

Fear delivers but...



MUHAMMAD NURUL HUDA

citizens were held in nerve-shattering fear. The establishment assumed a tough posture come what may and used the big stick very generously while the opposition was dead set on settling everything on the street by means that struck primal fear.

Observers of the socio-political scene are of the considered view that, in end 2006 the governments that handed over and assumed powers apparently by the book actually did not stand strongly on

the entire leadership plank of a major political party?

For those used to the culture of constitutional politics the macabre tactic of physically eliminating the adversary came as a rude shock but at the end of the day there was no denying that a fear psychosis did set in. The crippled minds at the apex that dabbled in crude politics saw the virtues of the fear syndrome. The establishment of the day enjoyed the deadly game.

There were other transactions

the unbearable characters masquerading as all powerful at the high offices. Such was the anaesthetising power of fear.

Fear brought relief and response, relief for the harried citizens and response from the hitherto insensitive power-wielders. Accountability, one cornerstone of good governance was no longer confined to the realms of abstract ideas contained in the platitudes of symposiums and workshops but gathered real

well to reflect that this has been possible due to the fear of arrest and imprisonment and that such earning is significant in our revenue deficit economy. A good start has been made.

The fear factor has been profitably utilised by many political leaders who in their garb of democratic exterior are deplorable autocrats in behaviour and actions. The irony is that while we have a constitution reflecting the hopes and aspirations of the people

condition.

Instead of the fear factor goading us into socially and legally desirable action, we need to show voluntary concern for

public good and public welfare. Care for public property should be as intense as it is for our own property. Public interest should require the promotion of law and order and not its denigration and destruction.

W

ould be able to make

increased investment in education, nutrition and public health because gross national happiness should be our priority. Private initiative should counteract the deficiencies of the government.

Bangladesh seems to be reaching out to the future, bracing for change. The bitter truth is that

majority of our people are surviving and contributing in spite of the state. The dissatisfied and the angry are yearning for change.

They need social organisation and morally upright leadership. They will not be encumbered by fear as

they have been successfully fighting the vagaries of nature and man-made bottlenecks. What is

needed is the exercise of state power with humility. We can hope

for the best.

Muhammad Nurul Huda is a columnist contributor to The Daily Star.

WORLD PALLIATIVE CARE DAY
Providing comfort to sufferer

NEZAMUDDIN AHMED

has been accorded a specialist status in UK and most of the prestigious medical institutes at present have got a teaching and training faculty for the subject.

Many institutionalised palliative care programmes in the world effectively demonstrate the value of symptom control for patients with advanced diseases. Till 2005, more than 8000 palliative care services have been offering their service worldwide, admittedly more in the developed world, but with an encouragingly increasing number in the developing world also.

In Calicut, Kerala, Institute of Palliative Medicine is a WHO recognised centre for palliative medicine. This institute is more known for proposing and demonstrating the concept of community based palliative medicine for the developing part of the world. Neighbourhood Network of Palliative Care (NNPC) is a proposed model where the whole community gets involved in providing palliative care for the terminally ill members of the society.

In reality, the prevailing health care approach of Bangladesh is cure oriented in accordance with the main global trend. As a result, patients having been diagnosed as suffering from an incurable disease do not get knowledge based appropriate attention from health care service providers. Concept of palliative medicine is not even known amongst the greater part of medical community.

But, the potential requirement of such care must be very large. Though the exact figure is not known, the educated guess is around four million cancer patients in the country. According to the only cancer institute of the country and also by the leading cancer specialists, about eighty percent of the cancer patients present themselves to the hospitals much later when the disease is far advanced.

Quite often this is due to the ignorance and costs of seeing a doctor. Very inadequate screening services, limited access to diagnostic facilities, few cancer specialists and existing socio-economic condition ultimately suggests that more and more patients will be requiring end of life care.

In modern world enormous knowledge has been accumulated in pain control and other symptom relief. There exists a scientifically valid and simple method for pain control and management of other distressing issues that costs very little and that is maintainable at community level. What is needed is the political will to act, educate and train the health profession, and make the necessary drugs affordable easily available along with a consumer demand.

The problems to be faced in implementing palliative care services are unique to a particular country. It is not only medical, but also socio-economic, cultural and ethical. Each society must determine the best way to care for its dying persons in accordance with its own culture and resources.

As health care systems evolve here, palliative medicine and care presents an opportunity for policy makers, clinicians, medical teachers and community organisations to immediately provide cost-effective care that will have a significant effect on the lives of patients and families living with advanced illness, while we all try to improve our country's capacity for prevention, early detection and treatment of those diseases.

