**PRESS RELEASE**

**Gangtok CMS VATAVARAN inaugurated at a gala inaugural ceremony**

*Hon’ble Minister of Forest, Environment and Wildlife Management, Shri Tshering Wangdi Lepcha inaugurated the first ever green film festival in the state.*

**Gangtok, March 12, 2015:** The Gangtok CMS VATAVARAN – International Environmental Film Festival and Forum started today with a gala inaugural ceremony at Chintan Bhawan, Gangtok. Shri Tshering Wangdi Lepcha who was the Guest of Honour, declared the festival open. The Hon’ble Minister outlined the efforts and policies for conservation by Sikkim government and also spoke on ongoing efforts in making Sikkim a green & organic state. He also said that the people of Sikkim celebrate the nature of state through our cultures and traditions like songs, dance, food, etc. “I’m glad that CMS VATAVARAN is contributing towards environment preservation through the medium of films and other activities,” said Shri Lepcha, in his stimulating inaugural address.

The festival began with a lamp lightning ceremony by all the eminent dignitaries present during the occasion. Ms P N Vasanti, Director General of Centre for Media Studies (CMS), New Delhi welcomed the august gathering. In her welcome address she said “it’s a pleasure to bring this internationally acclaimed travelling festival to your green and organic state of Skikim. Your state has set benchmarks for others to follow in environment conservation. I hope this festival is a beginning of celebrations of what Sikkim has achieved and can do further. Thru award winning green films, panel discussions, activities like nature trail and cleaning drives and competitions, this festival will showcase the citizen and government concern for their vatavaran.”

On this occasion an award winning film Ladakh’s Artificial Glacier was screened. Inspired by the film, the Hon’ble minister, requested all the senior officials present to set up a core group to investigate the effectiveness of such artificial glacier technology in Sikkim.

A special video message by Shri Prakash Javadekar, Hon’ble Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India was shown where he complemented Sikkim for its beauty and green initiatives.

The highlight of the inaugural ceremony included felicitation of Green Ambassadors from Sikkim. 30 nominations were received in total, out of which 2 individuals were felicitated for their remarkable contribution in the field of environmental conservation in Sikkim. The awardees include:

1. **Mr Nosang Limboo-** He was awarded for his efforts towards highlighting the richness of biodiversity in Sikkim through the discovery and documentation of butterfly species, wildlife tours and introduction of butterfly watching tourism, he raised awareness about the natural wealth of Sikkim and contributed towards safeguarding it.
2. **Ms Tshering Uden Bhutia-** She was awardedfor her efforts towards conservation of environment in Sikkim through wide ranging eco-tourism, Waste Management and Watershed Planning related work.

Present on the occasion were State Associate Partner of CMS VATAVARAN, Shri Nabin Kumar Naik, Zonal Director, Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan, Sikkim Zone. Shri Nabin in his address commended the efforts of CMS VATAVARAN and said, “NYK is glad to partner with CMS VATAVARAN in its efforts in environment conservation”.

Also present at the inaugural ceremony were various partners of Gangtok CMS VATAVARAN. Representing the Department of Forest Environment & Wildlife Management, Dr. Thomas Chandy, PCCF cum Principal Secretary said, “CMS VATAVARAN has come as a breath of fresh air to Gangtok by engaging people from all walks of life. CMS VATAVARAN’s tool of using films as a medium to spread awareness is very effective .”

Dr Anil Mainra, Principal Secretary of Department of Science, Technology & Climate Change spoke on climate change studies and unique programmes of his department. He invited participants for the Green Filmmaking Workshop hosted by his department in this 5 day festival. He also urged all to use their creative skills on spreading their word on environment conservation.

Also present on the occasion was Additional Chief Secretaries, Mr A K Shrivastav and Mr Suresh Gupta.

The vote of thanks was addressed by Dr B C Basistha, Additional Director, Sikkim State Council of Science & Technology.

Two award winning films, Stand by Nicolas Teichrob and People of a Feather by Joel Heath were also screened at the Chintan Bhawan Auditorium. The screenings were attended by invited dignitaries, officials representing various departments, students, teachers and the public.

The inaugural day also saw an important panel discussion on ‘Biodiversity Conservation in Sikkim: Issues and Concerns’ and was held at the Meeting Hall in Chintan Bhawan. The panel discussion was chaired by Dr Thomas Chandy, PCCF cum Principal Secretary, Deptt of Forest, Environment & Wildlife Management, Govt of Sikkim. This panel discussion showcased the rich biodiversity of the state and looked at some of the key threats; key issues such as ecotourism and climate change adaptation were also discussed during the panel discussion. The panelists included eminent people from Sikkim, i.e., **Dr Usha Lachungpa**, Principal Research Officer (Wildlife), Forest, Environment and Wildlife Management Department and Additional Director, Sikkim State Biodiversity Board, Govt of Sikkim, Gangtok; **Dr Hemant K Badola**, Scientist-F (Conservation of Biodiversity) and Scientist-in-Charge, G B Pant Institute of

Himalayan Environment & Development, Sikkim Unit; **Shri R P Gurung**, Chief Executive Officer, Ecotourism and Conservation Society of Sikkim, Gangtok and **Dr Sunil S Thorat**, Scientist-C and Officer on Special Duty, Institute of Bioresources and Sustainable Development, Sikkim Unit, Department of Biotehcnology, Ministry of Science and Technology, Government of India. Ms Seema Bhatt, Senior expert on biodiversity and ecotourim moderated this panel discussion.

The week long festival will be hosting film screenings, green filmmaking workshop, nature trail, slogan writing competition, cleaning drive, quiz and many more activities in Gangtok across various venues.

**The highlights of tomorrow’s programme (March 13, 2015):**

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| **Time** | **Programmes** | **Venue** |
| 08:30 am- 05:00 pm | Green Filmmaking Workshop | Conference HallSikkim State Council of Science & Technology, Vigyan Bhawan, Deorali, Gangtok |
| 09:00 am- 10:00 am10:15 am- 11:15 am11:30 am- 12:30 pm12:45 pm- 01:45 pm | Green Film Screenings for School Students and others | Conference HallDepartment of Forest, Environment & Wildlife Management, Deorali, Gangtok |
| 05:30 pm- 6:30 pm | Green Film Screenings for Members of Rotary Club of Gangtok | Rotary Club of Gangtok |

**ABOUT CMS VATAVARAN :** Initiated in the year 2002 by CMS, CMS VATAVARAN – India’s premier environment and wildlife film festival and forum is aimed towards enhancing understanding, appreciation and shift in attitudes towards the natural world and to increase space for environmental issues in mass media and evolve a nationwide environment outreach framework. The festival reaches out to people from all walks of life including filmmakers, civil society groups, government organizations, environmentalists, researchers, conservationists, policy makers, activists, public and private sector organisations and students of all ages and is recognised as a calendar event amongst filmmakers, environment, wildlife and conservation sector. Its unique twin track approach of organising competitive and traveling film festivals and environment forum has positioned it as one of the most prestigious film festivals across the globe. Till date 39 festivals have been organised in 30 cities of India. The travelling festivals are organised in state capitals and other important towns and cities. **www.cmsvatavaran.org**

**For more information, please contact:**

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