

Towards people-centred forestry

In sum, there have lately been a few encouraging attempts towards policy and institutional reforms in the forestry sector. The current forest policy is a good example in this process of reversal, which attempts to guide the forestry regime to move from the conventional custodial-policing orientation to a more people-centred mode and philosophy of working. These positive trends, despite many limitations, seem to have sown the seeds of a fundamental reversal in favour of developing a public-focused, participatory forestry regime in Bangladesh.

NAZ AHMED KHAN

THE salience and urgency of moving away from the custodial-policing mode of forest management regime to more participatory, people-centred forestry practices are now unequivocally established, both amongst the academia and the forestry practitioners in Bangladesh.

The term "participatory forestry" is used rather flexibly in the context of Bangladesh as an umbrella concept for such public, private and community initiatives which aim at ensuring active participation by the rural people in the planning, implementation and benefit sharing of tree growing schemes.

Participatory forestry is viewed within the broader framework of rural development nowadays, and it has become the mainstay of Bangladesh forestry.

Notwithstanding the importance of participatory forestry, however, it has been consistently argued and emphasised that the national forest policies and institutions have historically been at odds with, and unresponsive of, community-based people-centred approaches to forest management.

The major institutional and associated attitudinal shortcomings and limitations of the public forestry organisations have also been well identified, and these maladies include: the elitist and custodian-like values and paramilitary service structures; a bureaucratic and revenue orientation to forest management; undermining of traditional rights, indigenous knowledge and resource use practices; widespread isolation from local communities; and corruption and connivance with local external commercial operators.

Historically, the above characteristic features and limitations have their roots in the colonial rule with predominant commercial considerations, and these maladies and the historical antagonism between local communities and governments have been at odds with the values and goals of participatory forestry.

Much to the relief of all those who wish to see a more participatory and community focused forest management, however, a clear positive trend in reforming the forest policy and institutional framework has become noticeable since the early 1990s.

This trend and the philosophy are reflected in a number of national documents. The Forestry Master Plan (FMP), which provides the operational basis for the functioning of the public forestry organisations, especially the Forest Department (under the purview of the Ministry of

Environment and Forests), clearly accommodates the concerns of participatory forestry.

It notes that homestead forests are the most important source of wood, bamboo and other non-wood forest products, and points out that despite their importance, the homestead forests do not get the attention deserved in terms of research and extension support, credit facilities, and utilisation and marketing facilities.

In the same vein, the current National Forest Policy 1994 (announced on May 31, 1995, vide PBM/Pori-1/FSM/Kari-34(part)/109, Ministry of Environment and Forests, Planning Section 1) seemingly marks some degree of departure from the earlier policies.

The policy views forestry within the broader framework of sustainable development, integrated rural development and poverty alleviation. It seeks participation of local people, and pledges full governmental support and encouragement for all forms of public and private afforestation programs.

It also advocates for women's participation in homestead and farm forestry, and commits itself to establishing a new Department of Social Forestry and strengthening the Forest Department in

order to respond to the demands of participatory forestry programs.

Besides the above policy reforms, there have been a number of attempts to reform and improve the institutional and legislative structures with a view to enabling and orienting the governmental forestry administration in general and the Forest Department in particular towards meeting the need for a more people-focused forest management.

Some of the major reform measures that have an immediate relevance to HF include the following:

- Enactment of the Forest Amendment Act 2000, which specifically established SF as a function of the Forest Department in accordance with the National Forest Policy 1994.
- Based on stakeholder consultations, drafting of the Social Forestry Rules in line with the basic spirit of the current forestry policy and act, elaborating such functional issues as the role of NGOs, and modes and mechanisms of public participation.
- Creation of a separate social forestry wing in the Forest Department.
- Additional staffing for the

Forest Department, especially to cater to the need of community extension and outreach (this includes creation of 1443 new positions in the "revenue head (budget)," and recruitment of new batches of assistant conservator of forests through BCS examination).

• Reorganisation and ministerial approval of the institutional structure (organogram) of the Forest Department, leading to a total of 8681 staff.

• Streamlining of promotion at the top level, with emphasis on social forestry positions: Four conservators of forests have been promoted to deputy chief conservators of forests with corresponding chain effect at the immediate lower levels of the hierarchy.

• Besides the mainstream forestry regulations and rules, some other policies and legislation have been developed, which, too, provide for the expansion of community-based afforestation, such as the new Agricultural Extension Policy.

In sum, there have lately been a few encouraging attempts towards policy and institutional reforms in the forestry sector. The current forest policy is a good example in this process of reversal, which attempts to guide the



Our major life source.

forestry regime to move from the conventional custodial-policing orientation to a more people-centred mode and philosophy of working.

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The above stocktaking of the recent trends in the forestry sector alludes to the fact that we still

have, indeed, a very long way to go, and there is hardly any room for feeling complacent.

