

Heart-breaking Human Stories Take Centre Stage

13 winners honoured for stories on environmental issues and its effects on humanity

Singapore, 17 October 2013 – The Singapore Environment Council (SEC) today announced the winners of the 2nd Asian Environmental Journalism Awards (AEJA) 2013, which saw top journalists, bloggers and photographers from China, India, Malaysia, Pakistan, Singapore, among other countries, recognised for their exceptional journalistic work on environmental issues.

“While the AEJA is still in its infancy, this cannot be said about the outstanding entries we have received for this year’s competition. We want this Award to continually up the ante on the high standards of journalistic skills. With more journalists covering such unprecedented challenges of globalisation and climate change, we are confident that more people will come to terms with environmental issues and take on a larger role of striving for a more sustainable future,” said Mr Jose Raymond, Executive Director of the SEC.

Er Dr Lee Bee Wah, Member of Parliament and Chairman, Government Parliamentary Committee for Environment and National Development, who also served as a judge on the panel, said: “When it comes to major issues like the environment or politics, people often turn to credible news sources from established news agencies. AEJA is an excellent way to recognise and reward the excellent work done by the people of the media to bring to light, matters of the earth to the public. The AEJA 2013 has certainly raised the standard of environmental reporting that engages the readers and stimulates their curiosity about sustainability and, ultimately leads to positive action in the community.”

Echoing Er Dr Lee and Mr Raymond’s sentiments, Ms Satwant Kaur, an AEJA judge from United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), praised the submissions: “I was impressed with the quality and diversity of environmental issues that were covered in the submissions. They were well-researched, engaging and reflect the challenges that countries and communities in the region are grappling with. Environmental journalists often go to great lengths and sometimes take risks to cover these stories. Initiatives like the AEJA bring recognition to these efforts and I hope it will continue to encourage and support quality environmental journalism in the region.”

Out of 84 applications, almost a threefold increase from 2012, 13 winners emerged for the five award categories.

- **Coca-Cola Environmental Story of the Year**
 - Winner: Stella Paul from India (Inter Press Services)
 - Merit Winner: Wang Yan from China (News China Magazine)
 - Merit Winner: Meng Yew Choong from Malaysia (Star Publications)

- **CDL Environmental Journalist of the Year**
 - Winner: Jing Li from China (South China Morning Post)
 - Merit Winner: Neo Chai Chin from Singapore (TODAY)
 - Merit Winner: Meng Yew Choong from Malaysia (Star Publications)

- **Environmental Blogger of the Year**
 - Winner: Kavitha Rao from India (The Guardian)
 - Merit Winner: Eugene Tay from Singapore (Green Future Solutions)
 - Merit Winner: Rina Saeed Khan from Pakistan (DAWN Media Group)

- **CITIC Telecom International Environmental Photograph of the Year**
 - Winner: Sridhara KS from India (Vijay Karnataka- Regional Daily)
 - Merit Winner: Douglas Ho from Singapore (Singapore Press Holdings)
 - Merit Winner: Andri Tambunan from Indonesia (Freelance)

- **Lee Foundation Excellence in Environmental Reporting by a Media Organisation**
 - Winner: Thomson Reuters Foundation (India Office)
 - Merit Winner: Eco-Business.com (Singapore)

Many of the stories submitted by the journalists are compelling and bring real issues to life.

The winner of the Coca-Cola Environmental Story of the Year was “Drought drives rural Indian women into city sex trade”, written by Ms Stella Paul from Inter Press Services. Her piece gave a deeply disturbing account of how climate change has adversely affected the lives of many women in rural communities. It drew a very strong link between climate change and the social impact, enabling readers to understand the gravity of the situation.

Ms Laura Davidson, Strategic Communications Manager, Coca-Cola Singapore and Malaysia, said: “As a company that champions environmental sustainability, Coca-Cola is proud to once again sponsor the Environmental Story of the Year Award. We were impressed with the calibre of entries this year and the wide range of topics covered. Stella’s story stood out as an example of exceptional environmental journalism. Her highly compelling and thought-provoking story engaged the readers and raised awareness about a less publicised impact of climate change.”

Agreeing, AEJA judge, Mr Amresh Gunasingham remarked: “The bar has definitely been raised in environmental journalism today. The issues that these reporters pursue convey the severity of the issue and the necessary measures that need to be taken to prevent or rectify the problem. With the many environmental issues that the region faced in the year, such as the haze saga as well as Typhoon Utor, the role that journalists play is indeed significant in the efforts of environmental preservation.”

