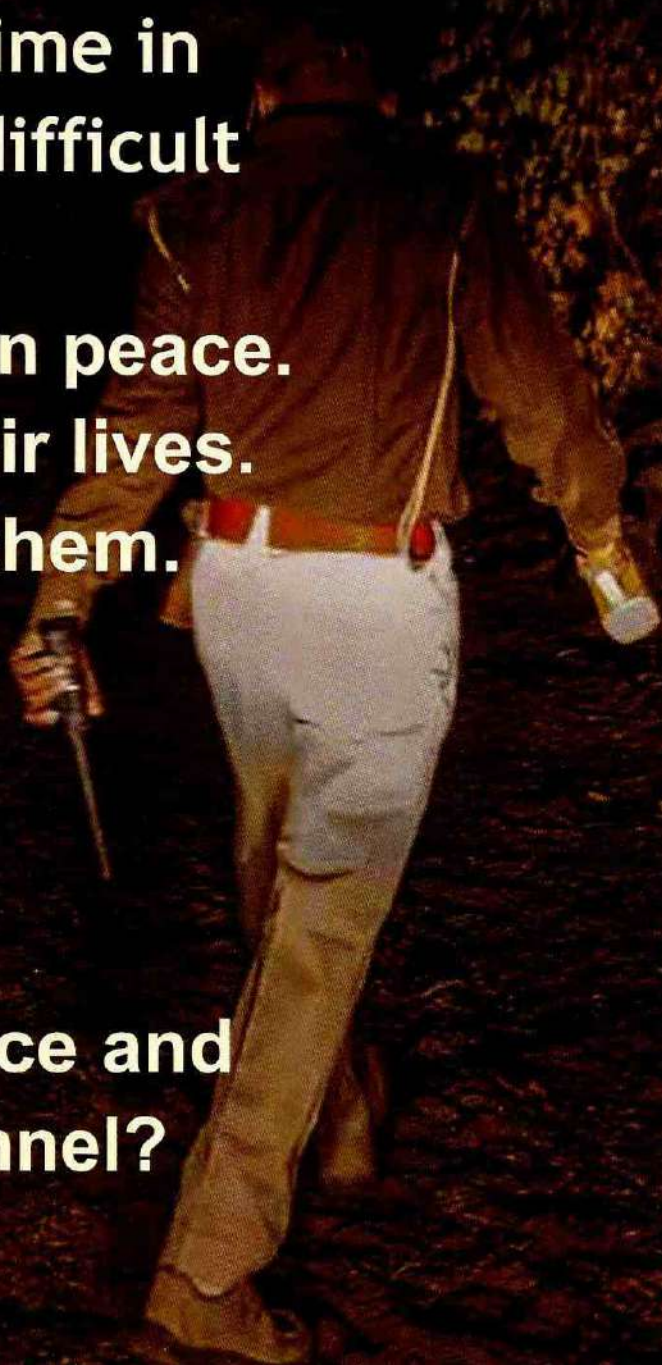


**Inconsistent compensation.
Inadequate appreciation.
Yet constantly
On duty for 35 years.**

**They fight crime.
They maintain peace.
They risk their lives.
We honour them.**

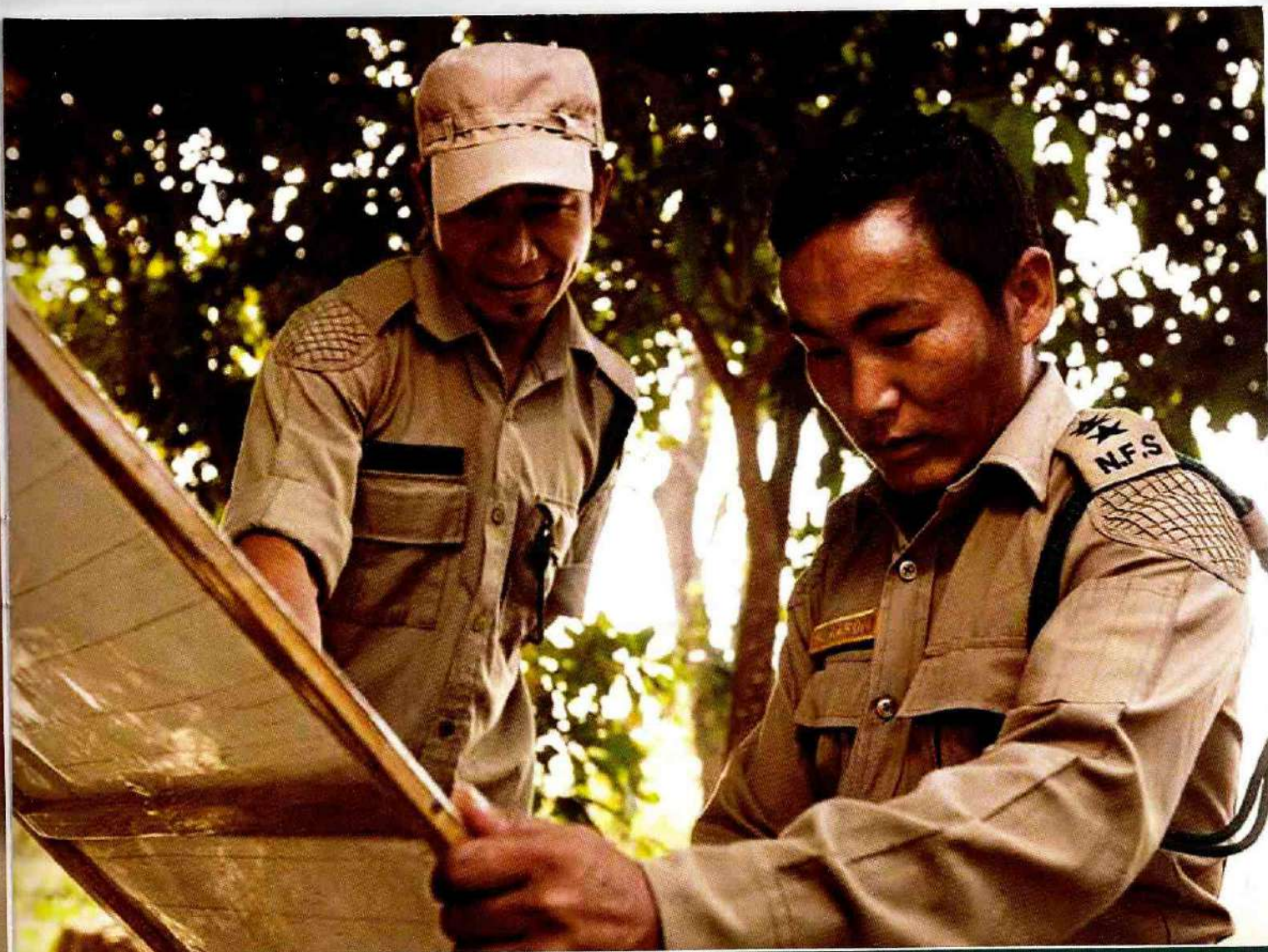
**They fight crime in
remote and difficult
terrains.
They maintain peace.
They risk their lives.
We neglect them.**

**Why the
difference
between the
frontline police and
forest personnel?**





**They put themselves
in danger every day.
The least we could do is put
them in better armor.**



Capacity Building of Forestry Personnel in Urban Forests

Annexure-I

OM relating to Constitution of the Committee to be inserted

In pursuance of the decision taken by the Competent Authority in the Ministry, a committee has been constituted under the Chairmanship of Shri Keshav Saran Varma, IAS (Retd.) Founding Director of World Bank's Global Tiger Initiative for improving and strengthening the working conditions of forest frontline staff. The composition of the core committee is as follows:-

- | | |
|--|-------------------|
| 1. Shri Keshav Saran Varma, IAS(Retd.) (GJ:1976) | : Chairperson |
| 2. Shri A K Goyal, IFS, (Retd.)Special Secretary | :Member |
| 3. PCCF & HoFF, Karnataka (Ex-officio) | : Member |
| 4. IGF(WL),MoEF&CC | :Member |
| 5. DIGF(RT), MoEF&CC | :Member &Convener |

2. The Terms of Reference (ToR) of the Committee are :-

- a. To study and recommend measures required to be taken for improving and strengthening working conditions of the forest frontline staff during protection duty.
 - b. To suggest steps to be taken for commemorating forest martyrs along the lines of police personnel.
3. This is issued with the approval of the Hon'ble Union Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change

