QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

April - June 2005

Green Voice

CMS ENVIS

Newsletter on Environment and Media

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वहाँ है खुशहाली।।

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Enviro News

National Geographic Channel bid to stay relevant to viewers

Correspondent: **Our Bureau**
New Delhi, April 20, 2005

In line with its global positioning, National Geographic Channel (NGC) today announced the Think Again' tagline. Announcing this, Mr. Guy Slattery, Senior Vice-President, Creative and Marketing, NGC International, said the new positioning of the channel stems from its need to continuously stay relevant to its viewers.

The positioning ensures that NGC continues to "promote knowledge of the world and all that's in it" while becoming more entertaining and engaging. Mr. Slattery said the channel would look at commissioning more programmes rather than buying them off-the-shelf. He added that the channel had seen good growth rates in markets where the channel has already been repositioned.

Elaborating on the Indian market, Ms Dilshad Master, senior Vice-President, Content and Communications, NGC, said that the channel would be focusing on 3Rs - relevant, resonant and relatable. The new programming would include series such as Nat Geo Investigates, In the Womb, Ultimate Survivor and new episodes of Mega structures, Show Real Asia and Taboo. The channel has also tied up with the Karan Johar produced Kaal coinciding with the premier of Deep Jungle Week.

On the advertising front, NGC has managed to attract a handful of advertisers. Mr Nikhil Mirchandani, Head Ad Sales, said that the number of brands have gone up from 49 last year to about 140. "We are confident that the new broad-based appeal of NGC with other ongoing sales and marketing initiatives will ensure a 200 per cent revenue growth by the end of fiscal 2006," he said.

Source: The Hindu Business Line, Thursday, April 21, 2005

Intel comes to the aid of giant pandas

Correspondent: **Staff Reporter**

Global chip major Intel is co-operating with China to better protect the highly endangered giant panda by offering real-time data and communication facilities to researchers.

The Wolong giant panda nature reserve in southwest China's Sichuan province has been fully covered by a regional telecom network based on Intel's centrino mobile technology, a company official said. He said the regional telecom network covered the administrative office building of the Wolong reserve, a giant panda museum, and China conservation and research centre for giant pandas, an open-air habitat for the endangered species. With the broadband network, researchers are able to process real-time data on the pandas, including photos and video signals, around the clock at any given corner of the nature reserve, or observe giant panda cubs on a daily basis without having to step out of their official Xinhua news agency reported. Before this regional telecom network was launched in Wolong, communication between the research center and the outside world was limited to conventional means of access. Researchers had to walk back of their offices to process data or drive several kilometers to send data to outside researchers.

"digital technology has changed communication between Wolong and the rest of the world an will help promote information sharing on giant Panda protection," director of the Wolong nature reserve, Zhang Weimien, said.

"This will not only help increase the number of giant pandas, but also help us manage the living environment of giant pandas in a more efficient manner," he said.

The giant panda is one of the world's most rare and endangered species, with an estimated 1,000 living in the mountainous regions of Sichuan in Southwest China, and northwestern Shaanxi and Gansu provinces.

Statistics from the state forestry administration released last June show the number of pandas in the wild China has risen by more than 40 % from 1110 in the 1980s to 1590 nowadays, while a total of 161 are in captive breeding programmes world wide.

Despite the increase, the animal's existence is under threat due to problems including loss of habitat and a low rate of reproduction, China has 33 nature reserves with a combined area of 3.95 million acres.

Wolong, founded in 1963, is the largest. It has an area of 494,200 acres and owns 76 giant pandas. With 20 giant pandas on leased overseas, there are now only 30 giant pandas in captivity at the Wolong center. The remaining 26 have been moved to the Bifeng George base in Yaan, also in Sichuan province, to make way for construction of new habitants.

