



# International Day of Forests - 2023

## Healthy Forests, Healthy Lives



मनोज सिन्हा  
उपराज्यपाल  
जम्मू एवं कश्मीर  
**MANOJ SINHA**  
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR  
JAMMU & KASHMIR



The UN General Assembly proclaimed 21<sup>st</sup> March as the International Day of Forests to celebrate and raise awareness on the importance of forests. The theme for this year is **"Forests and health"** which reaffirms the importance of healthy forests for well being of society. Large number of people around the world depend on forests for provisioning of water, food, timber, fuel wood, life saving medicines as well as for livelihood, clean air and other ecosystem services.

The Government of Jammu & Kashmir has taken several initiatives for conservation of forests and increasing green cover of the Union Territory. The programmes like "Green J&K Drive", "One Beat Guard, One Village Programme" under the campaign "Har Gaon Haryali"& "Van Se Jal, Jal Se Jeevan" are being carried out with the involvement of PRIs and forest dependent communities including tribals.

The policy on "Sustainable Collection & Utilization of Non Timber Forest Produce" recently sanctioned by the administration has a huge potential to improve the health of people by providing medicinal plant parts on sustainable basis. This can be achieved by involving local people, especially women self help groups and tribal communities. This will also create livelihood opportunities for these forest dependent communities and help in conservation of forests.

On the International Day of Forests, I extend my best wishes to the people of Jammu & Kashmir and the Forest Department for contributing significantly towards the sustainable development of Jammu & Kashmir.

*Manoj Sinha*  
(Manoj Sinha)

### HEALTHY FORESTS FOR HEALTHY PEOPLE



21 March  
International Day of Forests



**Dr. Arun Kumar Mehta,**  
IAS



**Chief Secretary**  
Jammu & Kashmir

On the occasion of the International Day of Forests, 2023, I would like to extend my warmest greetings to the people of Jammu & Kashmir. As you are aware, this day is celebrated every year on March 21<sup>st</sup> to raise awareness about the importance of forests and to promote sustainable forest management practices.

This year's theme, **"Forests and health"**, highlights the vital role that forests play in promoting human health and well-being. Forests provide a range of ecosystem services, including clean air, clean water, and natural medicines, that are essential for human health.

In Jammu and Kashmir, forests are an integral part of the landscape and play a critical role in supporting the livelihoods of local communities, including tribals. It is therefore essential that we prioritize the sustainable management of forests to ensure that ecosystem services are preserved for future generations.

I would like to take this opportunity to urge all the stakeholders to continue to invest in the conservation and restoration of forests in Jammu and Kashmir. This can be achieved through the implementation of policies and programmes that promote increase in forest cover, protect biodiversity, and support the livelihoods of forest-dependent communities.

I extend my best wishes to the Department of Forest, Ecology and Environment and people of J&K for successful implementation of programs like "Green J&K Drive", "Van Se Jal, Jal Se Jeevan", "Forests for Fodder" and "Forests for Livelihood" and for their contribution in safeguarding the forests of Jammu & Kashmir. As we celebrate the International Day of Forests 2023, let us renew our commitment in protecting our forests and promoting the health and well-being of our people.

*(Dr. Arun Kumar Mehta) IAS*



**Dheeraj Gupta,**  
IAS



**Principal Secretary to Government**  
Department of Forest, Ecology & Environment

Jammu & Kashmir is blessed with one of the most diverse forests in the country with highest growing and carbon stock per unit area. With 54% of geographical area under forests, meadows and tree cover, they add immensely to the scenic beauty of the Jammu & Kashmir. The people heavily depend on these forests for their bonafide needs of timber, firewood, fodder and grazing requirements. The forests also support other primary sectors like Agriculture, Horticulture, and Animal, Sheep Husbandry& Fisheries Department.

The International Day of Forests encourages us to involve more and more stakeholders in our greening efforts and conservation of forest resources. The forests also play significant role in meeting sustainable development goals on poverty alleviation; health and nutrition; provisioning of fresh water; biodiversity conservation and carbon capture & storage.

The Department of Forest, Ecology & Environment, Government of Jammu & Kashmir has embarked upon various initiatives like "Green J&K Drive" and "One Beat Guard, One Village Program" under the campaign "Har Gaon Haryali" to increase the forest and tree cover of the Union Territory of J&K. The Government recently sanctioned the policy on "Sustainable Collection & Utilization of Non-Timber Forest produce in J&K" which supports "Forests & Health" theme of International Day of Forests. The policy will enhance the involvement of the forest dependent communities in sustainable collection and utilization of herbs, leaves, fruits, nuts etc. which are source of variety of medicinal products.

On this special day, I take this opportunity to invite the people of J&K to extend their full support to Department of Forest, Ecology & Environment in all our greening efforts and raising awareness on the importance of forests and the benefits they provide.

*(Dheeraj Gupta)*



**Dr. Mohit Gera,**  
IFS



**PCCF & HoFF, J&K Forest Department**  
Chairman, J&K Biodiversity Council

The forests of Jammu & Kashmir have a close relationship with its people and play an important role in provisioning of clean water, non-timber forest produce like fodder, herbs, fruits and providing grazing areas for their livestock. Forests also help to mitigate climate change and provide ecological security to Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir.

The International Day of Forests reminds us on importance of forests and the role they play in sustaining our lives. The theme for this year's International Day of Forests is **"Forests and health"** which highlights how forests are beneficial to the health of people by providing raw material for medicines and nutrition in the form of leaves, seeds & fruits and other parts of plant.

Forests of Jammu & Kashmir harbour important medicinal plant species throughout its hills, valleys & plains. The tribal and local communities have traditionally been involved in collection and utilization of these species. The sustainable collection and utilization of vital resources by these forest dependent communities can play a crucial role in creating livelihood opportunities besides conservation of forests.

I take this opportunity to compliment the people involved in greening initiatives of the forest department with an aim to bring two-third of geographical area of Jammu & Kashmir under the forest and tree cover for sustainable livelihood of people.

*(Dr. Mohit Gera)*

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