

(IPR) As a curtain raiser for an upcoming event under the Directorate of Eco-Tourism, Forest, Wildlife Management and Development Department Government of Sikkim, PCCF cum Principal Secretary, FEWMD Mr Thomas Chandy called a press meet today at the conference hall of the Forest Secretariat. He informed that the Department will be organising two events which are:

1). Familiarisation Tour - where 12 prominent ecotourism/adventure tour operators from Ahmedabad, Delhi, Bangaluru, Kolkata, Mumbai, Pune and Kochi will visit and stay at four eco-tourism zones identified by the Directorate. As a result of structured interventions that involve ecotourism product and package development, capacity building etc over the years by the Directorate of Eco-Tourism, 4 Zones out of the identified 11 zones are at an advanced stage and have become operational and are receiving visitors. The four zones namely Lingdok-Pangthang (East District), Okharey (West District), Kitam (South District) and East Pendam (East District) will receive these participants on a study tour with an objective to give the selected tour operators exposure and first hand experience of available ecotourism packages and facilities of each ecotourism zone listed above. Further it is expected that the tour operators share their expert opinion on specific aspects of ecotourism development like destination preparedness, tourist amenities, safety and security, guiding, products and packages, ecotour packaging and pricing, enterprise management, promotion and marketing etc.

2). Conclave - The field visit by the prominent tour operators will be followed by series of meetings and deliberation, which will finally culminate into a conclave on the topic Innovation and Progress of Ecotourism in Sikkim to be held on the 16th of February at the conference hall of the Forest Department.

The aim of the conclave will be to bring together the important tourism stakeholders (government and non government) under one roof with an objective to converge, deliberate, share and learn about different facets of tourism and ecotourism in Sikkim's context and imbibe values of sustainable tourism principles and practices.

The conclave also visions in merging the conclave theme with the significance of 2017 being the UN Year of Sustainable Tourism and has been registered as the First event on the Sustainable Tourism in the Website of the United Nations. Eminent speakers from other states will be addressing on ecotourism and the sustainable approach to tourism. The illustrious Panel will comprise of noted experts namely Shri Vinay Luthra, IFS (retd), CEO, Karnataka Ecotourism Development Board, Government of Karnataka, Shri Chandrashekhar Jaiswal, DGM, Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation, Shri Anirudh Chaoji, Executive Committee Member, Adventure Tour Operators Association of India, and Shri Madhu Menon, ANALA Outdoors, Ahmedabad.