

Rich tributes paid to forest martyrs in Odisha

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KENDRAPARA: Rich tributes were paid to five forest personnel who lost their lives in the line of duty on National Forest Martyrs' Day at Dangamal within Bhitarkanika national park on Wednesday.

Forest officials, locals and environmentalists garlanded the martyrs' tower at Dangamal. DFO of the park, Sudarshan Gopinath Yadav said forester Sk Nur Mohammad and guard Sheikh Gafil were brutally killed at Hukitola island on January 2, 1990 as they tried to prevent the timber mafia from plundering the mangrove forest.

Similarly, timber mafia had buried the body of forest guard Dijabar Swain in Akasadia forest on April 4, 1996 after killing him. Madhusudan Behera, a forest guard was killed by a crocodile on April 24, 2000 while he was feeding the reptile in the hatchery and complex at Dangamal. The body of Shyamsundar Singh, a forest guard, was dumped in the sea by some fishermen at Gahirmatha marine sanctuary. Singh was patrolling the sea to protect Olive Ridley sea turtles.

"They sacrificed their lives to protect the forest and wildlife. We should remember their dedication which remains an inspiration for future generations," Yadav said.

Madhusudan's son Manoranjan said his father used to feed 'Ravana' a 16 feet long estuarine crocodile at a pen in Dangamala. "But the crocodile killed my father 23 years back. I was only 18 at that time," he said.

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