

Global Diplomacy on Climate Change and Our Common Position

by Ahsan Uddin Ahmed

Despite signing and ratifying the Climate Convention (UNFCCC) the industrialised countries of the Northern hemisphere, the heavy emitters, have not complied with the Convention. The Southern countries, essentially the poor and developing countries likely to be most affected due to global warming, complained that the Northern countries were not complying with the targets of UNFCCC.

The Conference of the Parties (COP) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) began on 7th November, 1997, in Buenos Aires, Argentina. The Conference is the fourth in a series of such meetings. It follows the third COP, held in Kyoto, Japan in last December, where the delegates came to a consensus and formulated an officially binding document, called by the Kyoto Protocol, and formally signed it. Bangladesh is a signatory to both the UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol (KP). In COP4 it is expected that the Bangladeshi delegation will try to mobilise global support towards reducing global GHG emissions and reducing vulnerability to climate change induced "natural disasters".

Ironically the COP4 is meeting just after the warmest year in the recorded climate history of about 114 years. The planet has confronted many unprecedented extreme weather events since the consensus in Kyoto. Extreme weather events have affected a million people in the world. El Niño and La Niña has devastated food production, increased drought, caused huge fires and floods in many parts of the world. In such a backdrop, global attention must be focused on climate variability and change, its causes and ways to minimise adversities across the globe. As one of the most vulnerable country to such events we deserve special privilege to raise issues in international meetings on behalf of the vulnerable. COP4 could be considered as an appropriate vehicle for drawing global attention in our favour.

Historical Development of Climate Negotiations

The global scientific community, under the leadership of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), has warned the global citizenry that there would be discernible impacts on the physical, human and ecosystems of the earth due to continued accumulation of greenhouse gases (GHG). To address the issue and to come to a political decision and consensus regarding arresting the GHG emissions globally, the United Nations have convened the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 1992. The global leadership signed a Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) which aimed at reducing the GHG emissions to slow down the warming process, reduce vulnerability of the nations through adaptation and achieving sustainable development at the end. The nations with more than 800 grams of CO₂ (equivalent) per capita GHG emissions were listed in Annex-I of the UNFCCC and they agreed to reduce their emissions by 10 per cent of 1990 levels by the year 2000. The non-Annex-I countries, however, were asked

to voluntarily reduce their emissions, but they were not bound with obligations. Despite signing and ratifying the Climate Convention (UNFCCC) the industrialised countries of the Northern hemisphere, the heavy emitters, have not complied with the Convention. The Southern countries, essentially the poor and developing countries likely to be most affected due to global warming, complained that the Northern countries were not complying with the targets of UNFCCC. They also complained that industrialised countries had not provided "new and additional" funding, promised under the UNFCCC, to arrest GHG emissions in the developing world.

On the other hand, the Northern countries expressed their dissatisfaction concerning non-Annex-I countries with huge population (e.g., China, India, Brazil etc.) having no obligation under the UNFCCC to reduce their emissions. They also complained that reduction to such an extent (10%) by 2000 would be too drastic and therefore, they wanted a relaxed timeframe and a lower reduction target. The negotiations, diplomacy and debates continued in the following years after the Earth Summit, with minimum success in achieving the objectives of the UNFCCC. Finally, the UNFCCC entered into force from March 1996. To resolve the differences between the developed and the developing countries, the United Nations convened three Conferences of the Parties (COP), the last one (COP3) being held at Kyoto. A legally binding instrument (Protocol) came into existence in Kyoto, which allowed the developed countries to reduce their respective emissions by 5 per cent of the 1990 level by 2008 to 2012. Bangladesh also signed the historical Protocol. But the content of the protocol does not appear to be good enough to reduce vulnerability of Bangladesh and countries alike.

COP4: Kyoto Protocol Faces First Test

The COP4 is the first major global gathering to follow up on the Kyoto Protocol. The Kyoto Protocol demonstrated the first serious, although inadequate commitment by industrialised countries to reduce GHG emissions. As the Introduction of

the KP states that "... this legally binding commitment promises to produce an historic reversal of the upward trend in emissions that started in these countries some 150 years ago." However, the very limited reduction commitment (mere 5% of 1990 level) appears to be far too low compared to earlier proposition stated by the UNFCCC. Furthermore, it actually allowed few of the major emitters in terms of per capita emission e.g., Australia to increase its emissions.