Source: Financial Express, Monday, April 4, 2005

Down to Earth's reporter bags media fellowship

Correspondent: **Staff Reporter**

The first CNES-Setu National Media Fellowship for a journalist studying issues in the North-East has gone to Nitin Sethi, a senior reporter with the environmental magazine Down to Earth, the awards committee announced on Thursday.

The fellowship, worth Rs 75,000 and spread over three months, is aimed at encouraging serious media research and reporting on issues relevant to the North-East and enabling the journalist to apply himself or herself to an issue that he or she has felt deeply about but has not had the time or opportunity to work upon.

Announcing the prize, the awards committee noted Mr Sethi's consistent coverage of issues

related to the region for the fortnightly magazine, the best-known advocates of strong environmental policies and people-related development.

"Although the fellowship programme received a number of excellent proposals ranging from the impact of conflict on women to India's Look East Policy and herbs, healers and the environment, the committee has picked Nitin Sethi for his deep insights into the challenges and problems facing the future of bamboo in the region - production, technology, impact as a tool for self-reliance as well as its potential for transforming the economy of the North-East and its people," the committee said.

The committee comprised of Managing Trustee of the Centre for North East Studies and Policy Research and Consulting Editor with The Statesman Sanjoy Hazarika, editor of the Imphal Free Press Pradip Phanjoubam and editor of Asom Bani, Guwahati Dileep Chandan.

It reviewed the applications at a meeting in Shillong last week before taking a decision.

Source: The Pioneer, Friday, April 01, 2005

'Akash can be used in disaster management'

Correspondent: **Staff Reporter**

Hyderabad: Akash, the indigenously built medium range software driven surface-to-air missile, which is equipped to provide communication and intelligence information to the defence forces could be used for disaster management, the DRDL Director Prahlada said at a press conference here.

He said technological support could be provided to coastal States to predict natural calamities like tsunami and coordinate rescue operations with advanced computer software used for missile development.

The DRDL was already working with the National Institute of Technology, Warangal, on evolving an advanced disaster management course in the wake of the tsunami tragedy, he said.

Quality manpower

Mr. Prahlada said DRDL could produce a broad variety of technologies ranging from aerospace sciences to high energy materials and electronics and instrumentation thanks to the quality manpower generated by the premier institutions of the nation.

Varsities roped in several joint programmes were taken up with various universities in the State - Hyderabad Central University, Osmania University, Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University, Indian Institute of Information Technology (IIIT), ISB in addition to NIT, Warangal and the Andhra University - for its development and review systems.

Research was on in the areas of hypersonic technologies in Osmania University, high-energy materials and computational fluid dynamics with Hyderabad Central University and telecommunication inscription and information security at IIIT, he added.

Source: The Hindu, Wednesday, May 11, 2005

Media raising false alarm on tigers

Correspondent: **Staff Reporter**

New Delhi: The Centre on Monday said the media was raising a false alarm on the disappearance of tigers. Speaking in Rajya Sabha, environment and forests minister A Raja said IUCN, an in international body that is studying the issue, has said the situation in 14 reserves was either good or satisfaction, "but none of them can be termed bad". Raja said Sariska was a matter of concern but it was wrong to equate other national parks with it.

"Tigers are visible in Bharatpur, which is not even notified as a tiger reserve," he said. IUCN, along with the Wildlife Institute of India will also conduct studies in the remaining 14 reserves, the minister added.

Raja said the government was taking all precautions to protect tigers. The ministry is planning to hold a meeting of chief wildlife wardens and forest ministers of all states. The government is also considering setting up forest management committees in villages across the country

Source: Times of India, Tuesday, May 03, 2005

Film Festival on Environment

Correspondent: **Staff Reporter**

The green brigade has something to look forward to: the country only film festival on environment and wildlife films, Vatavaran Film Festival, this time round on the theme of "Forests for Life".