Annexure-II

Details of meetings

S.No.	Date and time	Names of experts /officials interacted with	Names of the members of the Committee present
1.	21.09.2020 (12.30PM)	Meeting of the Committee Members	Shri Keshav Saran Varma, IAS (Retd.)(GJ:1976) Shri A.K. Goyal, IFS, (Retd.)(KR:81), Shri Sanjai Mohan, PCCF&HoFF, Karnataka Dr. Amit Mallick, IGF(WL), Dr. Suneesh Buxy, DIGF(RT) Special invitee: Shri S.P.Yadav,ADG (NTCA)
2.	25.09.2020 (11.00AM)	Secretary General & CEO, WWF, PCCF- Himachal Pradesh, Addl. Director, WCCB, Addl. PCCF(WL), Assam, WII, Dehradun, Shri	Shri Keshav Saran Varma, IAS (Retd.)(GJ:1976) Shri A.K. Goyal, IFS, (Retd.)(KR:81), Shri Sanjai Mohan, PCCF&HoFF, Karnataka Dr. Amit Mallick, IGF(WL), Dr. Suneesh Buxy, DIGF(RT) Special invitee: Shri S.P.Yadav, ADG (NTCA)
3.	22.10.2020 (11.00AM)	Secretary General & CEO, WWF, PCCF- Himachal Pradesh, Addl. Director, WCCB, Addl. PCCF(WL), Assam, WII, Dehradun, Shri	Shri Keshav Saran Varma, IAS (Retd.) (GJ:1976) Shri A.K. Goyal, IFS, (Retd.) (KR:81), Shri Sanjai Mohan, PCCF & HoFF, Karnataka Dr. Amit Mallick, IGF(WL), Dr. Suneesh Buxy, DIGF(RT) Special Invitee: Shri S.P.Yadav,ADG (NTCA)

4.	15.04.2021 (11.00PM)	Representatives of Forest Protective Staff Unions and Forest Range Officer Associations of the states namely Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh, Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Delhi, Chandigarh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh and Bihar	Shri Keshav Saran Varma, IAS (Retd.)(GJ:1976) Shri A.K.Goyal, IFS, (Retd.)(KR:81), Shri Sanjai Mohan, PCCF&HoFF, Karnataka Shri Rohit Tiwari, IGF (WL), Shri S.K. Verma, DIGF (RT) Special Invitee: Shri S.P.Yadav, ADG (NTCA)
5.	26.04.2021 (11.00AM)	Representatives of Forest protective Staff Unions and Forest Range Officer Associations of the states namely Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andaman, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura, Sikkim, Goa, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Odisha, West Bengal, Daman & Diu, Puducherry, Lakshadweep	Shri Keshav Saran Varma, IAS (Retd.)(GJ:1976) Shri A.K. Goyal, IFS, (Retd.)(KR:81), Shri Sanjai Mohan, PCCF& HoFF, Karnataka Shri Rohit Tiwari, IGF (WL), Shri S.K. Verma, DIGF (RT) Special Invitee: Shri S.P.Yadav, ADG (NTCA)
6.	26.05.2021 (11.30AM)	Meeting of the Committee Members to discuss and finalize the structure of the report on the basis of recommendation	Shri Keshav Saran Varma, IAS (Retd.)(GJ:1976) Shri A.K.Goyal, IFS, (Retd.) (KR:81), Shri Sanjai Mohan, PCCF&HoFF, Karnataka Shri Rohit Tiwari, IGF(WL), Shri S.K.Verma, DIGF(RT)

