



Vanamahotsava Celebrations

14th July 2009

Venue: Sang Senior Secondary School compound.



A REPORT

[Compiled by ENVIS Centre Sikkim]

Vanamahotsava is the festival of forests. It started in India as a campaign to save mother earth and pay tribute to nature. Vanamahotsava Celebration is carried out every year since its instigation in India in the 1950's by the then Krishi Mantri Dr. K. M. Munshiji. This campaign has gained its momentum till date. In the crucial era of Global warming where we all need to unite to combat the Climate Change, Vanamahotsava celebration is an added vigor to battle the issue.

Likewise, in Sikkim Vanamahotsava Celebration 2009 was observed with verve at Sang Senior Secondary School Premises, East District on the 14th of July 2009, and the day to remind all of us that we should take care of our priceless forests. The celebration was hosted by the Department of Forest Environment & Wildlife Management Department.

The function was graced by Shri D.B.Thapa the Chief Guest Hon'ble UDHD Minister; Hon'ble Forest Minister, Shri Bhim Dhungel; Honorable Area MLA Shri Menlom Lepcha; Former PWD Minister Shri Samten Bhutia ; Officials from the Forest Department, Officials from different departments, Panchayat members; Teachers, students of Sang SSS, JFMC members, EDC members, NGOs, and local public.



The function was conducted by DFO (W/L) East Shri Karma Legshey, in coordination with DFO (T) East Shri B.B.Gurung, DFO (NTFP) Shri T.Gyaltso and DFO (SF) Smt S. Choden.

The programme began with a welcome address by DFO Shri K.B.Gurung welcoming all the distinguishing guest, teachers & students to be a part of this celebration. Shri K.B.Gurung gave a brief summary of 'Vanamahotsava day', its establishment, function and the symbol of such celebration being held every year. Plantations by method of celebration play a pivotal role in instilling a habit in the minds of people to carry out plantation as a way of life.

The event that followed was a plantation drive in the school premises by the Chief Guest, Forest officials, officials from different departments, General public, students and teachers with great enthusiasm. Plantation of more than 300 saplings was done on the school premises.



This was followed by the address by the CCF (Wildlife) Mr. H.P.Pradhan, IFS who expressed grave concern over the precarious nature of the environment. He said that the Tree Planting Festival is carried out to stabilize the environment, conserve and protect it. Further he informed the people that this type of planting festival is being carried out in all the other districts of Sikkim as per the instructions of the Hon'ble Minister of Forests and the Principle Chief Conservator of Forest. He pointed out the flaws in certain programme carried out regarding the plantation process; and this sometimes being theoretical in nature rather than an action oriented approach.

Most importantly in this crucial situation of Global Climate Change where temperatures all over the world is increasing at an alarming rate, the forest of the Himalayas is rapidly thinning out leading to rapid depletion of our natural resources. The rich forests reducing at greater pace is due to the carelessness on our part by carrying out the illicit felling of trees for our own needs. Therefore, there is the need to realize the role of forests in our life; not to forget that nature worship has been a traditional approach carried from centuries till date.



Relief funds were also distributed by the Department of Forest to the villagers of Thangsing who were affected by encroachment of Wild animals.

Ms Priya Shrestha (WWF) spoke on the issue of conservation measures of wetlands in Sikkim and to protect the endangered animal species of our state, for example Red Panda. For this a research team is undertaking a study, she added. The WWF also distributed dustbins to Sang Senior Secondary School & Sang PHE.



Hon'ble Area MLA, Shri Menlom Lepcha in his speech focused on global warming. He mentioned the richness of the forests in Sikkim and therefore, ranking as one of the biodiversity rich state in India. He requested the Panchayat members and the Local people that this culture of plantation is important and should be carried out in future. He emphasized the initiative taken by the forest department for plantation purposes; by providing sapling to the people for plantation drive.

The Hon'ble Minister of Forests Shri Bhim Dhungel emphasized on the effort taken by the then Krishi Minister Dr. Kanyalal in 1950 for such a farsighted vision to carry out plantation drive as a part of celebration. He stressed on the achievements made by Sikkim in recent years; our Hon'ble Chief Minister who was awarded the Greenest Chief Minister in 1999; and in 2008 earning the distinction of being the first state in the country to achieve 100% sanitation; and also being ranked 1st in Conservation of Natural Resources in 2008.



On another note he expressed his serious concerns about the drastic Climate change happening globally; to state an example he pointed out the shortage of water supply in countries like Jamaica at present. At the same time appealing to the people to be conscious of the serious threat to mankind i.e. Global Climate Change, and take plantation work seriously; one plant for each individual. The focus in future should be to conserve and expand the forest.

In his address, the Hon'ble forest Minister pointed out the symbiotic relationship between man and forests and added that the Hon'ble Chief Minister Dr. Pawan Chamling is the most environmentally conscious person in the nation; he appealed the people to participate whole heartedly in the 'Ten Minutes to Greenery' programme of the State Government which is to take place on the 15th July 2009 in the state after 10.30 am.



The Chief Guest Shri D.B.Thapa Hon'ble Minister UDHD mentioned the occasion celebrated by the Forest Department to spread and follow up awareness programmes about the importance of forest in our day to day life and appreciated support endowed by the department to local people when needed. His appeal to the people was to cooperate in spreading awareness by way of plantation and conserving it. He stated that Greenery ensures tourism which creates more employment and revenue generation for Sikkim.

The day turned out to be very fruitful in educating people about the importance of forests. Followed by a good cause where plantation drives were carried out in the school premises. The programme concluded with a vote of thanks by DFO (headquarters) Shri S.K. Thatal.