

Mission Possible

Directors of Uranium Film Festival, Norbert Suchanek and Marcia Gomes de Oliveria, talk about their first tour to India and filming on a donkey cart

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CASUAL talk over a spicy Indian dinner at Berlin in October last year became food for thought and finally led to the Uranium Film Festival's first tour to Asia as part of Kirloskar Vasundhara International Film Festival in Pune. Norbert Suchanek and Marcia Gomes de Oliveria, directors of the festival, are happy with what they are seeing now.

"We were chatting with Indian filmmaker and nuclear activist Shri Prakash over dinner when the idea struck in October. We named it the "Mission Impossible" film festival when we started off with the plan to bring it to India in January. We had only about two months in hand to get all the arrangements in place, and we pulled it off quite well," says Suchanek, who is a filmmaker and human rights and environment journalist from Germany.

Suchanek says that the film festival originated from the need to educate the masses and help them build an opinion on the effects of uranium mining, radio activity and nuclear technology. So



Marcia Gomes de Oliveria, Norbert Suchanek and Shri Prakash

in 2006, when more and more countries were getting involved with nuclear activities, Suchanek and Oliveria got together to screen films that dealt with the issues in Rio de Janeiro.

"Eighty per cent of the population watches only fiction because the common notion is that documentaries are boring and preachy. But there is so much awareness about an issue like AIDS because it is used as a theme in so many soap operas and feature films. We must create awareness about the effects of nuclear energy in the same manner. Only when you combine serious issues with a love story will people listen," says Suchanek, whose film, *Uranium Thirst*, made in collaboration with Oliveria, was screened on January 29 at Balgandharva Rangmandir.

The film captures the sorry state of the once-rich land of

Namibia due to uranium mining and how people suffer from what is generally called, the old man's illness, which makes young miners look old and haggard.

Talking about his film, Suchanek says that in 2010, they were invited to talk about uranium mining in Brazil, where the king of Nama tribe approached them. "He requested us to go to his village and tell his people about uranium mining. So we went from village to village and house to house on a donkey cart for four days, talking to the people and filming simultaneously. The king wanted us to show the rest of the world what was happening to their land," says Oliveria. She adds that they were skeptical about how they would communicate and whether people would accept them. "But when a king stands besides you, what difficulties can you have? It was an experience of a lifetime," says Oliveria.