The importance and potential of participatory forestry is now well established, and the process for creating a supportive research policy and institutional environment for nurturing people-centred forestry practices must go on.

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Resurgence of malaria

It is largely believed that malaria control programs will succeed in the context of third world countries like Bangladesh through community participation, in the absence of trained personnel and adequate financial resources. Let us hope that the concerned authorities will give necessary consideration to this aspect while continuing their various activities in this regard, including prevention and control.

NURUL HUDA

THE resurgence of malaria in some Asian and African countries has become a matter of concern for governments and doctors, as the disease and the mosquitoes that carry it are increasingly developing resistance to the traditional methods of control.

Reports from Brazil and South-East Asia, in particular, show that insecticides like DDT no longer work, and some of the bacteria which mosquitoes inject into the patients' blood have become immune to drugs like chloroquine. So the number of deaths and debilitations caused by malaria has been on the rise in some third world countries.

Many countries have stepped up their anti-malaria campaigns, some of which had stopped in the 1960s. The remarkable success of DDT (when first used) against malaria bearing (female anopheles) mosquitoes gave the authorities the false hope that the disease could be eradicated. But both the insects and the bacteria have a surprising ability to develop resistance against drugs and insecticides.

That is why more and more attention is today being given to the possibility of tackling malaria by preventing the breeding of mosquitoes and adopting other mechanisms to protect the people from mosquito attacks.

In some developing countries, both adults and children are given training on how to reduce breeding sites, and to monitor and also identify mosquitoes in their areas.

Meanwhile, the first World Malaria Day on April 25 was observed in our country as elsewhere across the globe to create awareness among the people about the preventable disease which claims at least 500 lives

and affects more than 60,000 people in Bangladesh annually. Malaria claims at least one million lives annually all over the world.

The day was observed through discussions, rallies and dramas to create awareness among the people about the disease, and about measures for prevention and early detection.

The outbreak of malaria in our country is the highest in 70 upazilas of 13 districts with a population of about 10.9 million. Most malaria affected people are in the districts of Rangamati, Bandarban, Khagrachari, Cox's Bazar, Chittagong, Netrokona, Mymensingh, Habiganj, Moulvibazar, Sylhet, Sunamganj, Sherpur and Kurigram.

According to Shaheen Akhter, a consultant under Global Fund for HIV/AIDS/TB and Malaria (GFATB), the government has started a program that aims at reducing malaria by 50% by the year 2012. Five lakh long-lasting insecticide treatable mosquito nets were distributed among the ultra poor people in malaria prone districts last year. The number will be increased to seven lakh, she said.

It is alleged that some of these nets have been found in the houses of comparatively privileged people. According to Shaheen Akhter the allegations are not without basis. Steps are being taken so that the nets reach the target groups for whom they are meant, she said.

According to Dr. A Raqib, Deputy Program Manager, Malaria Control Program under GFATM, Bangladesh, as a part of five-year program, has received \$40 million, which is being channelled through government agencies and NGOs like Brac.

According to him, the government and the NGOs have been

working to promote quality diagnosis and effective treatment to at least 80% of the malaria cases. The government agencies and NGOs are engaged in promoting use of long-lasting insecticide treatable mosquito nets and creating awareness among the people as preventive measures. Under GFATM, steps are being taken for strengthening program management capacity, and coordination and partnership in malaria control, he said.



A female anopheles and its prey.

Rapid diagnostic test is gradually being made available in rural areas in the malaria prone districts, where one field health worker has been assigned to look after 5000-7000 people. According to Shaheen Akhter, under the GFATM, some NGOs have been tasked with setting up microscopic laboratories (diagnostic centers) in remote areas for quick detection through proper diagnosis so that malaria patients can get timely treatment.

A couple of decades ago a

Chinese doctor named Dr. Li invented a new cure, which does not have any side effects, for this deadly disease. Dr. Li Guqiao was the son of a traditional doctor, and deputy president of Canton College of Traditional Chinese medicine. He and his group reportedly discovered Ginghamosu's (active principle of the green herb) potential for preventing malarial infection.

The process of synthesising Ginghamosu has proved prohibitively expensive, but a cheaper soluble derivative of the natural extract is reportedly being developed. But it is not known whether the drug, already in use in China, has got necessary approval for marketing.

It is largely believed that

Attention must be paid

We are the ones who wind up dealing with health care for our children and elder care for our parents. We are the ones fighting for sexual-harassment safeguards and workplace standards. Those are not issues on which John McCain has been passionate, and gender equity is not something with which he's ever been associated. This is an opportunity for you, not just an obligation.

ANNA QUINDLEN

CONGRATS, Senator Obama, from one of those middle-aged, white women, who voted for Hillary Clinton in the primaries. Everyone is suggesting you'd better pay close attention to us, especially since we're used to being chronically overlooked, and we're more than a little steamed about that fact. I agree completely, although not for the reasons you're hearing elsewhere.

