

Soma Basu writes on the films and issues discussed at the sixth international edition of CMS Vatavaran

6 December

The sixth international edition of CMS Vatavaran, India's premier environment and wildlife film festival, was inaugurated in an award ceremony held at the Convention Centre, New Delhi.

In the "The Big Moments" session eminent filmmaker Naresh Bedi shared some of the most exciting experience of his four-decade-old career in environment and wildlife filmmaking. With some magnificent film clips the session showed some of the most thrilling moments while filming in the wild. Moderated by Nalaka Gunawardene from TVEAP, Sri Lanka the session with Naresh Bedi and Evert Van Den Bos, GM, Nature Conservation Films, Netherlands, brought together enriching experiences and interesting anecdotes related to their experience in the wild. In another interesting session

"Reflections", renowned conservationist George Schaller shared his personal experiences, memoirs and instances. The session was moderated by AJT Johnsingh, eminent Wildlife Biologist and Perna Singh Bindra, regional coordinator, Tiger Programme, Panthera.

The inaugural programme was attended by PN Vasanti, director, CMS, PJ Dilip Kumar, DGF & SS, ministry of environment and forests, government of India and Ann Ollestad, ambassador of Norway to India.

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The second day was quite an action-packed affair with the participation of several Indian and international filmmakers and wildlife experts.

In a special master class on the theme of "Films as a tool in propagating Biodiversity Conservation" the world-renowned conservationist George Schaller shared several experience of films playing an important role in saving the environment. He claimed that though awareness today is greater than what it was ever before, but at the same time biodiversity loss is continuing at an alarming rate. So what do filmmakers have to do? Filmmakers have to keep in mind that there isn't a need to produce a plethora of films rather one film with spectacular footage is enough to deliver a message, loud and clear and the message can be delivered with much poise. Talking on the issue of funding Schaller said big business establishments have money but they aren't investing much, even if they have the moral responsibility to maintain ecological balance as they are exploiting natural resources the most. So when corporations are backtracking, it's the government that needs to step in and provide funds to budding filmmakers.

Ralf Quibeldey, commissioning editor from NDR, Germany during his session talked about various elements which has to be kept in mind while shooting a film - budget and more importantly the reason for making films that include audience and self-satisfaction. He criticised narrative script writing and natural flow scripting during filmmaking. In the second half master classes by Andie Clare from Icon Films, UK and Shyam Benegal were organised.

Prominent films that were screened today included *Amazon Alive: Hidden Secrets*, *The Miracle water village*, *Melting paradise*, *Blood and Iron*, *Broken Tail* and several others. Several filmmakers like Snehasis Das, Naresh Bedi, Ajay Bedi, Ashish Chandola, Akanksha Joshi, Nandan Saxena and several others were present. Senani Hegde, director of the award-winning film *The Pack-5 Episodes*, during the open forum on biodiversity talked about his experience while directing the movie. It took

