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Broadcast Coverage Of The Environment In Maldives

By

Najeema Hussian
Mankind is the product of environment. Environment, on the other hand, is the product of man's efforts. From the period of prehistoric days, environment nurtured mankind, civilization, its art and culture, religion and science and technology has become instrumental in pulverizing environment. The injudicious destruction of forest resources, utter negligence in making efforts of deforestation, invention, wars, atom and hydrogen bombs and discovery of gases harmful to both man and nature, not only polluted the environment but rendered it destructive to both nature and the human race all around the world by the fatal warming of the earth.

It is no wonder that the nature has become savagely retributive by draught here and storm or tidal wave or inundation there and crop failure everywhere. Exploitation of the earth's resources has reached its maximum and the whole human race is now faced with far-reaching implications of the utter doom. Gone, or are on the verge of final exit, are days when people used to savor the beauties of peaceful nature at its very best and enjoy the fruit of the bountiful resources of nature for their livelihood, because there is a growing scientific consensus that within a few decades the sea level the sea will rise at a faster rate than at any time in history as the consequence of global warming.

Maldives forms a chain of coral atolls rising deeply from the deep Indian Ocean. Each of the about 2000 islands is quite small in area, largest being 5 square Kilo meters with, and average of only 1.6 meters above mid-sea level. Out of the total area of 90,000 square Kilo meters only 2% is land with the surrounding reefs as the only protection. The topography, size and position of the Maldives make the country totally exposed to natural calamities, especially to the whims of the vast swells of the Indian Ocean. The climatic and global warming is indeed a severe threat to us, the 200,000 inhabitants of the island nation. It will change the wind pattern and speed, increasing the frequency and intensity of tropical storms. Increased wind will generate steeper waves resulting in flooding and erosion of the very precious soil of the tiny island nation. Warm-induced change in rainfall, evaporation and salinity is also crucial. In short, impact of climate change on coral islands like the Maldives are estimated to be considerable.

We are victims of the consequence of global warming and subsequent sea-level rise process to which we, like all the developing nations of the world did not contribute at all. We are well aware that the fate of the low lying coastal islands depend upon sound environmental planning and management strategy.
To create awareness among the small states on the impact of sea-level rise, Male' Declaration was adopted on November 18th, 1989. In the declaration it was pointed out, (quote) "In view of the fact that the overloading of the atmosphere with greenhouse gases occurred primarily through the action of the industrialized nations during the past two hundred years, these nations now have a moral obligations to initiate on an urgent basis, international action to stabilize and subsequently reduce emissions of greenhouse gases....In addition, resources and technology should be made available by the industrialized nations, particularly to the vulnerable states, which may not have the financial and technical means to address these problems." (unquote) Our president His Excellency Mr. Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, in his inaugural address to the Small States Conference on Sea-Level Rise urged upon all the small developing nations in general and industrialized developed nations in particular to take the lead in the fight to save our planet Earth and its inhabitants.

The dismal picture of land and lives of Maldives is not ordinarily unknown to the inhabitants. But our government thinks that only awareness is not enough rather creating and urge to contribute to improving environment to balance the deteriorating ecology. Due to in physical communication, braving the mighty waves of the Indian Ocean, between the islands, telecommunication is the main communication means in Maldives. All the islands are connected with capital Male' by radio-telephone. Government keeps close watch on development activities in the islands.

Circulation problems limit printing of newspapers in Maldives. There are two daily newspapers catering to the public of Male'. The print media focuses attention of the people to the importance of keeping ecological balance and keep readers aware of the role of government.

Television Maldives covers Male' and the neighboring islands. It puts up programmes of information and motivation regularly.

Voice of Maldives and Television Maldives as very important institution are disseminating information about the prevalent situation, role of the government and motivating people to cooperate in government activities.

Voice of Maldives put up weekly quiz programs for the school children and a weekly discussion/participation program for the adult. The purpose of these programs are informational as well as motivational. In addition, announcements and motivational spots are broadcast everyday followed by a fortnightly "On the Road" interview program to get listeners feedback. Motivational songs especially composed and tuned are broadcast on special occasions. Special programs are presented with the cooperation of the Department of Information and Broadcasting and the Ministry of Planning and Environment.
The electronic media of the Maldives have got a very close relationship with the citizens of the country and work together with them in every considerable way.

We in the electronic media considered our moral obligation to bring to the notice of the people of the Maldives the true perspective of the dismal picture painted above.

Voice of Maldives puts up informational and motivational programs regularly. One of such programs is a quiz for the school children broadcast weekly. In this program the school children apprised of the causes and effects of greenhouse, other factors are responsible for global warming, the effect and salinity and evaporation, causes of inundation, high wind and tidal waves, countries other than Maldives feared of being affected by global warming, remedies and necessary precautional steps, ways of keeping environment clean and healthy, governmental activities with regard to all those preventive measures.

Another weekly program is presented in discussion format for the general public. This program covers steps taken worldwide about ecological balance, prevention of global warming and the role of the people of Maldives in general during any natural calamity.

The third program is an interview of the people on the road to create awareness of the impending danger caused by imbalance in the ecology and the environment and their feedback.

In addition to these regular programs magazine or featurized programs are broadcast in observance of special occasions. The government of the Maldives has taken steps to organize a signature campaign with cooperation of Non-Government voluntary organizations to be presented to the conference to be held in June in Brazil. Voice of Maldives is broadcasting spots to inform people about the campaign. Regular announcement and spots, accompanied by playlets and motivational songs are broadcast. Besides the radio programs, management and staff of Voice of Maldives keep close contact with the people and cooperate with the Ministry of Planning and Environment and the Department of Information and Broadcasting in preparing leaflets, booklets, posters and sign boards.

There is now a general awareness of the effect of global warming in Maldives. We know we are heading towards a general disaster of inundation, salinity and high winds. We are doing whatever is possible within our small means. But the unanswered question corroding our mind is whether our efforts are enough to save us from the impending ordeal!