While the festival will be held in the Capital from November 21 to 24, for the moment, it is open for entries. The last date for entries in July 15. In the competitive section, awards have been instituted in eight categories. They include films on wildlife conservation, wildlife natural history, environment, public service message spots, animation film, student film and the most environmentally conscious broadcaster. "For the student-film category, we will be looking at an age group of at least secondary level schooling and above. And not just students of media institutes but anyone interested in the theme. For the environmentally conscious broadcaster, we will be looking at the content from the period January 2004 to December 2004," says the Deputy Director of the Centre for Media Studies, Sanjay Mohan.

A jury of eminent filmmakers headed by Shyam Benegal will decide the award-winning entries. These will travel to different cities as part of Vatavaran Travels so that people all over can view the films. And that's not all. In the non-competitive sections, the best of Asian films and a retrospection of masters like Richard Brock and David Attenborough will be screened. Organized by CMS, the festival has been supported by the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests.

Source: The Hindu, Wednesday, May 25, 2005

Water conservation film starring Dikshit

Correspondent: **Staff Reporter**

New Delhi: The next time you go to a cinema hall, you might just bump into the chief minister and sarod maestro Amjad Ali Khan's family advising you to conserve water. Delhi Jal Board (DJB) has made short films with CM Sheila Dikshit that inform the Delhiites why every drop is precious. Shot at CM's residence, a 30-second film shows Dikshit closing a tap of her bathroom and saying: "Every drop is precious. Do not waste water." About 53 cinema halls have been showing the short films during intervals and before the movie shows since Monday. A second short film features Khan and his two sons Amaan and Ayaan Ali Bangash at a breakfast table and then washing a car with just half a bucket of water. As the sons wash the car in the background, their father declares how water should be conserved and that he is learning from his own children. More innovative films have been made showing increasing population in the Capital and declining water resources.

Source: Times of India, Thursday, May 19, 2005

Green Initiative by All India Radio

Keeping in view the importance of Environment, all AIR Stations are broadcasting a daily programme on Environment for 5 to 7 minutes duration and a weekly programme of longer duration. In order to inform and educate the listener living both in urban and rural areas and for creating environmental consciousness among them on preservation of Environment through development for forests, afforestation , social forestry etc., these programmes are mounted in interesting, appealing and imaginative ways. These programmes are being broadcast in different formats like talks discussions, features, news items spots serials etc by all AIR stations in their local languages. AIR Stations are advised from time to time to intensify and include the programmes on Environment in their future schedules.There is a regular broadcast of programmes related to Environment & Forests development Schemes launched by the Central/ State Governments, adopting a multilingual approach targeting local communities for its broadcasts of Programmes on Environment. Forestry. Wildlife and ecology. In View of their importance, subjects like wildlife and forests conservation are treated by AIR as a challenge and emphasis is given on development activities as well as social rituals. All India Radio projects the success of Government initiatives, in respect of forestry, wildlife conservation and ecological balance. As such, programmes on wildlife and care of animals are broadcast through its various special audience programmes were produced and broadcast on world Environment day.

Articles

Strategies for reporting on environment

Environmental journalists often go wrong when they highlight flagship species to emphasis the need for protection of biological habitats.

The people may just refuse to go by when you argue that the lion tailed monkey ought to be protected in preference to a power project.

This happened in the case of the campaign against Silent Valley hydroelectric project in Kerala (India) that focused too much on the monkeys. Yet Silent Valley was saved owing to multi-faced campaigns launched by Non-Governmental Organizations and The Hindu, India's National Newspaper. However, politicians still raise the debate whether monkeys or human beings were important. They manage with these kinds of argument because the public is not fully aware of the biological wealth of Silent Valley and how that wealth relates to them and the future generations. (Silent Valley is now a World Heritage site). A few years ago, a newspaper report on the proposed Vamanapuram Irrigation Project in Thiruvananthapuram spoke of the harm the project would cause to the Nilgiri tahr (ibex) on the Ponmudi Mountains. Such reports can even be counter-productive not only because it projected a flagship species but also because the argument was far fetched.