			Special Invitee: Shri S.P. Yadav, ADG (NTCA)
7.	01.06.2021 (11.00AM)	Meeting of the Committee members to design proforma for seeking more information from the States/UTs.	Shri Keshav Saran Varma, IAS (Retd.)(GJ:1976) Shri A.K. Goyal, IFS, (Retd.)(KR:81), Shri Sanjai Mohan, PCCF&HoFF, Karnataka Shri Rohit Tiwari, IGF(WL), Shri S.K. Verma, DIGF(RT) Special Invitee: Shri S.P. Yadav, ADG (NTCA)
8.	08.06.2021 (04.30PM)	Meeting of the Committee Members	Shri Keshav Saran Varma, IAS (Retd.)(GJ:1976) Shri A.K. Goyal, IFS, (Retd.)(KR:81), Shri Sanjai Mohan, PCCF&HoFF, Karnataka Shri Rohit Tiwari, IGF(WL), Shri S.K. Verma, DIGF(RT) Special Invitee: Shri S.P. Yadav, ADG (NTCA)
9.	02.07.2021 (11.00AM)	Meeting of the Committee Members	Shri Keshav Saran Varma, IAS (Retd.)(GJ:1976) Shri A.K. Goyal, IFS, (Retd.)(KR:81), Shri Sanjai Mohan, PCCF&HoFF, Karnataka Shri Rohit Tiwari, IGF(WL), Shri Priya Ranjan, DIGF(RT) Special Invitee: Ms. Suveena Thakur, AIGF(RT)
10.	12.07.2021 (3.30PM)	Meeting of the Committee Members	Shri Keshav Saran Varma, IAS (Retd.)(GJ:1976)

			Shri A.K. Goyal, IFS, (Retd.) (KR:81), Shri Sanjai Mohan, PCCF&HoFF, Karnataka
			Shri Priya Ranjan, DIGF(RT) Special Invitee: Ms. Suveena Thakur, AIGF(RT)
11.	15.07.2021 (11.30AM)	Meeting of the Committee Members	Shri Keshav Saran Varma, IAS (Retd.) (GJ:1976) Shri A.K. Goyal, IFS, (Retd.) (KR:81), Special Invitee: Ms. Suveena Thakur, AIGF(RT) Ms Tilotama Varma, Addl. Director WCCB Sh P.K. Mallik, IGNTCA
12.	22.07.2021(3:00 PM)	Meeting of the Committee Members	Shri Keshav Saran Varma, IAS (Retd.)(GJ:1976) Shri A.K. Goyal, IFS, (Retd.)(KR:81), Special Invitee: Ms. Suveena Thakur, AIGF(RT) Ms Tilotama Varma, Addl. Director WCCB
13	19.09.2022 (11:30 AM)	Meeting of the Committee Members	Shri Keshav Saran Varma, IAS (Retd.) Shri A.K. Goyal, IFS, (Retd.) Shri C P Goyal, DGF&SS Shri B.K. Singh, Addl, DGF (Forest), MoEF&CC Ms. Madhu Sharma, PCCF & HoFF, Karnataka Shri Rohit Tiwari, IGF (WL) Shri A K Prabhakar, DIGF (RT), MoEF&CC

* Representatives from various associations/unions/Federations of state frontline staff including Shri Kamal Singh Yadav, General Secretary, AIFO, Shri Shailendra Singh, Uttar Pradesh, Shri V N Dubey, Chhattisgarh Ranger Association, Shri Suyash Dhar Diwan, Chhattisgarh Forest Ranger Association, Shri Vijendra Nath Dubey, Chhattisgarh, Shri Virendra Kumar, Shri Sandeep, Himachal Pradesh, Shri Shailendra Bhadare, Forest Guard Maharashtra, Shri Dinesh Sharma, Madhya Pradesh, Shri Ajay Patil, Maharashtra, etc. participated and contributed during the meetings.

Annexure-III

Tool-Kit, First Aid Kit and Supply of Anti-Venom

Basic Tools Kit: While patrolling deep in the forests, the staff may have to climb steep hills through narrow footpaths, cross water bodies, make way through fallen trees and deep thorny bushes and even come face to face with wild animals, both herbivores and carnivores. They should be provided with some basic tools and equipment to protect themselves from injury and to successfully navigate the forests.

A standard tool-kit for individual staff and a kit for a patrol party should contain:

ITEMS OF THE FIRST AID KIT			
Items for First Aid Kit	Number	Medicines	Number
Sterile gauze pads(4"x4")	4 pieces	Painkillers (Aspirin /Piroxicam)	10 tablets
Rolls of 4" wide sterile gauze	2 rolls	Anti-histamine tablets (Fexofenadine)	10 tablets
Band-Aids (Include a couple large-sized Band-Aids)	10 packets	Paracetamol/ Crocin	10 tablets
Triangular Bandages (Useful for slings and lashing to improvised splints)	2 packets	Antacid Chewable Tables (Digene)	10 tablets
Athletic tape/Crepe bandage	2 rolls	Sprays for Insect Bites	1bottle
Micro shield (lightweight mouth shield for giving CPR)	1 piece		
Tincture/Betadine Bottle (for cleaning wounds)	1 bottle		
Neosporin or Providone-iodine ointment (to dress wounds)	1 tube		
Safety Pins	2 packets		
Scissors and tweezers (Scissors and tweezers are also available on Swiss Army knives)	1 piece		
Rubber Gloves	2 pieces		