You've run some race. The coalition of young voters and black Americans has been powerful and inspirational. The turnout among Democrats has put paid to the notion that no one cares about politics. And the estrogen alert that now says female Clinton supporters are going over in mass to John McCain out of pique, spite or rage is way overblown.

The idea that we will illustrate our disappointment by voting Republican is just another insulting suggestion that we're all emotional nut bars. Ever since the GOP sold out to the right wing, which sees women as a service industry for men, it has been no friend to us.

This is the party that brought us Clarence Thomas even after Anita Hill testified; tried to neuter the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission; held up approval of over-the-counter emergency contraception, and even put a guy on a commission for reproductive health who believes prayer is the way to deal with PMS. (Please, God, deliver him from the reach of my strong right hook.)

Senator McCain himself opposes legal abortion and acknowledging the role of women in combat; progressive women's groups have long tagged him as weak on workplace bias and equal-pay guarantees. His likely Supreme Court appointees would

mirror all that.

It would be silly for us to blame you for the cable blah-blahers who were so negative about Senator Clinton. If she'd invented fire, they would have accused her of pyromania. You, by contrast, have been gracious in acknowledging her contributions as she bowed out. But you did have your moments. Along with your giving up cigarettes, may I suggest that you never again refer to a grown female reporter as "sweetie"?

After all, you know what it's like to be stereotyped. When you were accused during this campaign of being elitist -- because good old egalitarian America isn't nearly as happy as one might hope when a black man gets a chance to go Ivy League -- you could have responded, "Funny, that's not what cabdrivers who won't pick me up at night seem to think." You didn't do that, just as Senator Clinton didn't make much of the pitfalls of gender assumptions. Both of you understood the power-structure rules for the formerly disenfranchised. Push, and you're pushy. Demand, and you're demanding. No complaining allowed.

But here's the great thing about your position now: since you're obviously not female, you can openly complain on our behalf. You can channel your grandmothers, who had no opportunities, and your mother, who had few, and your wife, who because of the newest wave of feminism suddenly had many.

You could even acknowledge the anger and frustration that women of a certain age, who have sat in the assistant's seat watching younger men promoted over them, felt when they saw what seemed to be the same thing happening to Senator Clinton.

We are the ones who wind up dealing with health care for our

children and elder care for our parents. We are the ones fighting for sexual-harassment safeguards and workplace standards. Those are not issues on which John McCain has been passionate, and gender equity is not something with which he's ever been associated. This is an opportunity for you, not just an obligation.

Don't get comfy because older women are moving your way in new polls. And don't think you can coast on the fact that the Republicans are going to show their true colors by attacking your wife, thereby driving into the Democratic camp every woman enraged by the hands-folded, mouth-shut standard of female behavior.

You've insisted you're running not to govern a demographic but to inspire a nation of individuals. Prove it. The real reason you have to reach out to women like us is that it will signal that you really mean to stand for a different America, a nation in which a black man can take up the concerns of white women for the sake of the greatest good.

