

For Immediate Release

Search begins for Asia's best in environmental reporting

Two new categories – Environmental Blogger and Photograph - added as SEC looks to expand outreach of awards

Singapore, 22 April 2013 – The search for Asia's best in environmental reporting is back on, with the launch of the Singapore Environment Council's (SEC) second Annual Asian Environmental Journalism Awards (AEJA) 2013 today. This year's awards will welcome applications from bloggers and photographers with the introduction of two categories - Environmental Blogger of the Year and Environmental Photograph of the Year. The AEJA 2013 will reach out to 48 countries under the continental bloc including China, Thailand, Vietnam, Hong Kong, Philippines, Malaysia and India.

Mr Jose Raymond, Executive Director of the SEC, said: "Earth Day emphasizes the message that everyone - regardless of their nationality, profession or age - has a part to play in protecting the environment. Inspired by the global focus of Earth Day, and its emphasis on raising awareness and inspiring action on environmental issues, SEC is observing Earth Day by launching these regional awards; through this, we hope that journalists, bloggers and photojournalists all over Asia will have renewed inspiration to produce high quality, rigorous coverage of environmental issues."

Journalists help enrich public understanding of the environment by presenting complex scientific, technical, ecological and cultural facts about a complex issue in a simple, accessible format. Regarded as the largest environmental non-government organisation (NGO) in Singapore, SEC has taken upon itself the role of encouraging good environmental reporting in Asia.

The five categories for AEJA 2013 are:

- Coca-Cola Environmental Story of the Year
- CDL Environmental Journalist of the Year
- Lee Foundation Excellence in Environmental Reporting by a Media Organisation
- Environmental Blogger of the Year
- Environmental Photograph of the Year

The judging panel for the AEJA 2013 consists of a distinguished group of leaders and experts from the Singapore government, private and NGO sectors. Among them is Er Dr Lee Bee Wah, Member of Parliament and Chairman, Government Parliamentary Committee for Environment and National Development: "It is my pleasure to sit on the judging panel of the second annual Asian Environmental Journalism Awards, which encourages continued high-quality coverage of environmental issues in Asia. The media plays a strategic role in advancing the cause of environmental protection, by forming a unique bridge between emerging environmental issues and members of society, whether it is the public, policy makers, or activists."

Added fellow AEJA 2013 judge Mr Nicholas Fang, Nominated Member of Parliament and Executive Director, Singapore Institute of International Affairs: "The media plays a valuable role in shedding light on environmental issues in Asia, thereby inspiring action among individuals. What happens in Asia affects the world, and the Asian voice matters not only because environmental degradation and climate change affects us adversely, but also because it is a valuable contribution to global strategies to mitigate the destruction of our environment."

Ms Vernetta Lopez, MediaCorp Radio DJ and President of One Singapore, who is also part of the judging panel, added: "Journalists lead the way in public sentiment, awareness and opinion and therefore play a major role in what happens to the green movement. Their stories can inspire one or a billion, in how we affect ourselves and ensure that we keep our eyes open to what is truly happening around the world, or in a small village. The attitude to the treatment of our fragile environmental situation needs an urgent and large scale change and that starts with knowing, understanding and ultimately taking affirmative action to make sure we take care of our planet."

The SEC has brought on board the National Climate Change Secretariat (NCCS), Singapore Press Club, Singapore International Foundation, The Media Alliance and Invisible Photographer Asia as supporting partners of AEJA 2013.

The awards received 31 applications last year, from local media such as The Straits Times, MediaCorp and web portals such as Eco-Business.com and Eco WALK the Talk.com. The awards also garnered regional applications from individuals and media organisations from Malaysia, India, Philippines and Iran.

"With the large number of countries eligible for the awards, it is a good opportunity for journalists to showcase their work and reach out to a bigger audience in Asia," said Mr Raymond.

Agence France-Presse, which emerged as winner in the TOYOTA Excellence in Environmental Reporting by a media organisation category, regarded the award as "recognition of its commitment to serious and consistent coverage of environmental issues in Asia."