60cc Syringe (For suction of vomitus or irrigation of wounds)	1 piece		
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Individual staff:

First-aid items (bandages, crepe bandage, sterile gauze dressings, spray to relieve insect bites and stings, pain-killers, etc.), smart (multi -purpose) mobile phone, binoculars, multi-utility knife (Swiss knife), water bottle, measuring tape, nylon rope, torch, matchbox, small notebook for recording information and documents like map of jurisdiction of their areas, details of plantations, nurseries and other assets being protected by them, etc.

(This is not an exhaustive list).

For a patrol party:

First-aid items (bandages, plasters, crepe bandage, sterile gauze dressings, antiseptic cream, spray to relieve insect bites and stings, pain killers, safety pins, etc.), wireless sets, walkie-talkies, micro-chip readers, power-chainsaw, pruning and cutting equipment, cage, search lights and documents like maps for jurisdiction of their areas, details of plantations, nurseries and other assets being protected by them, etc.(This is not an exhaustive list).

Supply of anti-venom:

The SFD in collaboration with the Health Department must ensure that adequate numbers of anti-venom vials and intra venous dopamine and/or adrenaline to treat scorpion bites are available in the PHCs located near forest areas for use in case of emergencies.

(Action:SFDs)



Annexure-IV: Dissent Notes

ಮಧು ಶರ್ಮಾ, ಐ.ಎ.ಎಸ್.,
ಪ್ರಧಾನ ಮುಖ್ಯ ಅರಣ್ಯ ಸಂರಕ್ಷಣಾಧಿಕಾರಿ
(ಮೌ,ಕಾ,ಸಂ,ತ, ಮತ್ತು ಹ,ಬ)

Madhu Sharma, I.F.S
Principal Chief Conservator of Forests
(EWPRT&CC)



ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಅರಣ್ಯ ಇಲಾಖೆ

KARNATAKA FOREST DEPARTMENT

7th Floor, Aranya Bhavan,
18th Cross, Malleshwaram,
Bengaluru - 560 003.
Phone : 080 - 23347008
e-mail : ewprtpccf@gmail.com

No.: PCCF(EWPRT&CC)/CR-13/2022-23

Date: 03/10/2022

To
Shri Keshav Verma
Chairman,
Committee for Improving and Strengthening the
Working Condition of the Forest Frontline Staff
Government of India
New Delhi

Respected Sir,

Subject: Committee for Improving and Strengthening the Working
Condition of the Forest Frontline Staff.

Reference: Email dated, 22 Aug, 2022, 6:30 am of the same subject

I attended the Meeting of the above said Committee on 19/09/2022. The details of the draft committee report were discussed. The report mentions recommending a Uniform for Forest Services on page 29 of the draft report.

I am not in agreement with this recommendation at all. This recommendation is beyond the mandate given to the committee itself and it should not have been included in the draft report. This point was made clear during discussions also.

Shri. Sanjai Mohan, PCCF (HoF), who was a member of the committee and was attending the earlier meetings, had also sent a dissent note regarding this. (Referencing email dated 22 Aug, 2022, 6:30am of the same subject, copy attached).

My disagreement to include any such recommendation may kindly be noted.