The Kallar Valley, and the river on which the dam of the Vamanapuram Project was to be built, is lying at an elevation of less than 300 metres whereas the ibex lived at an elevation of about 900 metres. There was little chance of the tahr being directly affected by the project. Moreover, ibex has almost ceased to be an endangered species on account of conservation measures undertaken in the past. The population at Ponmudi was not that critical. All that one could say was that some forests would be lost on the lower elevation and this would have some effect on their habitat at the top of the mountains.

Loss of forests and its distant effects, unfortunately, are not arguments that would be fully appreciated by many readers. However, in the case of the forests of Kallar Valley, there was a something more to say. The Valley was one of the few remaining forested low lying valleys in Kerala. The State has more than 30 valleys that lie at an elevation of less than 300 metres above the mean sea level. Almost all of them were forested over a century ago. But, people have cleared them for farming. The import would still be obvious only to a trained scientist unless the reporter adds a few scientific facts in plain language. Different types of plants grow at different elevations. Plants found at low elevation would not grow at higher elevations, say, the Ponmudi Mountains.

Relate the issue to people

The reporter has to add something more that would relate the issue to daily lives of people. One fact is that many of our medicinal plants grow at this elevation and many medicinal herbs are now found only in the forests. Well, our ancestors were conscious of these things when they colonized the valleys. So, they preserved some areas as sacred groves and gave a religious aura to it so that none would destroy them. Even in those groves, sacred trees like Koovalam, which has medicinal value, have become rare.

For the man on the street, the ayurvedic medicines would be important, but not necessarily for the policy maker. Here, economics may be an area they would understand better than environment. Kerala had invested over Rs. 1000 crores on major irrigation projects during the past forty years. The rate of return has not been even one

Interview (Films and Media)

Meeting a Filmmaker: Shekar Dattatri

(Excerpts from Sanctuary Asia
Source: www.sanctuaryasia.com)

Filmmaker, Naturalist, Conservationist

Born in Chennai, to a supportive middle-class family, Shekar's first tryst with nature began in his backyard. It was a tiny garden that housed a large neem tree, which attracted Rose-ringed Parakeets and a Tecoma, whose flowers lured sunbirds. Influenced by the writings of Gerald Durrell, he took to birdwatching and the study of nature at a very early age and today, he is recognized in India and overseas as a world-class wildlife and conservation filmmaker. He speaks here to Bittu Sahgal about filmmaking, the many awards he has won and saving wild nature.

You used to work with tribal communities. How do you view the widening chasm between wildlife conservationists and tribal welfare groups in India?

Frankly, with a lot of despair. The polarisation is needless. Some of the most enjoyable and illuminating moments in my life have been spent in the company of tribal people. Roaming with the Irulas of Chinglepet District during my teenage years, I learnt a great deal about the natural history of the scrublands around Chennai. I was also privileged to assist in setting up the Irula Snake Catchers' Cooperative, a long-standing, and perhaps unique example in India of the sustainable use of a natural resource. As a filmmaker, I have spent weeks with the Kadars, camping in the shola forests of south India. I am always awed by their knowledge of the natural world and I think it is a tremendous shame that enough isn't being done to document and harness this vanishing wisdom.

That is perhaps what the architects of the new Scheduled Tribes (Recognition of Forest Rights) Bill, 2005 are saying as well. They ask that tribal communities be given title to forest lands.

I think all humans are entitled to a place they can call home, and tribal communities shouldn't be an exception. They too have aspirations for a better life. But surely, we can find solutions that satisfy peoples' aspirations without sacrificing our remaining forests? I've seen too much to share the misty-eyed romanticism of many who think that all indigenous people live in 'harmony with nature'. Today, in India, I think only the Sentinelese, who inhabit North Sentinel Island in the Andamans, can be described as living in complete 'equilibrium' with their surroundings. That's because they inhabit a 'closed' ecosystem with no interference by or commerce with the outside world. They live by that strict law of nature - survival of the fittest.