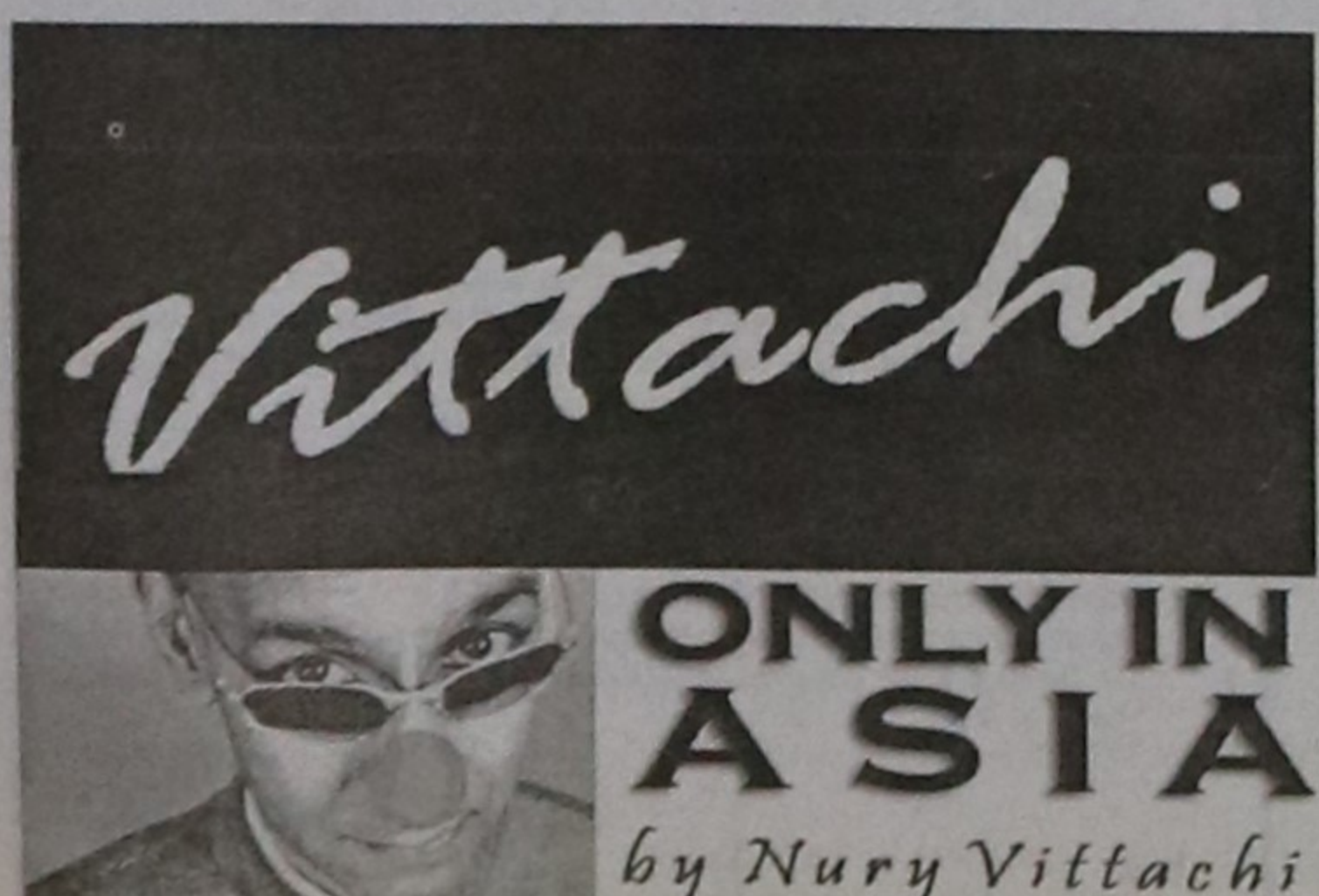
Sometimes being an older

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Keeping them all happy ...

Asia is the only place where you actually get weather



DON'T go out," she warned. "It's raining." I was standing in the doorway of a house in London, about to step outside.

I turned and shook my head. "This," I said, gesturing outside, "is not rain."

Honestly: Europeans are SO delicate! In that region, they define as "a rainy day" what we in Asia would call "mild humidity." What they define as "a major rainstorm" is an almost imperceptible mist of water vapour, a bit like the weather angel is sitting on the edge of her cloud squirting an

Evian atomiser.

The slightest dampness causes Europeans to barricade themselves in their houses and phone flood control. If a drop of water hits the head of a European woman, she is taken to hospital to have it extracted. In England, the law requires that everyone carry an umbrella with them at all times, even while swimming. In cartoons, British monarchs may wear crowns and ermine robes, but the queen's actual ceremonial outfit is a headscarf, raincoat and rubber boots.

Yet the weather in Europe is so

mild that we in Asia wouldn't even count it as weather. It's just sort of nothing.

Europeans: Want to see what real rain is like? Come to Asia.

They think the UK is a rainy place, but the average rainfall there is a mere 60 millimetres a month. Compare that to the last big rainfall in Mumbai, which was 1,000 millimetres in a single day.

On a rainy weekend in Hong Kong earlier this month, fish could be seen swimming down a high street. You know that scene in The Little Mermaid where Ariel sits in her den at the bottom of the sea

and wonders what life is like on land? Well, the silly girl could just get off her scaly butt and swim to Asia and wait for a decent rainstorm. She could easily swim down the main road, get some sightseeing done, do a bit of shopping, and she wouldn't even have to get her tail dry.

When I was a young reporter I recall writing a story about a truck in Bangladesh, which was in a collision with a large fish. The truck was wrecked and the fish was not too happy either. This rarely happens in Pall Mall.

I also recall writing about a

woman in India where the rain turned into a flood, as it often does, so she climbed a tree to finish what she was doing -- having a baby. Now that is what I call "natural birth."

In Europe, after what passes for a rainstorm, pedestrians have to negotiate a slight dampness on the pavements. After a rainstorm in Asia, we have to get on to Google Earth and redraw the borders on our maps.

Personally, I love weather, especially the big stuff. I feel compelled to go outdoors whenever a typhoon or rainstorm hits town.

My doctor says this is because I suffer from a rare medical condition known as "idiocy."

I once went out during a major typhoon near my home with a visitor from Europe. At first, he was scathing about how undramatic it was. Then we walked around a corner and were instantly hit by a body of water approximately the size and shape of an Olympic swimming pool.

Now that's rain.

You'll be soaked with tears of laughter, or boredom, at www.vittachi.com