Yours Sincerely,

Madhu Sharma

Madhu Sharma
Principal Chief Conservator of Forests,
Evaluation, Working Plan, Research,
Training & Climate Change
Forest Department
Government of Karnataka

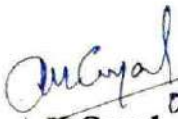
Dissent Note

**of A K Goyal, Member of the Committee, on the
Recommendations concerning "Introduction of Uniform for
Forest Services"**

I am not in favour of this recommendation because of the following reasons:

- (i) It is **beyond the mandate** of this Committee.
- (ii) It **will dilute the purpose** for which this Committee has been set up and attention will be drawn towards service issues relating to IFS.
- (iii) **It is not going to improve the lot of the frontline** staff in anyway.
- (iv) It **will also have major financial implications**, an extra burden on the Central/State Governments **even when we are trying to convince the states to allocate financial resources for improving the much-required working conditions of the frontline staff.**
- (v) Uniform is **generally associated with law and order and security.**
 - a. **Enforcement of forest laws is one of the mandates** of the forest officers. Apart from this, forest officers are required to substantially engage in developmental activities which include afforestation, rural development, employment generation, tribal and social welfare, social and farm forestry, forest extension, research and development, awareness generation, participatory forest management involving local communities, etc., **where uniform will be a distinct disadvantage.** These jobs are of specialized nature.
 - b. At present the frontline staff performs these multifarious roles whereas at the higher levels of forestry administration, specialization is what matters most and the uniform will be a liability.

- c. In fact, there are many jobs performed by the frontline staff wherein most of the time they need to work in-house and **can be exempted from wearing uniform.**
- d. In the **Customs and Excise Departments**, the subordinates have direct dealing with people enforcing provisions of Customs Act and they have uniform **only upto Assistant Commissioner level and no uniform at higher levels.**
- (vi) It is a larger issue involving All India Services in which various Ministries of the GOI too have major role to play besides the State Governments
- (vii) This issue has been **debated at length at several fora previously** too and no consensus reached.


A K Goyal 01/10/2022

Member of the Committee

Dissent Note of Anand Kumar Prabhakar, DIGF (RT)

I attended the meeting of the Committee "Improving and Strengthening the Working Condition of the Forest Frontline Staff" on 19/09/2022. The details of the draft committee report were discussed. The report mentions about "Introduction of Uniform for Forest Service's".

I disagree with the recommendation. It is beyond the mandate of the Committee. Further, this is not going to contribute for improvement in the working conditions of frontline staff. Apart from enforcement of forest laws, forest officers are also required to engage in different developmental activities and in participatory forest management involving local communities where uniform will be a distinct disadvantage.

Hence, in view of the above, my dissent note may kindly be accepted.

Yours Sincerely,


Anand Kumar Prabhakar
DIGF (RT), MoEF&CC
Member Secretary of the Committee

Dissent Note of Rohit Tiwari, IGF (WL)

I attended the meeting of the Committee "Improving and Strengthening the Working Condition of the Forest Frontline Staff" on 19/09/2022. The details of the draft committee report were discussed.

The report recommends introduction of uniform for Forest Service officers. In my view, this is beyond the mandate of the committee. This is not going to contribute for improvement in the working conditions of forest frontline staff which is the mandate of the committee. Apart from enforcement of forest laws, forest officers are also required to engage in different developmental activities and in participatory forest management involving local communities where uniform will be a distinct disadvantage.

Hence, in view of the above, my dissent note may kindly be accepted.

Yours Sincerely,



Rohit Tiwari
IGF (WL), MoEF&CC
Member of the Committee



V Karkalan is working as a daily wage protection mazdoor in the Periyar Tiger Reserve since July 2009. He has dedicated his life to the cause of conservation.

V Karkalan/53 years
Periyar Tiger Reserve (East) Division



K A Raju belongs to the Mannan tribal community and is an expert in nature interpretation and species identification. He has been working at the Periyar Tiger Reserve as a daily wage mazdoor since 1998.

KA Raju/54 years
Periyar Tiger Reserve (East) Division



Sose has been in the forest protection service for 15 years. A daily wage protection mazdoor, Sose is involved in inter state border patrolling, fire management activities, ganja raids, camera trapping exercises and rescued 5 people during the floods in 2011.