And elsewhere in India?

Virtually everywhere else in India, indigenous people are caught in an unfortunate cusp that straddles two worlds with market forces ranging from giant pharmaceutical firms to dealers in the wildlife trade, exploiting their knowledge of the jungle. No longer are they judiciously using the resources of the forest for their own subsistence, but are being made to indiscriminately and unsustainably collect forest products to feed a bottomless national and international market. Something needs to be done urgently to set things right and populist slogans such as "give the forests to the people and they will look after them" are not the answer.

What would you say is the answer?

We need well-considered, site-specific solutions that will treat indigenous people with dignity, respect and fairness, without imperiling what little is left of our natural wealth. As stakeholders in India's well being, it is incumbent upon all of us to solve problems without exacerbating things. The quality of life of the children of India and their children is closely bound to our actions or inactions today. For India's sake, let us, first and foremost, put an end to this destructive polarisation between 'wildlife' and 'social' groups and acknowledge that the welfare of the environment and of all human beings is inextricably interlinked. Let us also acknowledge that indigenous forest dwellers have been given a raw deal so far. We should think of sensible and practical ways of mitigating their suffering without slaying the goose that lays the golden eggs.

How right you are. I am not surprised at all that your 'Wild India Project' won you the coveted Rolex Award for Enterprise in 2004! Let's shift focus. What do such awards mean to you?

My work, frankly, is my reward. But the recognition is tremendously useful. The awards support me to do more work. I'm always - and I mean always - scrounging for money to add to my equipment inventory and an infusion of cash is a wonderful tonic.

And what exactly is the 'Wild India Project'?

It's a goal I've set myself to produce a series of short films, including a children's film, over the next few years on specific wildlife and conservation issues. I believe that these films will be extremely useful to a wide cross section of people, from teachers and students to decision makers and politicians. It will hopefully help them understand the practical value of our natural heritage. The money from the Rolex Award is being invested in equipment and I'm seeking other support to make the films happen.

You are a wonderful combination of passion and rationality. How did this come to be?

I was incredibly lucky not only to have 'discovered' nature very early in life but also the works of great naturalists. By the time I was 18, I had read every wildlife book I could get my hands on - Jim Corbett and Jane Goodall, Gerald Durrell and George Schaller. One thing that I learnt, particularly from the biologists, was that to make sense of anything as complex as nature requires years of patient observation and field experience. It makes me cringe when I see people reaching conclusions or making momentous decisions affecting the environment after a cursory examination of a complex problem or the much loved 'flying visit' to a location.

And what led you on the journey from books to the wide world beyond?

A trip to the Madras Snake Park at the age of 13. I was mesmerised by snakes and enrolled as a volunteer. The Snake Park became a second home and the Irula tribal snake catchers who supplied snakes and other reptiles, as well as frogs and rats to the Park, became my gurus. My involvement with the Snake Park led to trips to real jungles, where I experienced the thrill of stalking all manner of creatures, great and small, with a still camera. The film bug came later, in the early '80s, soon after college where I studied Zoology. I met John and Louise Riber, friends of Rom Whitaker who had come to India to make a film called 'Snakebite'. Deputed to help them, I became fascinated with filmmaking itself. While working on this project another great opportunity presented itself. Sanctuary Films began production of their 'Project Tiger' series of films for Doordarshan. Rom Whitaker and I were both roped in for the Periyar episode, with a Bollywood cinematographer we were supposed to direct. Three days into the shoot, the cinematographer threw a tantrum - waking up at 5.00 a.m. and rushing off to film 'boring' animals and birds just wasn't his cup of tea. He went home. We took over the filming. There's been no looking back since.

Green Films

Importance of Water : Paani ka Mahatva

Hindi/04min 37sec/2003

Producer: Children at Gandhi Summer School, Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti

Subject focus: The film tries to dwell with the water crisis in Delhi, in equal distribution of water, increasing pollution in Yamuna and urges to save water.

Summary: The film tries to dwell with the water crisis in Delhi, in equal distribution of water. It tries to highlight that due to increasing pollution, all big rivers like the Yamuna are becoming drains having dirty and polluted water. While it urges to save water, it points out the unequal distribution of water in areas of the capital.

Right from scripr-writing, planning of the film to deciding on the locations to shoot, the children worked all these out themselves, they were also intricately associated during editing which was done by Mr. Maharishi and his team.

From Sea to Drop (Samudra Se Boond Tak...)

Hindi/7mins approx./2003

Producer: Priyanka S./Siddharth S./Paricher T

Subject focus: How water effects our daily lives and how we effect it

Summary: 'Samudra se boond tak' is an insight into how water effects our daily lives and how we effect it. A journey of life with one of the most valued elements on earth, without which the other elements seize to exist and so do we. This is an account of how much water is a part of our lives yet how much water is apart from our lives. Right from a drop dripping out of a rusted tap, to a rainstorm when people start looking for shelter this is a symbolically put-together musical reminder of this. Through pictures, music and a few words the aim is to depict the reality and preciousness of water in it's different forms.

Kahani Peepal Wali Gali Ki

Hindi/ 00min 50sec/2002

Producer: Zee News, Zee Telefims Ltd.

Subject Focus: Rapid Urbanisation Leading to loss of trees in cities

Summary: Pipal Waali Gali
'It' is a postal address.
'It' is a landmark.
'It' is no more.

Yes, we are talking about the protagonist of the film---The pipal tree. It has ceased to exist. The film is based on a true story. This "gali" is no different from any other alley or small-town neighbourhood. If you visit the historical city of Jaipur, you will find the "Pipal waali gali" in one of the numerous meandering lanes. What struck the director on his maiden visit to the now defunct postal address was the carelessness with which modernisation tore out the roots of environment. The film covers a period of 50 years and how the pipal tree has been slowly but surely mowed down to make way for modern conveniences. It depicts how mercilessly the environment has been butchered in the name of progress.

Long live the pipal tree.
Sadly, the "gali" outlived the tree.

TV Programme - Born Wild (Elephants)

English/22 mins/2003/dvc pro

Director: **Swati Thyagrajan**

Producer: **New Delhi Television (NDTV)**

Summary: **A series that takes a look at India's wildlife and wild spaces. While we might worship the elephant headed god, we certainly do not treat his counterparts in the wild with any respect. The biggest people animal conflict today in the country is the man - Elephant conflict. Hundreds of people die every year, acres of crops are destroyed, property damaged and several elephants death as well. A schedule! Animal, it is certainly is a god in distress.**

CMS ENVIS GREEN MEDIA E-NEWSLETTER

Daily e-newsletter Green Media, an electronic documentation of news and features, which appear in English News dailies in India. Green Media satisfies information requirements of environmentalists, wild lifers, conservation activists, researchers, media professionals, filmmakers, political activists, NGOs/ scientific organizations, mass communication institutes, lobbyists and advocacy groups in an effective and functional manner. The newsletter reaches to more than 3000 email boxes every day.

This e-newsletter also facilitates easy organization, maintenance of archival material electronically and quick retrieval of information. Presently, over twenty national dailies in India are documented in Green Media - the largest ever-daily compilation on environment and wildlife. With the click of the mouse, you gain access to all news and features and other updates on environmental issues including environmental management, air pollution, water pollution, noise pollution, ecology, wild life, nature and natural resources conservation, health toxicology, solid and hazardous waste, energy, policy matters etc. These topics are also available in the archives of CMS ENVIS. CMS has established this site to provide access to back files on news and features related to environment, wildlife and conservation issues. For Subscription email to:

Web Master at webmaster@cmsindia.org

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