



Padma Shri Jadav Payeng (Forest Man of India)

Padma Shri **Jadav Molai Payeng** born in 1963 is a Mishing tribe environmental activist. He is a forestry worker **at Plant for Planet and Peace (PPP)**, from Jorhat, India. He has done a great service to mankind by working towards saving the environment.

Moved over by the sight of more than hundred snakes dying one after the other due to severe heat on the deserted sandbar, he singlehandedly decided to plant life on eroded island. In April 1979 he started his task by sowing the seeds and shoots offered by villagers. Over the course of several decades, he planted and tended trees on a sandbar of the river Brahmaputra and turned it into a forest reserve. It now boast of thousands of trees including bamboos, many endangered animals, including one-horned rhinos, Royal Bengal tigers, vultures and migratory birds. A herd of around hundred elephants regularly visits and stays in forest for six months every year. His thirty-six years of hardship and dedication has helped him create a forest. The forest, called Molai forest after Jadav Molai Payeng, is located near Kokilamukh of Jorhat in Assam. It encompasses an area of about 1,360 acres per 550 hectares.

In 2015, he was honored with Padma Shri, the fourth highest civilian award in India for his contribution towards society. In October 2013, he was honored at Indian Institute of Forest Management during their annual event Coalescence. Film maker Aarti Shrivastava acknowledged the life and works of Jadav Payeng into a film documentary called "Foresting life" in 2013. Padma Shri Jadav Payeng was also honored by the School of Environmental Sciences at Jawaharlal Nehru University on 22nd April 2012 for his remarkable achievement. JNU vice-chancellor Sudhir Kumar Sopory honored Jadav Payeng by naming him as "**Forest Man of India**".