

**Azad Hind Fouz Smriti Mahavidyalaya
Domjur, Howrah**

The United Nations General Assembly declared **21 March** the International Day of Forests (IDF) in 2012. The Day celebrates and raises awareness of the importance of forests.

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AHFSM - IQAC celebrates
“**International Day of Forests**”



“**Bishnoi Community: An Inspiration to All**”
A Special Lecture by Sri Patit Paul



21.3.2024
Conference Room
1PM

Each year millions of hectares of forests are lost, and as the forests disappear, so do the plant and animal species that live in forests. Forests play a critical role in climate change: deforestation results in carbon emissions, healthy forests are one of the world's primary 'carbon sinks.' Forests provide food, fiber, water and medicines for the world's poorest people, including indigenous peoples with unique cultures.



In the dry and arid land of **Jodhpur in Rajasthan** lives a unique and ecologically conscious community known as the **Bishnoi**. The Bishnoi are the first Environmentalists of India for their love for nature and wildlife. They are the best example of the harmony between humans, animals and nature. The Bishnoi community dates back to the 15th century. These people follow Guru Jambheshwar, who specifically instructed his followers to look after nature and wildlife. Therefore, protection of trees and animals has always been a part of Bishnoi culture.

Bishnoi legend records the story of Amrita Devi, who lived in Jodhpur around the 1700s. The then Maharaja of Jodhpur, Abhay Singh, sent his soldiers to Amrita Devi's village to cut down some khejri trees to build a new palace. However, Amrita Devi bravely hugged one of the trees to protect it. When the soldiers threatened to kill her, she told them that she was prepared to give up her life to protect the tree. The king's men killed her while cutting down the tree. Following her, 363 other villagers including her three daughters sacrificed their lives to protect the khejri trees.

Amrita Devi continues to be an inspiration to all – her village is known as '**Khejarli**' and every year in September, the Bishnoi community gathers here to remember her and the others. In the 1970s, the **Chipko Movement** in Uttarakhand was inspired by the Bishnoi. In 2001, the **Amrita Devi Bishnoi Wildlife Protection Award** was created in her honour, to recognize people who had contributed to environmental conservation.

