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Kaziranga national park to get first woman field director, to take charge from Sept 1

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Chief conservator of forests Dr Sonali Ghosh is all set to become the first woman field director of Kaziranga National Park from next month.

The Assam government has already issued an order posting Ghosh as the head of the forest, famed for the one-horned rhinos, spread across Nagaon, Golaghat, Karbi Anglong, Sonitpur and Biswanath districts, with effect from September 1.

The Indian Forest Service officer will take charge of the park from incumbent field director Jatindra Sarma, who will retire on August 31.

Ghosh is presently working as the chief conservator of forests for research education and working plan division at the office of the principal chief conservator of forests and head of forest force in Guwahati.

According to a forest department official, she will become the first woman to hold charge as director of the 118-year-old KNP.

"Born into a family of Army personnel, Ghosh knew from an early age that she wished to be involved in forest and wildlife conservation," he added.

The official informed that a topper of the IFS batch of 2000-2003, the field director-designate is armed with a slew of degrees, including post-graduate degree in forestry and wildlife science, a post-graduate diploma in environmental law from the National Law School of India and another one in systems management.

"She has also won a doctorate in remote-sensing technology concerning habitat suitability for tigers in the Indo-Bhutan Manas landscape," he added.

Kaziranga National Park is one of the last areas in eastern India undisturbed by a human presence. The landscape of Kaziranga is of sheer forest, tall elephant grass, rugged reeds, marshes and shallow pools.

It is inhabited by the world's largest population of one-horned rhinoceroses as well as many mammals, including tigers, elephants, panthers and bears, and thousands of birds.

The KNP was first declared a proposed reserve forest in 1905, followed by reserve forest in 1908 and game sanctuary in 1916. It was opened to visitors in 1938.

In 1950, it was declared as a wildlife sanctuary and upgraded to a national park in February 1974.

UNESCO declared KNP as a World Heritage Site in December 1985.

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