

INTERNATIONAL RHODODENDRON FEST WILL HAVE MANIFOLD BENEFITS, SAY TOURISM MINISTER.

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Gangtok: Posters, Stickers and Audio CD for International Rhododendron Festival (IRF) were released by Mr. Bhim Dhungel, Minister for Forest, Environment and Wildlife Management Department (FE & WMD), Govt. of Sikkim, at Forest Conference hall on Tuesday.

Mr. Dhungel said in his address, the basic objective of the festival is to generate awareness and promote conservation of our rich heritage of Rhododendrons at global level. It is also to boost eco-tourism of the region, promote sustainable eco-tourism package which involves overall development of the local community and better understandings and appreciation of natural and cultural features of host population leading to national, international and inter-cultural understanding for sustainable development, he added.

The IRF, he said, will also benefit hotel owners, vehicle owners, drivers and all the people of Sikkim, especially the local unemployed youths by providing alternative livelihood. Sikkim is rich in biodiversity, culture and environmental sector compared to other states of India, he noted.

Mr. Tshering Yongdi Lepcha, Area MLA of Lachen-Mangan told the minister about a problem of plastic bottles left behind at tourist sites which has to be controlled. He also urged for an awareness programme for drivers and local people how to behave with the visiting tourists.

IRF will be held from 25th April to 15th May 2010. The main events of the festival are live rhododendron show, trekking for adventure tourists, nature camps, bird watching, wildlife watching through wildlife trail, mountain biking, angling for trout fish, food festival, exhibition of local handicrafts and culture show, informed Mr. S. T. Lachungpa, Secretary FE & WMD.

The inaugural function of IRF 2010 has been scheduled to be held at Shingba Rhododendron Sanctuary, North Sikkim on 25th April, while more areas of natural habitat of rhododendron trials like Lachen, Zema, Thangu, Tholung Kesongla in North Sikkim, Kongnosla Alpine Sanctuary, East Sikkim and Barsey Rhododendron Sanctuary in West Sikkim are in the itinerary of this festival which coincides with the Year of Tourism, it is informed.

All the officers of FE & WMD and President of All Sikkim Drivers Association, among others, attended the programme.

Cut see Sikkim Reporter.