Ms Grace Chua from The Straits Times, who clinched the CDL Environmental Journalist of the Year award, said: "In urban Singapore, where things are generally well taken care of, people don't always see environment news as immediately, directly relevant to their lives. But it's always relevant - whether it's the chipping away of green spaces for development, or the prices of fuels old and new. I'm glad that the Asian Environmental Journalism Awards recognises and appreciates those of us who are trying to cover this 'slow' beat and bring home its relevance to a wider audience."

Winner of last year's Coca-Cola Environmental Story of the Year Category, Mr Augustine Anthuvan, said: "As a Channel NewsAsia journalist, I don't do stories to win awards. However I do believe the 'media can be a catalyst for change'.... Hopefully, the Mighty Mekong: Mother of SouthEast Asia documentary will spark discussion and inspire governments, NGOs and the private sector to approach major projects with greater care, placing the planet and its people at the core."

Applications for the Asian Environmental Journalism Awards 2013 will close on 4 August 2013, and the eligible publication date for all submissions is between 1 July 2012 and 4 August 2013.

“The sphere of journalism has evolved significantly over the past decade, with citizen journalists and bloggers playing an ever-increasing influential role in engaging the public, thereby raising awareness about pressing environmental issues. This – coupled with a photograph’s ability to elicit strong emotions instantaneously – sparked the launch of the two new categories for AEJA 2013. Behavioural change doesn’t happen overnight – one must first feel strongly enough ignite change, which is how we hope the AEJA will make an impact,” added Mr Raymond.

The awards ceremony will be officiated by Guest-of-Honour Dr Yaacob Ibrahim, Minister for Communications and Information on 17 October 2013 at the Megu Hall, Singapore Flyer.

Interested parties should visit www.sec.org.sg/aeja for application guidelines and submit entries via the new paperless online portal.

**For a complete list of eligible countries, please refer to Appendix.*

****END OF MEDIA RELEASE****

NOTES TO THE EDITOR



ABOUT THE AWARDS

The Singapore Environment Council’s **Asian Environmental Journalism Awards (AEJA)** aim to recognise and reward excellence in environmental journalism across an array of platforms, from print to online and even bloggers and photojournalists.

From passionate citizen journalists, to outstanding professional journalists, to the environmental attitudes of overall media organisations, the AEJA highlight exceptional journalistic work, and encourage continued high-quality coverage of environmental issues in Asia.

For more information about the Asian Environmental Journalism Awards, please visit

www.sec.org.sg/aeja



ABOUT THE SINGAPORE ENVIRONMENT COUNCIL

Established in 1995, the Singapore Environment Council (SEC) is an independently managed, non-government organisation that nurtures, facilitates and co-ordinates environmental causes in Singapore. SEC’s work is founded on three pillars of action – Firstly, partnership with the people, private and public sectors of Singaporean society, to nurture a culture aligned with sustainable development concepts. Secondly, SEC rewards environmental excellence through awards schemes and product endorsement programmes, such as the Singapore Green Labelling Scheme. Thirdly, the SEC collaborates with partners to develop and implement training and learning programmes to build

competencies in environmental sustainability within companies, thus keeping our business leaders ahead of the curve. Visit our website at www.sec.org.sg.

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Appendix: List of Eligible Asian Countries

- 1) Afghanistan
- 2) Armenia
- 3) Azerbaijan
- 4) Bahrain
- 5) Bangladesh
- 6) Bhutan
- 7) Brunei
- 8) Cambodia
- 9) China
- 10) Cyprus
- 11) Democratic People's Republic of Korea
- 12) Georgia
- 13) India
- 14) Indonesia
- 15) Iran
- 16) Iraq
- 17) Israel
- 18) Japan
- 19) Jordan
- 20) Kazakhstan
- 21) Kuwait
- 22) Kyrgyzstan
- 23) Laos
- 24) Malaysia
- 25) Maldives
- 26) Mongolia
- 27) Myanmar
- 28) Nepal
- 29) Oman
- 30) Pakistan
- 31) Papua New Guinea

- 32) Philippines
- 33) Qatar
- 34) Republic of Korea
- 35) Russia
- 36) Saudi Arabia
- 37) Singapore
- 38) Sri Lanka
- 39) Syria
- 40) Tajikistan
- 41) Thailand
- 42) Timor-Leste
- 43) Turkey
- 44) Turkmenistan
- 45) United Arab Emirates
- 46) Uzbekistan
- 47) Vietnam
- 48) Yemen