Wild in the country



Ralf Quibeldey

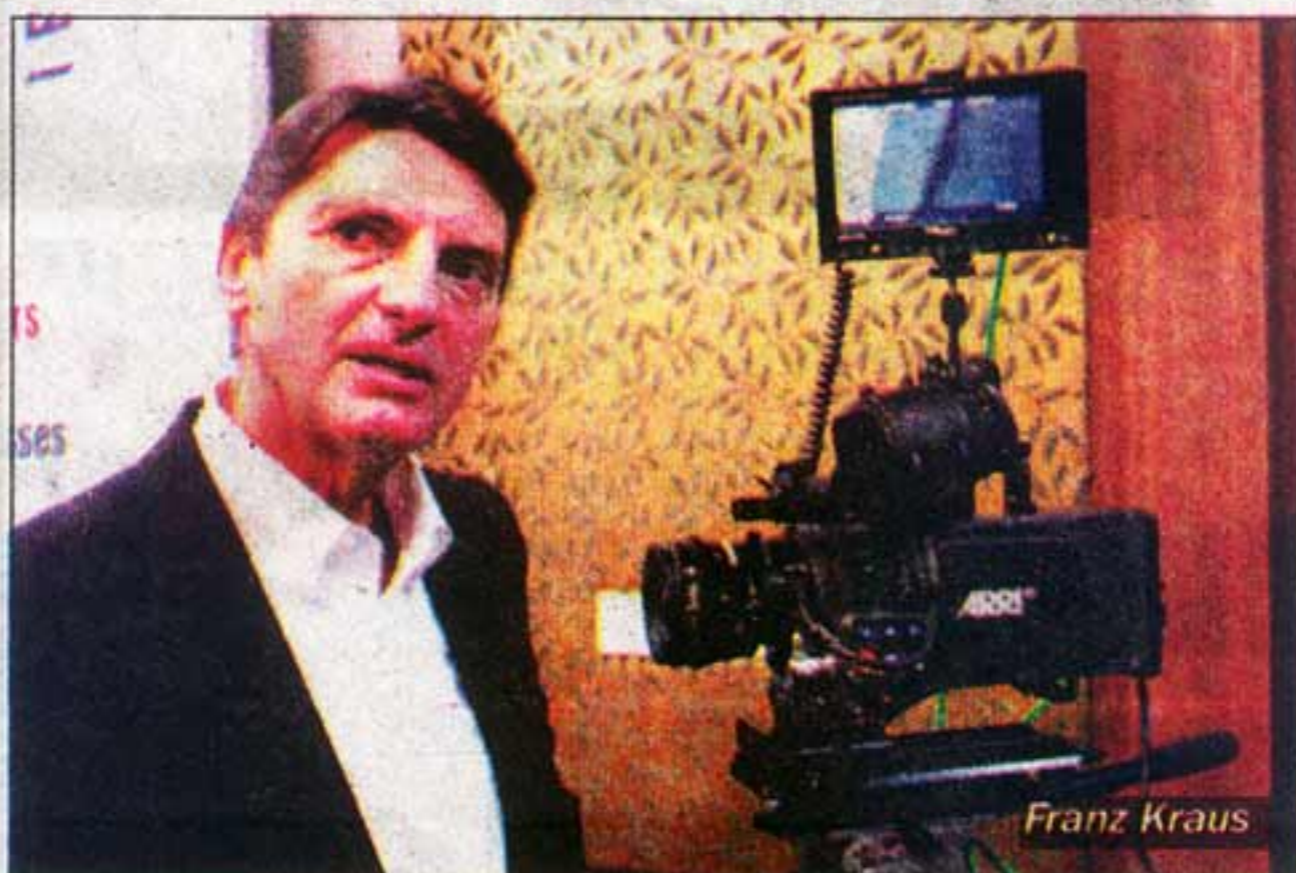


Perna Singh Bindra, George Schaller and AJT Johnsingh

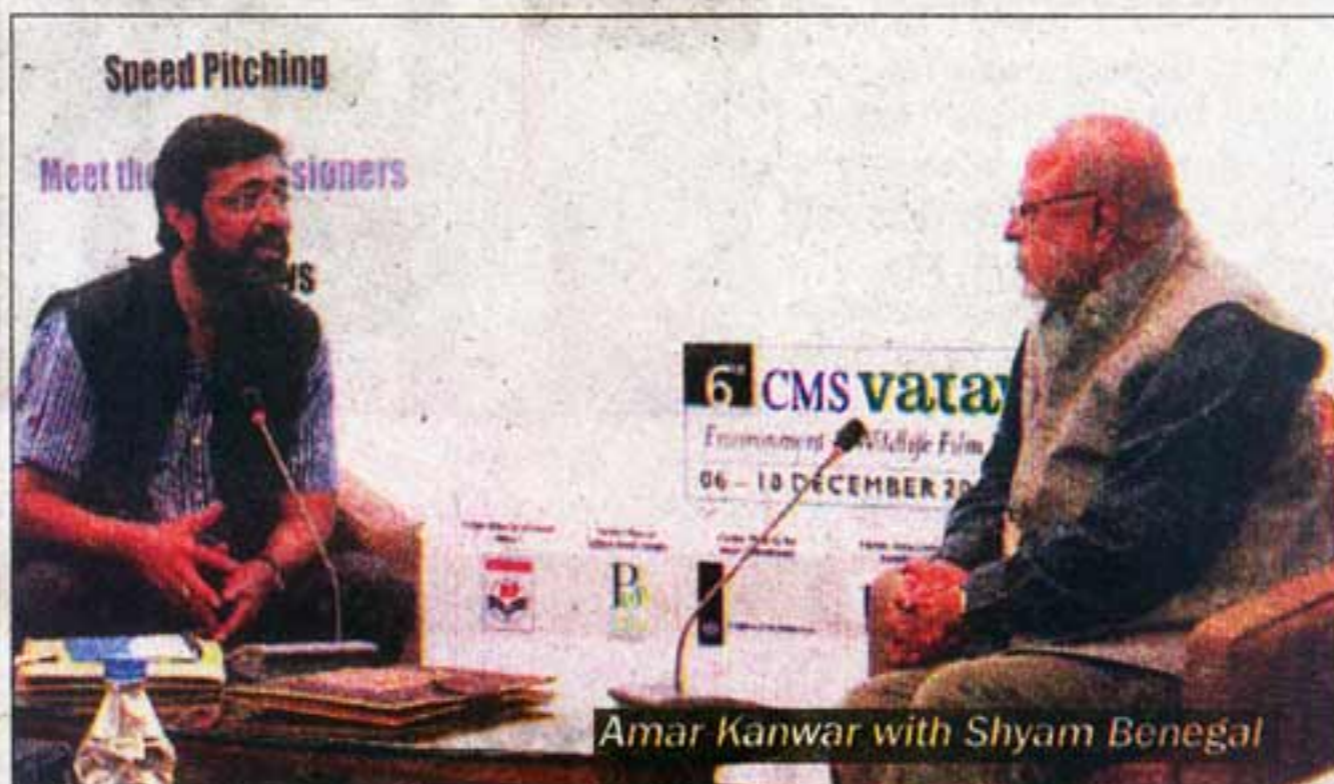
him two years to make this movie. The major challenge was to find wild dogs because these could only be seen once in 15 days.

