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# TN Khoshoo Memorial Award 2017 Conferred Upon the `Ice Stupa’ Man - Sonam Wangchuk

December 01, 2017: Sonam Wangchuk, Founder, Students’ Educational and Cultural Movement of Ladakh (SECMOL) and a leading educational reformer and sustainability advocate, was today awarded the TN Khoshoo Memorial Award 2017. Instituted by Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (ATREE), the award was presented to Mr Wangchuk for his innovative approach and pioneering work in the field of sustainability, at the TN Khoshoo Memorial Award and Lecture ceremony held at Indian Institute of Science.

Mr Wangchuk started a project called `Ice Stupas’ to combat the water crisis in cold deserts. These conical mounds serve as mini-glaciers that melt slowly in spring, releasing millions of litres of water over the critical planting season and helping to ease local food and water scarcity under climate change. Currently, Mr Wangchuk is also building a crowdfunded alternative university campus – Himalayan Institute of Alternatives, Ladakh (HIAL) to engage youths from multiple Himalayan countries in Research & Development to tackle the issues faced by mountain people, especially in the domains of education, culture, and the environment.

Accepting the award, Mr Wangchuk said, “Sustainability and conservation of nature has become a luxury among intellectuals. It should be taught to children in schools in ways that they develop a sentimental relationship with nature and respond to issues of ecological degradation. It’s unfortunate that not many people know the realities of present-day ecological issues. There is a need for those working in the field of ecology, environment and sustainability to disseminate knowledge in a way that is accessible to all section of society. We need to introspect the way we live and understand the impact it has on environment. We need to redefine and reinvent our values and keep it in harmony with nature.”

The event also featured a guest lecture by Anshu Gupta, Founder, Goonj and the Ramon Magsaysay Awardee 2015. His keynote address explored the need to develop complementary currencies which create a meaningful barter, and look beyond money as the only resource to spur development. “Organisations working towards addressing some of the most pressing issues need to go beyond statistics to understand the core of the problem. This also requires prioritising key issues and accordingly allocating the resources,” said Mr Gupta.

Speaking on occasion, Dr Kamaljit Bawa, Founder Trustee and President, ATREE said, “Sustainable practices are beginning to move from the periphery to the mainstream, and we need more people like Sonam Wangchuk and Anshu Gupta to be at the forefront of this change. We can no longer ignore the pressures that climate change and biodiversity loss are exerting on society and need innovative approaches to address sustainability issues. The TN Khoshoo Memorial Award and Lecture was created to promote, encourage and honour these efforts.

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**About the TN Khoshoo Memorial Award and Lecture:**

The TN Khoshoo Memorial Award was instituted by ATREE, the Khoshoo family, and other philanthropists to honour the work of Late Dr Triloki Nath Khoshoo – an environmental leader and recipient of the Padma Bhushan in 1992 and the Sasakawa Environment Prize by the United Nations Environment Programme in 1996. Now in its 14th consecutive year, the award recognises the distinguished contribution of a mid-career academician or practitioner in the field of environment, sustainability and conservation. The lecture, a key highlight of the event, fosters environmental responsibility, knowledge and ignites new conversations around topical issues. Keynote speakers in the past have included Holiness Dalai Lama, Noble Laureate Elinor Ostrom, Prof. MS Swaminathan and Sam Pitroda.

**About ATREE:**

ATREE (www.atree.org), a global socio-environmental think tank was established in 1996 on the principles of environmental justice, to address pressing issues in biodiversity, water and climate change. ATREE conducts problem-driven interdisciplinary research and offers a PhD programme. It synergises multiple identities as a think-tank, academic institution and a grassroots organisation.

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