

National Forest Martyrs Day 2021: All You Need to Know

13 September 2021

National Forest Martyrs Day is marked on September 11. The day as the name suggests is observed to pay tributes to those who laid down their lives in order to protect the jungles, forests and wildlife across India. The day officially came into existence in 2013 after the Ministry of Environment and Forest made the declaration.

The date of September 11 was chosen as on this date in 1730, the infamous Khejarli massacre took place. During this tragic incident, people started cutting Khejarli trees on the orders of the then king Maharaja Abhay Singh of Rajasthan. These trees were considered sacred by the people that belonged to the Bishnoi community in Rajasthan's Khejarli village.

If the folklore is to be believed, then as a mark of protest to the merciless cutting of trees, a woman named Amrita Devi offered her head in place of the sacred Khejarli tree.

The workers beheaded her and continued to kill over 350 people including Amrita's children, who rose in protest and offered their lives in place of the trees. After the incident reached the king he instantly asked his men to back off and apologised to the people belonging to the Bishnoi community.

As a part of his apology he also issued a decree which was engraved on a copper plate that prohibited the cutting of trees and killing of animals in areas that are around the Bishnoi villages.

In order to mark the day, many educational institutions across India organise events to create and raise awareness about protecting the trees, forests and environment at large.

Various competitions are also held to ensure more and more children engage and become aware of the importance of conserving jungles. Ever since the pandemic has started all events have shifted to the virtual medium. As a result, this year the events related to the day will be marked over video conference.

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