IGNFA and NHRC Launch Human Rights Training for Indian Forest Service Probationers in Dehradun

A two-day training program on human rights for Indian Forest Service (IFS) probationers commenced today in Dehradun, organized by the Indira Gandhi National Forest Academy (IGNFA) with support from the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) of India. The initiative aims to equip young officers with tools to integrate human dignity and rights into environmental governance.

Inaugurating the session, NHRC Chairperson Justice V. Ramasubramanian highlighted the constitutional mandate under Article 48A and Article 51A(g) that places a duty on both the State and citizens to protect the natural environment. “The conservation of forests and wildlife is not only a state responsibility but a citizen’s duty under our Constitution,” he stated.

Justice Ramasubramanian traced the evolution of human rights globally, from the Charter of Cyrus to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and categorized rights into four generations: civil-political, socio-economic, collective, and emerging technological rights. He underscored the need for ethical safeguards amid advancements in artificial intelligence, biotechnology, and digital privacy.

NHRC Secretary General Bharat Lal, delivering the keynote address, emphasized India’s longstanding cultural foundation in human rights, rooted in empathy, non-violence, and justice. He pointed to the country's rich history of giving refuge to persecuted communities and the contributions of leaders like Mahatma Gandhi and B.R. Ambedkar in promoting human dignity.

Lal also called on the new IFS officers to actively involve tribal and forest-dwelling communities in conservation efforts, stressing that inclusion is key to sustainable governance.

Director of IGNFA, Dr. Jagmohan Sharma, explained the purpose of the training: to integrate human rights principles into forest management practices. He said the program features 13 expert-led sessions covering legislative frameworks, best practices, and field realities.

Speakers include Rajiv Jain, former NHRC member; Rajiv Kumar, former Chief Election Commissioner; Dr. S.P. Yadav of the International Big Cats Alliance; and Sunita Narain, Director General of the Centre for Science and Environment, among others.

The initiative is part of NHRC's broader strategy to build rights-based awareness among civil servants early in their careers. Similar training was previously held for Indian Police Service (IPS) and Indian Foreign Service (IFS) probationers.

Looking ahead, the NHRC plans to expand such programs across services to ensure that human rights remain central to public service delivery and policy implementation across India.