

**IFS officers must play effective role in protecting forests from illegal activities: President Murmu**

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Asserting that forests are essential for the social, cultural and economic development, President Droupadi Murmu on Wednesday asked Indian Forest Service officers to play an effective role in protecting them from illegal activities.

Addressing probationers of the IFS, who had called on her at the Rashtrapati Bhavan here, Murmu said [India](#) is giving special attention to the rights of forest dwelling communities.

"The symbiotic relationship of the forest dwellers including tribal communities, with the forests is now widely recognised and factored in our development choices. It is responsibility of Indian Forest Service officers to make these communities aware of their rights and duties towards conservation and protection of bio-diversity," she said.

Wide ranging reforms are underway for effective participatory management and improved access to more efficient market systems for major and minor produce, Murmu said.

Referring to incidents of large forest fires in various parts of India and the world, the president said, "We have a big challenge of not just conserving the forests but dealing with climate change".

"Today we have new technologies and concepts of urban forestry, forest risk mitigation, data driven forest management and climate-smart forest economies. You should innovate and come out with new methods for sustainable management of India's forest resources.

"You must also play an effective role in protecting our forests from illegal activities which have negative economic and environmental impact," she said.

Nature has given us bountiful presents and it is the duty of each one of us to be sensitive and responsible towards the environment, the president said.

"Forests are the anchors for all life on earth. Their role varies from providing wildlife habitats and being livelihood source, to promoting economic activities and serving as large carbon sinks. They are home to many endangered species of the world," she said.

The diverse range of forests found in India is rarely seen in other countries, Murmu said.

"Minor forest produce supports livelihood of well over 27 crore people in our country. Forests have high medicinal value too. In India, only 15 per cent of medicinal plants are cultivated while 85 per cent are collected from forests and other natural habitats," the president said.

Murmu said the forest officers are the guardians of "our rich and diverse forest wealth".

"You are also protectors of the heritage and culture of our forest dwelling communities. You have a key role to play in maintaining ecological stability of the country through participatory sustainable management," she said.

Murmu said she was happy to know that more women are now joining forest services.

The 'green queens' as they are called, have proved themselves in the physically demanding arena and they provide inspiration to young women across the country to become forest officers, the president said.

"Our forest officers have been doing great job as conservators and guardians of nature. But with the changing environment and development landscape, your role and the expectations from you, have increased. I am sure you will live up to the rising expectations," she added.

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