It is high time that Bangladesh also implants a seed of organised palliative care service and education in the mainstream health care service.

People of Bangladesh do need humanistic compassionate care for the incurable cases.

Nezamuddin Ahmed is Associate Professor and Project Coordinator, Palliative Care Service, BSMU.

Is eco-tourism a green-wash?

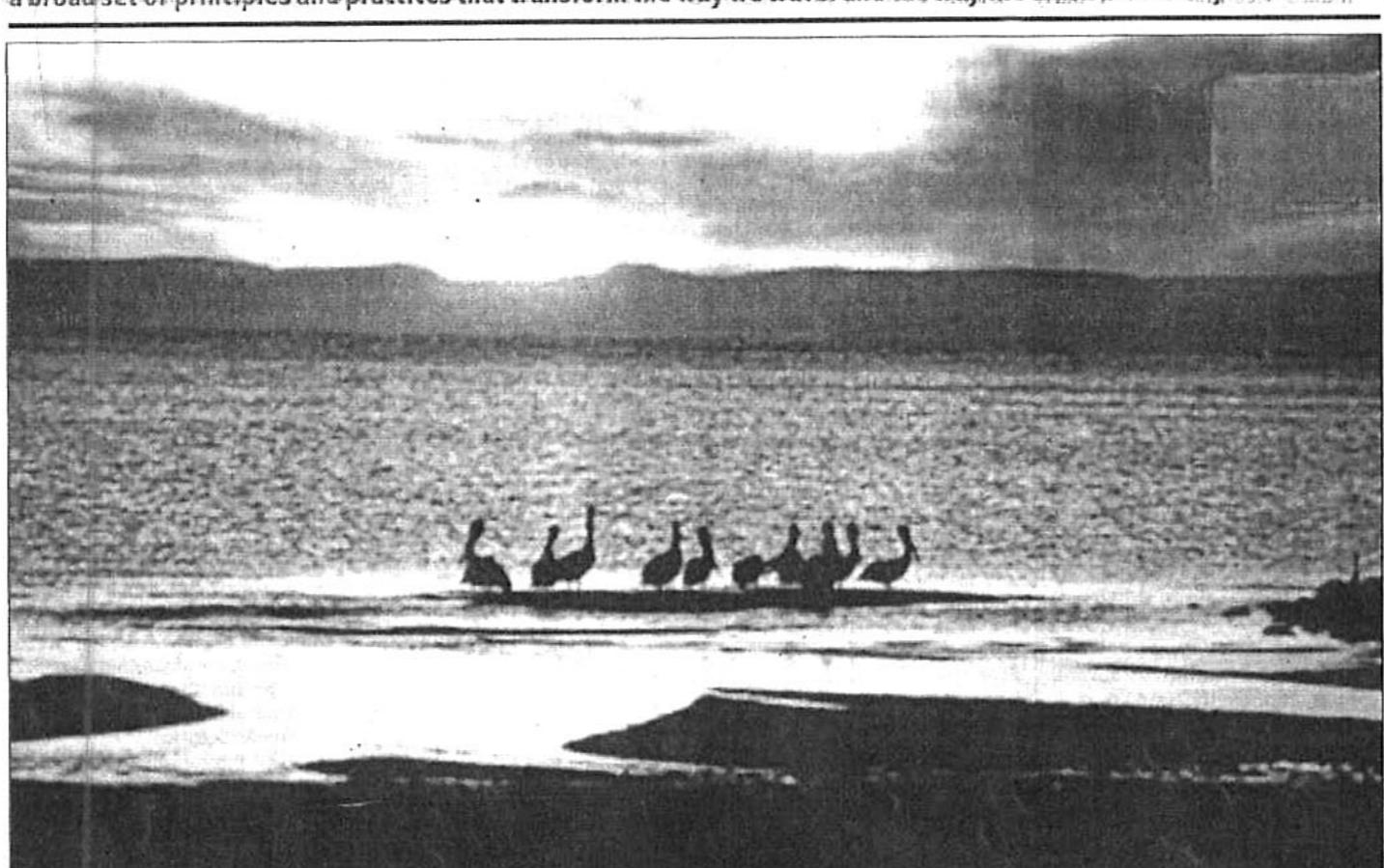
MOHAMMAD SHAHIDUL ISLAM

HE travel industry, though travel journalists have no recognised union to publicise their interests and fight on their behalf, is defended and supported by a variety of organisations, including ASTA (American Society of Travel Agents), WTO (World Tourism Organisation) and WTTC (World Travel and Tourism Council). Noticeably, the travel industry intends to protect the world's natural and cultural resources, which are at the heart of its business activities. But it has other concerns as well, some of which run counter to the tenets of sound ecotourism. These travel associations sponsor, for instance, self regulation, expanded tourism markets and a lowering of trade barriers. Almost for two decades, industry associations responded to the development of environmental concerns and the rise of ecotourism by instituting certain transformations that, when inspected directly, often amount to promoting minor, cost saving environmental reforms -- ecotourism rather than critically fighting the codes and practices of ecotourism.

