

KVIFF sets stage to help revive Mula, Mutha

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Pune: The Kirloskar Vasundhara International Film Festival (KVIFF) will offer a platform to chalk out a blueprint of solutions to revive the rivers flowing through Pune.

The festival, with its theme Save River, Save Life, will hold a conference titled Muthakaran on January 9 and a workshop on Upper Bhima River Basin Restoration on January 11, the organizers said at a news conference on Wednesday.

Muthakaran will feature panelists, including environment experts, bureaucrats, people's representatives, activists, fisher folk and other stakeholders. "Along with the audience, the panel will brainstorm on various issues plaguing the rivers. The objective is to provide policy makers a blueprint to resolve problems engendered by lopsided development and steady depletion of Mutha's environment health," said Sachin Punekar of city-based Biospheres.

Events planned

KVIFF will address issues related to river restoration with over 70 events over a week, including river walks and cycle rallies. The Sangrun river walk will culminate in the Nadi Sansad. Organizers aim to sensitize as many as 20,000 Pune residents via the event.

The workshop, meanwhile, will talk about the need to connect the city's population to the state of the river. "In the various cases and petitions before the National Green Tribunal (NGT) and courts pertaining to the rivers, one question comes forth — 'Who owns the river?'. People assume that the government owns it, but there are six to seven different departments and agencies that tend to different aspects of the rivers, as well as those citizens, who depend on the river's water," said Suneel Joshi of Jalbiradari, while explaining citizens' role in the equation.

Conservationists have voiced several concerns, including the state of encroachments such as the Metro line that has been planned along the river banks.

Environmentalist Vikas Amte was also present during the news conference and spoke of various initiatives for river and water conservation. The KVIFF will also award Amte the Vasundhara Sanman.

Filmmaker stresses on importance of forests as natural water purifiers

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Pune: Wildlife filmmaker Mike Pandey on Thursday highlighted the need to protect forests as 80% of the potable water is purified by them.

"Only 3% of the world's water is fresh, while the rest is salty. Of this, only 0.4% is potable. Forests, which purify 80% of the potable water, have been chopped to half their original size. Like our bodies, 75% of the planet is water. When we destroy one part of nature, the entire cycle is disturbed. We need to wake up to this reality and secure our planet," Pandey said.

He was in the city to give away awards to the winners of film competition at the 11th Kirloskar Vasundhara International Film Festival, which is being held under the theme 'Save River, Save Life'. "Education plays a key role in stopping the relentless progress (urbanization) and films are a good way to retell humans their own story," Pandey said while addressing a news conference.

While recalling the prelude to his film 'Shores of Silence', the filmmaker said, "Before we began the film, we found that as many 1,200 whale sharks were killed along Indian shores every year, and the

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— Mike Pandey | WILDLIFE FILMMAKER



Wildlife filmmaker Mike Pandey was in the city to present awards to the winners of film competition at the 11th KVIFF on Thursday

ir meat sold locally at Re 1 per kg. This meat would later be sold by fishing mafia in South East Asia at \$600/kg, labelled as shark fin meat, a delicacy there."

However, there was no one to take up this issue up then. "Most bodies and international networks we went to, refused to acknowledge the existence of whale sharks and their hunt in the region. So, we made a film showing these creatures consume plankton and, in turn, neutralise the level of carbon," Pandey said.

He said a good film is the one that not only shows a pro-

blem, but also presents solutions to it. Three months after 'Shores of Silence' was first screened, there was an amendment in the country's Wildlife Act, with the addition of 'protection of sea creature' laws.

Pandey has produced more than 600 films and won about 300 awards over the past three decades, including three Wildscreen Panda Awards, also known as 'Green Oscars'.

KVIFF film contest winners

Pandey as well as Indian Documentary Producers' As-

sociation (IDPA) vice-president Usha Deshpande felicitated six winners of the KVIFF film competition at the National Film Archive of India (NFAI).

Anand Kulkarni from Mumbai received the first prize for 'All Is Well', a documentary on indoor air pollution, followed by Steve Fisher and Jason Jaacks from the US for 'Silent River', Joint third was awarded to Amit Goswamy and Asif Khan, while consolation prizes went to Pune-based directors Amol Kachre and Sanyog Mithite.

BSF officer bags green prize for movie

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Born into a family of defence officers, Amit Goswamy from Ghaziabad also decided to join the forces. However, along the way, he picked up a passion for wildlife, which would drive him to make an award-winning film.

Goswami, currently an assistant commandant in the Border Security Force (BSF), was awarded the third prize for his film 'Chronicles Of A Wildlifer' at the Kirloskar Vasundhara International Film Festival on Thursday.

Talking about his passion, Goswamy told TOI that since his family moved around the country due to postings, he had always had a liking for the outdoors. "We had lived in different places including Bangalore and Shillong where I experienced the out-



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Amit Goswamy | ASSISTANT COMMANDANT BSF

doors. My passion grew as I pursued my studies in wildlife sciences. Later, I focused on crimes against wildlife as an area that needed to be brought to the fore," he shared.

It was during his post-graduation in wildlife biology in 2011 that he was given the opportunity to study deer at the Ranthambore Tiger Reserve near Sawai Madhopur, Rajasthan. "The footage used in

the film was shot at this time. It was then I realized that most documentaries about wildlife sciences centred around the wildlife species, rather than the people who pursue them," he explained.

"I wanted to spread the message about the life of a wildlife researcher and what their day-to-day work entails. I also wanted to try to bring awareness about crimes aga-

inst wildlife as a subject under the mandate of the paramilitary forces," he added.

By the time the realization dawned upon him, Goswamy had already been posted in BSF's anti-naxal operations as assistant commandant. After his duty hours, he continued to learn skills needed to make a film. "In my spare time, I would learn script writing, practice voiceovers, and film editing. I spent my after-hours in 2015 and 2016 to finish the film," the officer said.

"Illegal wildlife trade is among the top crimes in the world. The concluding minutes of my film are also about the crime. Once the forces get better knowledge of this, a nodal wing may be set up to liaise with other environmental and forest agencies to check such crimes," he stated as he spoke of his aim.