Dual Objectives: The Central Issues

Article 2.1 of the Protocol clearly states its dual objectives: (a) to reduce greenhouse gases in the atmosphere and (b) to promote sustainable development by reducing vulnerability of the affected countries. Unfortunately, the central issues of the Protocol disappeared due to constant insistence of the developed countries towards (mis)directing the negotiations around a "number game". The developed countries wanted the reduction of GHG emissions to be the main issue, neither the sustainable development, nor the reduction of vulnerability. In reality, reduction of vulnerability should be the most important aspect of the Protocol for which reduction of emissions could only be a modality. Reduction of vulnerability and improvement of modalities of adaptation should be the prime theme for negotiations, not the silly reduction target that may be achieved fairly easily.

Must Reduce - Not Transfer

In achieving the objectives of the Protocol it embodied three so-called flexible mechanisms: (i) Clean Development Mechanisms (CDM), (ii) Joint Implementation, and (iii) Emission Trading. All such mechanisms have dealt with emissions reduction. There are criticisms that these mechanisms are to help developed countries to shift their "emission burden" to the developing world. Great emphasis has been put on the need to "transfer the reduction of carbon" to developing countries or economies in transition where it can be done more cost effectively. The first two mechanisms, i.e., CDM and JI, are considered as the appropriate modalities for transferring carbon "emission burden" to

developing countries from the industrial countries. Where one of the central objective of both UNFCCC and KP is the reduction of GHG, most efforts are being directed on how to transfer such reduction into the "environmental space" of developing countries. It has to be understood that, if "transfer" takes place instead of "reduction", it would only increase vulnerability of the nations and the poor nations can not achieve sustainable development under such conditions. The central responsibility of carbon reduction by Annex-I countries must be primarily and dominantly undertaken at home. A small proportion might, perhaps, be undertaken in or through other Parties, as it is permitted by the Protocol. This cannot be the central thrust of the Protocol.

It is true that carbon emission has very major and significant economic implications. What must not be forgotten that the UNFCCC is essentially about a safer planet with lower GHG in the atmosphere and achieving sustainable development for all nations, people and ecosystems. The ecological imperative and its centrality must not be sacrificed at the altar of economic efficacy. COP4 must make all efforts to reduce carbon primarily within each Annex-I country. COP4 must address the pros and cons of all the mechanisms agreed upon and must not allow the industrialised countries to take undue advantage over the developing countries.

Support for Adaptation: A Missing Dimension

Most of the poor developing countries are also the most vulnerable. The small islands, deltaic countries are particularly vulnerable to sea-level rise, while tropical countries are vulnerable to drought and desertification. Food security of many of these countries is also threatened. Contribution of these countries to global GHG load is often very little but will have to bear the disproportionate burden of climate change impacts and consequent adaptation actions.

Though "adaptation" has been treated as the poor and neglected step-daughter in climate change research financing and negotiations, it is most important in achieving sustainable development, one of the key common objectives of both the

UNFCCC and KP, enshrined in Article 12.8 of KP. Vast majority of the developing country delegates at COP3 asserted that their main reason to be part of KP was essentially to obtain finance for their sustainable development. Unfortunately, adaptation failed to draw any significant attention during the courses of the past negotiations. Not a single industrialised country has supported activities concerning identification and/or implementation of adaptation in any developing country.

There must be a greater thrust on adaptation and support for better scientific knowledge, tools, methodologies and a much greater financial support and investment in adaptation. Since Bangladesh would require to adapt to the imminent threats of climate change and its impacts, we should raise these issues to draw international attention in this regard.

Bangladesh's Position at the COP4

Bangladesh has been globally recognised as one of the most vulnerable countries to climate change. IPCC in its every report so far has mentioned that it would be worst hit in an event of climate change. In the past Bangladesh received the highest attention from the international delegations, but could not capitalise on those. We have to take the leadership in demanding our dues and mobilise the developing countries to support our demands. We must transform despair into opportunity and guide the global community to save the planet from obvious distress.

COP4 offers again another such opportunity. This should not fizzle out into hiding behind words, mechanisms and shifting responsibilities. The little negotiating space created by the very minimal commitment to reduction by Annex-I countries must be best used to the objectives of GHG reductions, primarily and principally at home, not at the backyards of the poor neighbours.

COP4 will be critical in setting the rules of the implementation of KP and the mechanisms therein. It is critical that the global community keeps its focus on the objectives of UNFCCC and does not dribble around words and undefined mechanisms. Reduction of GHG, assisting sustainable development and achieving a fairer and more equitable world remain the central objectives of UNFCCC as well as KP and must be true for COP4 also. The achievements of COP4 will also be judged by these broad criteria.

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In Defence of Developing Nations ...

Danielle Knight writes from Washington

"Why should developing countries commit to binding limits on emissions when those who have polluted the most historically are not reducing emissions?"