ASTA's Commandments

- Respect the frailty of the earth. Realise that unless all are willing to help in its preservation, unique and beautiful destinations may not be here for future generations to enjoy.
- Leave only footprints. Take only photographs. No graffiti! No litter! Do not take away souvenirs from historical sites and natural areas.
- To make your travels more meaningful, educate yourself about the geography, customs, manners and cultures of the region you visit. Take time to listen to the people. Encourage local conservation efforts.
- Respect the privacy and dignity of others. Inquire before photographing people.
- Do not buy products made from endangered plants or animals, such as ivory, tortoise shell, animal skins, and feathers. Read Know Before You Go, the U. S. Customs list of products which cannot be imported.
- Always follow designated trails. Do not disturb animals, plants or their natural habitats.
- Learn about and support conservation-oriented programmes and organisations working to preserve the environment.
- Whenever possible, walk or use environmentally-sound methods of transportation. Encourage drivers of public vehicles to stop engines when parked.
- Patronise those (hotels, airlines, resorts, cruise lines, tour operators and suppliers) who advance energy and environmental conservation; water and air quality; recycling; safe management of waste and toxic materials; noise abatement; community involvement; and which provide experienced, well-trained staff dedicated to strong principles of conservation.

As a concept, as a set of principles and practices, ecotourism is still in its infancy. In identifying what is ecotourism enlightenment and determining where genuine ecotourism is being practiced today, we need also to discover ways in which authentic ecotourism can move from being simply a niche market in the category of nature tourism to becoming a broad set of principles and practices that transform the way we travel and the way the tourism industry functions.



- Encourage organisations to subscribe to environmental guidelines. ASTA urges organisations to adopt their own environmental codes to cover special sites and ecosystems.

Tourism is a passport of peace. This is an innate right of people. Tourism matters the peace and brotherhood round the globe. It draws many responsibilities in the performances of travelers. ASTA has declared crusade for peaceful tourism and environmentally responsible travel.

ASTA vs WTTC

These commandments are among a growing number of voluntary codes of conduct written by various organisations. Widely distributed to travel agents and the travelling public, the "Commandments" are printed on green paper and designed to slip into an airline ticket folder. Directed at sensitising travelers, not the travel agents who belong to ASTA they include such platitudes as stated above.

Although they urge travelers to "Patronise those...dedicated to strong principles of conservation," they do not specifically encourage travelers to patronise locally owned or community-based ecotourism ventures. Without further education of both travel agents and the public, ASTA's "Commandments" are not good ecotourism.

Codes such as this have no teeth but allow an organisation to claim great sensitivity and responsibility. Few industry efforts demonstrate

this more clearly than the WTTC's Green Globe logo programme, endorsed by the Earth Council, which was set up to oversee implementation of the 1992 Earth Summit's Agenda 21:

- Planning and management of land resources
- Combating deforestation
- Combating desertification and drought
- Sustainable mountain development
- Sustainable agriculture and rural development
- Conservation of biological diversity

The WTTC's president, Geoffrey Lipman, unveiled the Green Globe programme at a 1994 Montreal conference titled "Building a Sustainable World through Tourism". Lipman told the delegates, "The Green Globe symbol means that a company is committed to environmental improvement". The WTTC did not verify Greenman Travel's authenticity or ask why it wanted to join Green Globe. Thus, Green Globe is, in essence, little more than a marketing ploy.

Green Debate

Much of what is marketed as ecotourism is simply conventional mass tourism wrapped in a thin veneer of green. Ecotourism is propelled by travel agents, tour operators, airlines and cruise lines, large hotels and resort chains, and international tourism organisations, which promote quick, superficially "green" visits within conventional packages. A lot of travel companies used it to call attention to anything they were selling.

It can be described as a diagnostic and self fitness programme, not an accreditation programme. It offers business benefits; it offers cost saving and commercial positioning. This seems as if it were putting a green glove on Adam Smith's hidden hand of the market place". Under this scheme, for as little as \$200, travel and tourism companies can purchase the right to use the Green Globe logo in all their publicity and thereby give the impression that they are "going green".