Sose/49 years
Eravikulam National Park, Munnar



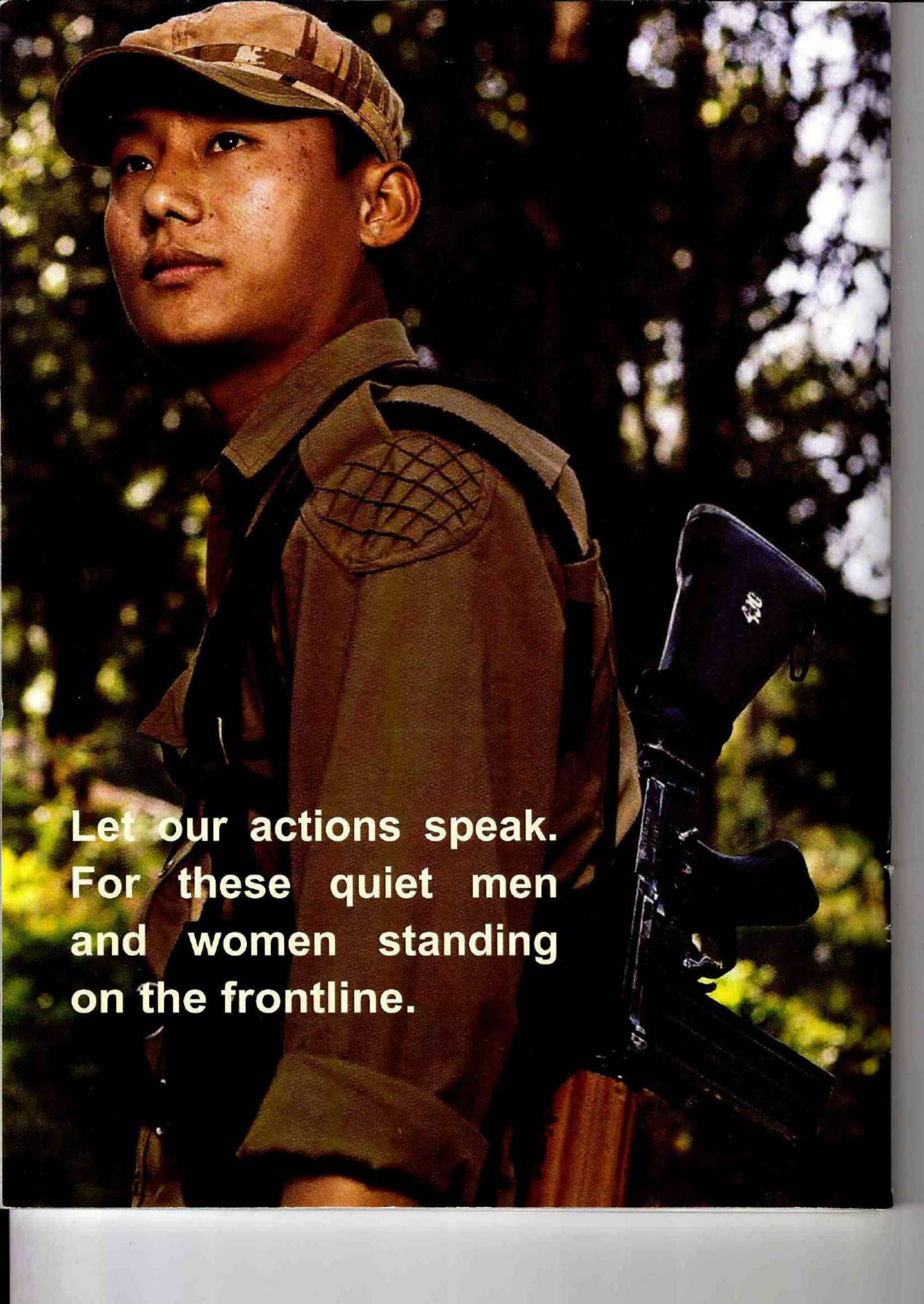
A watcher in the Department of Wildlife Protection since 1985, Mohammad has expertise in various protection-related activities. During this long span of service, he has been promoted only once while his counterparts in other wings of the forest department progressed regularly in their careers. Needless to say, this has compromised his morale to a large extent.

Mohammad Ismail Mir/56 years
Wildlife Warden Central Division, Srinagar



With her dedication and sincerity to her duties, she has successfully controlled illicit entry, illicit grazing, felling and poaching in the Samnapur Range, the buffer zone division of the Kanha Tiger Reserve.

Ms. Sita Jama
Kanha Tiger Reserve

A young man in a military uniform, including a camouflage cap and a jacket with a diamond-patterned shoulder patch, is shown in profile. He is holding a rifle with a black boot cover. The background is a blurred forest scene with sunlight filtering through the trees.

**Let our actions speak.
For these quiet men
and women standing
on the frontline.**