



He is Bollywood's biggest star, and he has vigorously taken up the cause of climate change which, he is convinced, "threatens our world". Amitabh Bachchan — veteran of more than 140 films and winner of fifteen major awards — is cutting his own carbon footprint and aims to persuade hundreds of millions of fans to do the same. And he has enlisted fellow stars in the campaign, including his own son and daughter-in-law who join him in making up the 'first family' of Indian cinema.

The 'Big B', as aficionados call him, says global warming is "a deeply grave phenomenon that can no longer be ignored" and has set out to bring it "to the forefront of people's minds", particularly in India. And he is determined make Bollywood "a powerful vehicle by which to rally public consciousness."

Last year, at his initiative, the Indian cinema's 'Oscars' — the International Indian Film Academy (IIFA) Awards — took on a green theme. Some 450 million people around the world watched as he and other stars took the stage to stress the need for action.

They were accompanied by a specially commissioned film starring the then British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, as well as Bachchan and fellow Bollywood legend Shekhar Kapoor — and Hollywood actresses Heather Graham and Sienna Miller. The film was put together by Global Cool, a charity which aims to persuade a billion people worldwide to reduce their carbon dioxide emissions by an average of a tonne a year for the next ten years.

The ceremony — held in England, the country with the second largest Bollywood audience — also launched the "IIFA Bond for Global Cool" through which fans pledge to save a tonne of CO₂. And the IIFA has drawn

up plans to make all its future events carbon neutral, embracing a whole range of environmental standards.

Bachchan, a science graduate himself, says: "We aim to carry this message to a constituency of people who may otherwise be unaware of the serious impact of global warming. The smallest and simplest of changes will contribute to deferring the climate tipping point." Asked for examples, he replied: "Switch off the lights when not using them, don't charge your mobile for too long, and never leave the television on standby".

He has made some changes himself, installing energy-efficient light bulbs in his homes, and switching his flat in London over to electricity from renewable sources. He has cut down his travel and taken to shopping locally rather than driving to supermarkets. And he and his fellow Bollywood stars travelled up to the IIFA ceremony, in the Yorkshire town of Harrogate, by public train. His next initiative is to travel to 18 countries on all six continents with other Bollywood superstars — including son Abhishek and new daughter in law, the former Aishwarya Rai. Dubbed "The Unforgettable Tour" it will combine performances with raising awareness about climate change.

"It is about India and its high profile and hugely popular film industry focussing attention on climate change", he says. "India is becoming very prominent as far as global warming is concerned. It is a vastly and rapidly developing economy."

He cites the authoritative verdict that the world has only got eight years to start taking radical action, but adds "I believe that we can all make a difference by doing our bit"

Amitabh Bachchan