In return, the company pledges

to work toward more environmentally sound corporate practices as outlined in the United Nations' Agenda 21. To test Lipman's description, Worldwide Television News (WTN) in London set up a phony business called "Greenman Travel" and sent an application and \$200 to Green Globe. In return, Greenman Travel received a certificate stating, "In recognition of commitment to environmental improvement". The WTTC did not verify Greenman Travel's authenticity or ask why it wanted to join Green Globe. Thus, Green Globe is, in essence, little more than a marketing ploy.

This more clearly than the WTTC's Green Globe logo programme, endorsed by the Earth Council, which was set up to oversee implementation of the 1992 Earth Summit's Agenda 21:

- Planning and management of land resources
- Combating deforestation
- Combating desertification and drought
- Sustainable mountain development
- Sustainable agriculture and rural development
- Conservation of biological diversity

The WTTC did not verify Greenman Travel's authenticity or ask why it wanted to join Green Globe. Thus, Green Globe is, in essence, little more than a marketing ploy.

Green Debate

Much of what is marketed as ecotourism is simply conventional mass tourism wrapped in a thin veneer of green. Ecotourism is propelled by travel agents, tour operators, airlines and cruise lines, large hotels and resort chains, and international tourism organisations, which promote quick, superficially "green" visits within conventional packages. A lot of travel companies used it to call attention to anything they were selling.

It can be described as a diagnostic and self fitness programme, not an accreditation programme. It offers business benefits; it offers cost saving and commercial positioning. This seems as if it were putting a green glove on Adam Smith's hidden hand of the market place". Under this scheme, for as little as \$200, travel and tourism companies can purchase the right to use the Green Globe logo in all their publicity and thereby give the impression that they are "going green".

In return, the company pledges

village and some one thousand real imported animals. This largest of Disney's theme parks is designed to let the American public "go on safari" without leaving the shores of the United States. Although it has won praise from zoo-industry officials, Animal Kingdom was opened in mid 1988 amidst protests from animal rights groups and an investigation by the US Department of Agriculture into the deaths of some dozen animals, including representatives of endangered species. Two West African Crowned Cranes were run over by tour vehicles.

These trends reflect the watering down of the true meaning of ecotourism -- a movement from real ecotourism toward ecotourism awareness. The ultimate goal of ecotourism should be to infuse the entire travel industry with the principles and practices of ecotourism and thereby transform tourism into an environmentally and culturally sensitive activity that contributes to sustainable growth in developing countries. Clearly there is some movement in that direction on the part of many travelers and the mass market. But the movement towards ecotourism, towards industry "green hoarding" through advertising images and cosmetic changes stronger.

Once some of the world's oldest and most prized nature destinations, including the Galapagos Islands, Nepal and even Monteverde were visited by only the most physically rugged and intellectually curious. Now, however, with improved air and ground transportation, better accommodations and extensive publicity, these destinations are being marketed to a mass audience. When poorly planned, unregulated and over hyped, ecotourism, like mass tourism or even traditional nature tourism, can bring only marginal financial benefits but serious environmental and social consequences. Nowadays, some visitors reach mountain summits via what is marketed as "ecotourism of the future" -- and their only step upward is into a helicopter. "Heli-copter treks" fly visitors to high mountain peaks, where they get out, stretch their legs, take photographs and then fly back. Such tours clearly do little to educate the traveler and do nothing for conservation or local economic development.

Conclusion

The travel industry's efforts to water down ecotourism, to sell ecotourism in exchange for short-term profits, have led some travel experts to drop the word ecotourism and dismiss the concept as simply afad. As world famous Eco Photographer and expert Bob Harvey puts it, "the word ecotourism became a buzzword in the early 1990's, but so many people used it in so many different ways that it has become virtually meaningless". This is, however, a classic case of throwing out the baby with the bathwater. As a concept, as a set of principles and practices, ecotourism is still in its infancy. In identifying what is ecotourism, we need also to discover ways in which authentic ecotourism can move from being simply a niche market in the category of nature tourism to becoming a broad set of principles and practices that transform the way we travel and the way the tourism industry functions.

A substantial segment of the traveling public wants this type of tourism. In recent years, there has been a gradual trend for many tourists to be less intellectually curious, socially responsible, environmentally concerned and politically aware than in the past. Increasing numbers of older, wealthier and "softer" travellers have begun opting for comfort over conservation. Ecotourism travellers are, as David Western puts it "entertained by nature, but not unduly concerned with its preservation". Biologist guides on the Galapagos Islands say that tourists these days, though far greater in number, are overall less interested in the details of the islands' unique ecosystem than they were in the past and want simply a quick historical and ecological overview of the islands. Several naturalist guides are contemplating quitting because they no longer get much professional satisfaction.

Mohammad Shahidul Islam, a travel writer, is a Faculty member of NHTT Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation.