

And Taj Mahal was saved...!

Pic by Nandesh Kambl

NT NETWORK

The Man Who Saved the Taj Mahal', a 56-minute documentary by the Canada-based filmmaker, Jay Bajaj about one-man crusade undertaken by Mr M C Mehta, a lawyer and an eco-activist to save the Taj Mahal from environmental degradation, has come alive on the screen at the Short Film Centre, during the ongoing 41st International Film Festival of India.

Mr Bajaj, addressing the media about his work, which took countless permissions from the government authorities during its filming, and nearly five-year period for completion, said that the Taj Mahal is only one of the many precious heritage monuments around the globe facing threat.

"Actually I wanted to do a six-part series on world heritage monuments whose very existence is threatened by various kinds of pollutions," the filmmaker said, pointing out that Pauline Chapel in Vatican, the Leaning Tower of Pisa in Italy, statue of Jesus Christ in Brazil and statues in ancient Egypt having badly damaged or missing noses are some of such monuments, whose problems he wanted to highlight in his documentary series. "However, looking at the time taken to complete the documentary on Taj Mahal, I feel that at least quarter-of-a-century would be needed to complete this six-part series," he said.

Coming back to 'The Man Who Saved the Taj Mahal', Mr Bajaj said that it was the public interest litigation of Mr Mehta, which prompted the Supreme Court to give direction as regards moving away polluting industries and traffic, in and around the 17th century heritage site located in Agra. "After the Taj litigation, Mr Mehta's subsequent PILs dealt with dumping of effluents in the Ganga and banning public transport in Delhi from using gasoline and diesel fuel," he recalled.

The documentary maker further stated that when he needed to speak with the managing director of Mathura Refinery, which was in the news for allegedly causing the white marble of the Taj Mahal to turn yellow and located about 50 kms away from the Taj Mahal, he was not given the opportunity to do so. "I also faced problems as regards Canadian support for this documentary because the people back there felt that this was a story about India and not Canada," the Canada-based filmmaker stated.



Mr Jay Bajaj with Elvis Rumion, the music composer of the documentary

"And now, I am struggling to trade the documentary, with little success to sell it to channels like National Geographic, Star Television, Zee Television and so on," Mr Bajaj said, mentioning that presently, he is trying to sell it to regional channels in Canada and the national channel in India. "This documentary is a salute to a man who saved one of the pristine heritage monuments in India from marble cancer and acid rain," he said on a parting note.