

**Report of the
National Forest Commission**

**Government of India
Ministry of Environment and Forests
2006**

PREFACE

The National Forest Commission is the first of its kind ever. There were thus no precedents. The terms of reference and indeed, the subject itself, is so vast and multi-faceted that the task was both complex and challenging.

It is impossible to cover all the diverse aspects and to satisfy all the stakeholders. We have, however, attempted to make the report as comprehensive as possible. In our recommendations we have kept one axiom constantly in view – the long-term survival and betterment of forest and wildlife of India and at the same time the safeguarding of the interests of the forest dependent populace. The subject area is unique. Designated forest land, both private and government owned, constitutes about a fourth of the country's landmass. No governmental set-up has such total, multiple and onerous responsibility over so vast an area as the forest personnel. Yet they are amongst the most neglected and distrusted.

The forest personnel on their part also need to radically change their mindset, vision and professionalism. Forests are not just trees – let alone the commercially valuable ones – not even non-timber forest produce, but the wetlands, grasslands and all forest lands with whatever animate and inanimate life below and above those lands, including humans living on those precincts. It also includes all water and ecological services that emanate from these lands. Unless the forest services become more specialized and professional and receive political, infrastructural and financial support, they will neither be able to meet the need of the forests nor of the civil society.

The State and the Central Governments must also alter their priorities and mindset. For too long have forests been regarded as an earning sector rather than a repository of biodiversity natural heritage and a provider of water and of ecologic and biotic goods and services. India has an excellent forest policy. It is not being fully implemented. Forests have neither voice nor votes and, therefore, one acid test of good governance should be a government's handling of forests and wildlife of doing the right thing for the Nation.

This report contains a large number of suggestions – perhaps too many. We have tried to take into consideration every valid suggestion that we received.

I would wish to thank my colleagues for their valuable contribution and cooperation, the staff of the Commission and the officers of the Ministry of Environment and Forests for their unstinted help and the Governments, Institutions and the individuals for their inputs.

Lastly, I would wish to compliment the Hon. Prime Minister for initiating this novel endeavour of getting an outside opinion on our forests and wildlife. One only hopes that the recommendations would prove useful, would get implemented and a mechanism is created for its implementation periodic updates and revisions undertaken.

[B.N. KIRPAL]
CHAIRMAN
NATIONAL FOREST COMMISSION

Contents

	Page
Preface	
Chapter 1. Introduction	1
Chapter 2. Forests of India	13
Chapter 3. Forest Policy	26
Chapter 4. Legal Framework	40
Chapter 5. Ecological Security	48
Chapter 6. Emerging Needs and Goals of Forestry Sector	63
Chapter 7. Constraints and Threats	83
Chapter 8. Forest Conservation	91
Chapter 9. Wildlife and Nature Conservation	111
Chapter 10. Forests of the North-East	148
Chapter 11. Forests, Local Communities and Peoples' Participation	161
Chapter 12. Agroforestry and Social Forestry	197
Chapter 13. Research and Applications	212
Chapter 14. Forestry Institutions	216
Chapter 15. Forest Administration	229
Chapter 16. Personnel Management	249
Chapter 17. Forests and Industries	261
Chapter 18. International Forest-related Instruments	269
Chapter 19. Forests in National Resource Accounting	298
Chapter 20. Centre-State Relation	321
Chapter 21. Financial Support	329
Chapter 22. Implementation and Aftermath	339
Chapter 23. Recommendations	340
Summary	383
List of Abbreviations	396
List of Tables	403
List of Figures	404
List of Boxes	404
Annexure I	405
Annexure II	406
Annexure III	407
Annexure IV	419
Annexure V	420
Annexure VI	421