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It takes a solar lantern to change destinies

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Mumbai: In his linen kurta and bandhani turban, 28-year-old Puranmal stood out among the dark suits and ties at the Creative Lantern Awards. Organised by the India chapter of the International Advertising Association (IAA), the ceremony toasted a unique environmental initiative that is lighting up the lives of men and women like Puranmal who live far beyond the bright arc of big cities.

For Puranmal, a resident of Gherta (five hours from Jaipur), life came to a standstill after sunset. Like 400 million other Indians, the 900 villagers here had no electricity. "Many of the villagers suffered from eye infections because of the carbon dioxide in the fumes from kerosene lamps," said the young Puranmal in broken English. Things began to change, and how, when Gherta was adopted by Lintas Media under the mentorship of the Lighting Up A Billion Lives (LABL) campaign spearheaded by Nobel Peace Prize winner Rajendra Pachauri's The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI).

Puranmal's roof is now lined with solar panels and his income has doubled. During the day, he charges 50 solar lanterns and rents them out at a nominal fee by night. "I normally charge Rs 2 for three hours but to those who can't afford it, I give it for Re 1," said

the father of two who has taken it upon himself to spread the message of solar power in his district.

For this project to take off, lantern donors are needed. In order to help TERI raise funds for LABL, the Indian chapter of IAA asked the advertising fraternity to come up with creative ad campaigns (print, electronic and other media) that would reach out to people all over the country. "The idea was to motivate individuals to donate Rs 3,600 (the cost of a lantern) and corporates

entry head Naina Lal Kidwai, Ogilvy & Mather chairman Piyush Pandey, author Shobhaa De, director and actor Farhan Akhtar, IAA (India chapter) president Raj Nayak, Guha, and an editor from this paper. The award went to Ashish Mishra and Pradeep S of Water (a Mudra group agency). The campaign will run extensively in the national media with the aim of getting people to contribute to LABL.

Birla said the real winner was clearly the solar lamp itself. "I'm completely blown away by the concept, it represents the power of technology combined with that of commitment," he said. Paranjpe said the winning entry was chosen because it touched a chord. "It was a call to action, an ad like this needed to go beyond reason," he said. Actor Sushmita Sen, who was the guest of honour, was so moved that she signed two cheques on behalf of her daughter and herself.

Singer Raageshwari's song, dedicated to the Sun God to highlight the urgency of global warming, will be released on the day the campaign is launched.

While sounding a warning that environmental degradation would cost Indian 10% of its economy, Pachauri emphasised the need for inclusive development. "A campaign like LABL will cause a change in values, a change that will allow the individuals to take destiny in their own hands," he said.



GUIDING LIGHT: R Pachauri felicitates Puranmal from Gherta in Rajasthan at the Creative Lantern Awards on Friday

to donate Rs 3,00,000 (the cost of empowering a village)," said Pradeep Guha, IAA Area Director (Asia Pacific).

A jury comprising some of the leading lights of Indian advertising shortlisted five print and TV campaign ideas from among 113 entries. On Friday evening, the winner was chosen by a jury chaired by Pachauri and comprising Kumar Mangalam Birla, Hindustan Unilever CEO & MD Nitin Paranjpe, HSBC's cou-