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On the third day several important issues related to filmmaking were discussed. The day start-



Franz Kraus



Amar Kanwar with Shyam Benegal

ed with a special session by Dennis Aig, Montana State University, USA. In his session, titled "The Fourth Paradigm: Documenting the new scientific method", emphasis was placed on re-looking at nature from a scientific angle. According to him vast information is available but the utility of that information depends on how we use it and this is where e-science is important. David Mac Donald, head of YouTube partner operations, Asia Pacific, in his hour-long session discussed how new media is being used to generate content, upload movies, and also copyright issues. Bhupesh Kumar, vice president, Aon Global Insurance Brokers Pvt Ltd, in his master class discussed why insuring films is important.

Several prominent Indian and international films were screened. These include *Project Tiger-Ensuring survival*, *War story*, *Back to the*

seven awards. The awards were presented this evening in a glittering award ceremony at the Convention Centre, NDCC.

Films from Delhi bagged awards in important categories like water for all, biodiversity, climate change, best story, best cinematography and best of the festival. Filmmakers whose

films have won include Vishal Nityanand, Akanksha Joshi, Rishu Nigam, Amar Kanwar, Rintu Thomas and others. Vishal Nityanand's film *Kosi: Injustice with Millions of Villagers and Revolt by Kosi River*, Akanksha Joshi's film *Earth Witness: Reflections on the Times and the Timeless*, Amar Kanwar's public service announcements won two awards each.

In the international category nine awards were presented. Three film from the USA have won awards. These are *Chasing Water*, *Dog in the Manger* (El Perro Del Hortelano) and *SoLa: Louisiana Water Stories*. Germany bagged two awards for *Poppy's Promise: Secret Life in the Cornfield* (Das Kornfeld: Dschungel für einen Sommer) and *Amazon Alive: Hidden Secrets*. One award each has been won by New Zealand, Canada, Japan and France.

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The final day was marked by film shows, open forums, master classes, trade shows and a gala award ceremony. With the screening of 114 films, participation of more than 100 filmmakers and 60 speakers the festival

turned out to be a grand five-day affair. A special section for children was also organised at National Science Centre.

A major attraction this year was the Asian Summit, which comprised workshops, master classes, trade shows, meet the commissioner sessions and speed pitching sessions. (On the sidelines of the festival was a pilgrimage to various food junctions in the city, including the famous Paratbe wali gali and dbabas selling makke-di-roti-sarso-da-saag and rajma chawal with pudina chatni!)

This year's CMS-PANOS Young Environment Journalists Awards went to Soma Basu and Manu C Kumar (Manorama News, Mumbai). The CMS Prithvi Ratna Award winner is Ashish Chandola.

Photographs by Shubhankar Basu