The CDL Environmental Journalist of the Year was Ms Jing Li from the South China Morning Post. “Journalists like Jing Li possess the integrity and courage to uncover and report the truth. Knowing the real issues will allow solutions to be found. Environmental issues are as real as the consequences they bring and what better way to bring awareness to the masses than through the representation of the people in the field. CDL is happy that it is able to recognise these outstanding individuals with this award,” said Ms Esther An, General Manager for Corporate Affairs and Head of Corporate Social Responsibility, CDL.

Grabbing the attention of the judges for the CITIC Telecom International Environmental Photograph of the Year was a shot taken by Mr Sridhara KS depicting the conflict between elephants and humans in India. Mr Richard Loo, General Manager, South East Asia, CITIC Telecom International said: “The advance in digital photography equipment and the corresponding affordability has meant that more of us have the chance to take good quality shots. However, it still takes a keen eye for detail and picture composition to produce photos that capture the attention of the casual reader. Mr Sridhara KS deserves to receive the award for his compelling photo that captured nature in its purest form.”

On the panel of judges was Mr Alan Lim, Founder and Photographer Mentor of School of Photography Singapore, who said: “The newly introduced Environmental Photograph of the Year award category is a good platform for a lot of budding photographers to showcase their work on the environment. A well thought through and composed picture of the aftermath of natural disasters or man-made destruction on the environment is powerful enough to speak to us and create awareness on the real issues that are happening to our neighbouring countries. Hence the old saying goes, a picture worth a thousand words, but a great picture does not require you to know any words at all.”

The Lee Foundation Excellence in Environmental Reporting by a Media Organisation was proudly won by Thomson Reuters Foundation. The articles explored the sustainability issues faced by communities around the world, and discussed solutions that could be adopted to improve the way of life.

Clinching the award for the new category of Environmental Blogger of the Year is Ms Kavitha Rao from The Guardian. Judges were impressed by the amount of research that went into each article she wrote as well as the breadth of topics covered. Her articles have successfully engaged the online community and generated many comments.

For most of us who live detached from nature and who are for now, buffered from the effects of the changing climate, these journalists and stories help remind us not to be complacent; to do our part to be responsible global citizens.

Mr Nicholas Fang, Nominated Member of Parliament and Executive Director, Singapore Institute of International Affairs, who was a judge for the AEJA, observed: "There is a huge difference between the environmental issues that we face now and those that we faced 20 years ago. Who's to say what Mother Nature has in store for us in the years to come? These journalists have shown qualities like passion, persistence and adaptability to partake in environmental journalism. It is definitely not easy to address environmental issues as it is a huge burden on their shoulders to deliver a strong story to initiate any change when it comes to environmental sustainability."

"There has definitely been an improvement in the quality of submissions for this year. A lot of the stories were definitely heartfelt and make you ponder about what you have done as an individual to make a difference to the environment. Each of us has a part to play in securing a better and greener tomorrow for future generations. Kudos to all the applicants of the AEJA 2013. Hope that we will get even more submissions from more countries next year," added veteran DJ and our AEJA judge, Ms Vernetta Lopez.

All winners of AEJA 2013 received their awards from Dr Yaacob Ibrahim, Minister for Communications and information at the AEJA ceremony held at InterContinental Singapore today.

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

Additional Notes to the Editor

Panel of Judges

1. Ms Esther An - General Manager for Corporate Affairs and Head of Corporate Social Responsibility, CDL
2. Ms Laura Davidson –Strategic Communications Manager, Coca-Cola Singapore and Malaysia
3. Mr Nicholas Fang - Nominated Member of Parliament and Executive Director, Singapore Institute of International Affairs
4. Mr Amresh Gunasingham - Former Environmental Journalist, The Straits Times
5. Ms Satwant Kaur - Regional Information Officer, United Nations Environment Programme
6. Er Dr Lee Bee Wah - Member of Parliament and Chairman, Government Parliamentary Committee for Environment and National Development
7. Mr Alan Lim - Founder and Photographer Mentor of School of Photography Singapore
8. Mr Richard Loo - General Manager, South East Asia, CITIC Telecom International
9. Ms Vernetta Lopez - DJ GOLD90.5FM, MediaCorp and President, ONE Singapore
10. Mr Jose Raymond - Executive Director, Singapore Environment Council



ABOUT THE ASIAN ENVIRONMENTAL JOURNALISM AWARDS

The Asian Environmental Journalism Awards (AEJA) was introduced in 2012 to recognise and reward excellence in environmental journalism at all levels of society. From passionate citizen journalists, to outstanding professional journalists, to the environmental attitudes of overall media organisations, the AEJA highlights exceptional journalistic work, and encourages continued high-quality coverage of environmental issues in Asia. The awards are open to Asian journalists, as well as journalists working in and writing about Asian countries.

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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