

Press Release

Wetlands for LiFE & 12th CMS VATAVARAN International Film Festival and Forum Concludes with a Resounding Call for Wetland Conservation

New Delhi, October 7, 2024 - The Wetlands for LiFE & 12th CMS VATAVARAN International Film Festival and Forum concluded on 5th October at the Indira Paryavaran Bhawan, New Delhi, marking the end of a three-day celebration of environmental awareness and conservation through the powerful medium of film.

Organised by the Centre for Media Studies (CMS), this festival is part of the Indo-German Technical Cooperation project. "Wetlands Management for Biodiversity and Climate Protection," implemented by GIZ on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection (BMUV), along with the International Climate Initiative (IKI), in partnership with the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC).

The journey of the Wetlands for LiFE initiative began with a grand event in Indore on 2nd February on the eve of World Wetlands Day 2024, which was attended by Dr. Musonda Mumba, Secretary-General of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, along with other dignitaries. After successful regional festivals in Indore, Lucknow and Shimla, the Delhi festival brings aboard collaborators including the National Museum of Natural History (NMNH) New Delhi, WWF India, AIR & IUCN CEC.

The festival kicked off on October 3rd with an inauguration ceremony graced by esteemed dignitaries. **Dr. Ramesh M**, Scientist F at MoEF&CC, delivered the welcome address, followed by **Ms. Vasanti Rao**, DG of CMS, who highlighted the critical importance of wetlands. **Ms. Taina Dyckhoff**, Head of Division for Climate and Environment at the German Embassy New Delhi, emphasized the strong bilateral cooperation between India and Germany. Representing the Government of India, **Dr. Amandeep Garg**, Additional Secretary MoEF&CC, GoI, stressed the importance of community participation in wetland conservation, while **Mr. Jitendra Kumar**, DG of Forest & Special Secretary at MoEF&CC, GoI, delivered the inaugural address, mentioning the powerful campaign "One Tree in the Name of the Mother", a government initiative towards wetland preservation.

The day also featured the opening of the 'Wetlands for LiFE' Painting Exhibition, showcasing beautiful artworks celebrating the importance of wetlands, followed by impactful film screenings. The day concluded with an engaging panel discussion on "Resilient Wetlands, Resilient Communities: Gender and Climate Adaptation," featuring experts line **Mr. Suresh Babu** (WWF-India), **Dr. Ritesh Kumar** (Wetlands International South Asia), **Dr. Archana Chatterjee** (Iucn India Country Office), **Ms. Gargi Rawat** (NDTV), and **Mr. Kirtiman Awasthi** (GIZ) and moderated by **Ms. Vasanti Rao**, DG CMS. The discussions saw active participation from the audience, sparking insightful conversations

The second day started with a special session led by WWF-India, spotlighting the incredible efforts of Wetland Mitras—local champions who are driving grassroots action for wetland conservation. We heard inspiring stories from Wetland Mitras from Uttar Pradesh, reminding us of the crucial role that communities play in protecting these vital ecosystems.

The highlight of the day was the engaging panel discussion "Conservation Stories: A Conversation with the Creators," featuring National Award-winning filmmakers **Mr. Krishnendu Bose** and **Ms. Akanksha Sood Singh**, along with **Mr. Sarthak Chawla**, **Mr. Oshank Soni** and **Ms. Imrana Khan**. These environmental storytellers shared their journeys, challenges, and the future of conservation filmmaking. The conversation left us all inspired and hopeful for the future of environmental awareness through powerful storytelling!

The festival concluded with screening of the 12th CMS VATAVARAN award-winning films in the presence of dignitaries including **Dr. Amandeep Garg**, Additional Secretary, MoEF&CC, GoI, **Dr. Yashveer Bhatnagar**, Head, IUCN India Office and Nomination Jury Head of 12th CMS VATAVARAN, and **Mr Vivek Menon**, Founder Wildlife Trust of India, IUCN Councillor and an eminent Conservationist. This year's

edition of the festival received 800 plus film submissions from 68 countries, through peer review, 320 films were shortlisted, out of which 66 films—37 National and 29 International—were selected for nominations, the award jury reviewed these films and out of which 8 national & 6 international films were selected for the final awards.

The closing ceremony honoured outstanding contributions in environmental filmmaking. In the National category, the winners included:

1. Amateur & Students Films: "Ganga Ke Do Kinare" by Asna Jamal, Archana Singh, and Avikal
2. Livelihoods & Sustainable Technologies: "Jhum: The Shifting Landscape" by Imrana Khan
3. Climate Change – Adaptation & Mitigation: "No Water, No Village" by Munmun Dhalaria
4. Environment Conservation: "SHADE" by Sudheesh Sivasankaran
5. Wildlife Conservation: "BLOODLINE" by Shriharsh Gajbhiye
6. Water Conservation: "P for Pyaaz, P for Paisa, P for Paani" by Laxminarayan Devda
7. Special jury mention in Water Conservation: "All Day and All of the Night" by Priya Naresh
7. Short Films for Conservation: "One for Change" by Akanksha Sood

Dr. Vasanti Rao, Director General of CMS, reflected on the success of the event: "This year's theme, 'Wetlands for LiFE (Lifestyle for Environment),' has resonated deeply with filmmakers and audiences alike. Through these powerful visual narratives, we've seen how wetlands are not just ecosystems, but lifelines for communities and wildlife. The festival has once again proven to be a crucial platform for environmental discourse and action."

Dr. Yashveer Bhatnagar, Head of IUCN India Office and Nomination Jury Head of the 12th CMS VATAVARAN, shared his experience: "It has been an absolute privilege to lead the nomination jury for this year's CMS VATAVARAN. The films we reviewed have not only showcased great storytelling but also highlighted the urgency of wetland conservation and the broader environmental challenges we face today. The creativity of filmmakers from India & across the globe have reinforced my belief that visual media is a powerful tool for change."

Chief Guest Dr. Amandeep Garg, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, emphasized the importance of such initiatives: "The Wetlands for LiFE and CMS VATAVARAN festivals provide a vital platform for enriching exchange on how we can work together to protect these invaluable ecosystems. These films not only raise awareness but inspire action at both individual and community levels."

The festival also featured a 'Wetlands for LiFE' Painting Exhibition, showcasing artworks from a competition that engaged 200 young artists across Delhi NCR. The top honours went to Hritvija Pandey from Kamla Nehru College, Sanskriti Singh from Manav Rachna International Institute and Ishaan Nagepalli from TERI School of Advanced Studies.

The Wetlands for LiFE & 12th CMS VATAVARAN International Film Festival and Forum has proven to be a cornerstone event in environmental advocacy, bringing together filmmakers, policymakers, students, and environmental enthusiasts. As the curtains fall on this 12th edition, the message resounds clear – the protection of our wetlands is not just an environmental imperative, but a lifeline for our shared future.

For more information, please contact

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