ENVIRONMENTALISTS have accused the Republican-dominated US Congress of trying to mask its aim of defeating the Kyoto treaty on global warming by alleging that developing countries pose a threat to American business.

This month in Buenos Aires, countries will negotiate the details of the treaty that aims to reduce "greenhouse gas" emissions believed to be responsible for global warming. But US Republican senators and congress members are adamant they will not ratify the agreement unless developing nations commit to binding limitations on emissions.

"This call by the US Congress has been based on false assumptions," says Agus Sari, a member of the Indonesian climate treaty negotiating team. "Developing countries should be exempt from the treaty since they are not responsible for the bulk of the greenhouse gas emissions currently in the atmosphere!"

"Why should developing countries commit to binding limits on emissions when those who have polluted the most historically are not reducing emissions?" asks Atiq Rahman, director of the Bangladesh Centre for Advanced Studies. "The whole fairness question has been turned upside down."

Most scientists agree that the cause of global warming stems from carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases released through the burning of fossil fuels, including coal, oil and gas. If these emissions are not reduced, scientists say temperatures will continue to increase around the world and will increase the risk of storms, floods, heat waves and droughts.

The threat was readily acknowledged by nearly all countries of the world when they gathered in the Japanese city of Kyoto last December to negotiate the climate change agreement.

Industrialised nations agreed to reduce the emissions of six greenhouse gases by an average of six per cent from the 1990 levels, and to complete the reductions between 2008 and 2012. But Republican lawmakers, echoing a multi-million-dollar advertising campaign

paid for by oil companies, say they will not approve the treaty because it unfairly exempts developing countries and will hurt the US economy.

Congress maintains that the emissions of developing countries as a whole will equal the emissions of the industrialised countries within 15 or 20 years. They say by the time that the United States and other developed nations comply with the Kyoto Protocol developing countries emissions will make other reductions useless.

"That is not exactly right," says Nancy Kete, director of the climate programme at the Washington-based World Resources Institute. "Climate change is a very long term problem."

"The correct way to determine when the relative contributions of greenhouse gases of the North and the South equal each other is to look at the emissions that have accumulated in the atmosphere since the industrial revolution."

Kete says that, when emissions from 1850 to the present day and into the future are taken into account, the United States and other industrialised countries will be contributing more to the increase in the atmospheric contributions for at least 30 to 50 years. Estimates used by congress members opposed to the treaty only take into account annual emissions.

"Besides, I do not think that anyone outside of the United States believes that this country has been treated unfairly because developing countries are not bound by commitments," says Kete.

"We have four percent of the world's population and we put out 21 percent of the carbon dioxide," she says.

While emissions from industrialised nations increase, many developing countries are taking voluntary steps to cut their emissions, adds Atiq Rahman.

"Developing countries are doing tremendous things," he says.

China, for example, reduced its subsidies for petroleum and oil by up to 55 per cent in the 1980s. Other developing countries, including Brazil, India, and South Africa have all cut fossil fuel subsidies while actively promoting energy efficiency.

and renewable energy sources, such as wind power.

Brazil initiated a programme to use ethyl alcohol from sugar cane in automobiles, in order to reduce their dependence on foreign oil and Thailand has increased its investment in energy efficiency for consumers, Rahman says.

"It is time now to flip the table and have industrialised nations take responsibility," says Agus Sari.

Emissions from industrialised countries are expected to continue to rise despite commitments made during the Rio Earth Summit to voluntarily reduce emissions. The United States emissions are projected to be 13 per cent above 1990 levels by 2000.

"The only way developing countries would feel comfortable getting into the system is through trust-building where the first step would be for industrialised countries to demonstrate commitment to reduce emissions," says Atiq Rahman. "Once this happens I think the ice will break."

Other analysts say that the financial turmoil of the past year may affect the upcoming negotiations.

"Given the calamity that's befallen this region, people are worried about far more basic things, and interest in accepting austerity measures to fight pollution will be far less than it was a year ago," observes Al Troner, managing director of Asia Pacific Energy consulting in Kuala Lumpur.

Yet if the issue of developing country participation is not resolved and climate change is not abated, the poorest of the poor — many living in developing countries — will bear the brunt of global warming, says Kete.

"Every year that these industrial interests succeed in delaying the policy changes and implementation of the treaty costs billions of dollars in health costs and thousands of lives," she says.

"We need to keep in mind as we debate the politics, that the poorest of the poor especially in developing countries will suffer the most by climate change and its accompanying floods, storms and droughts."

— IPS/APB

What's Wrong with Third Party Mediation?

by Saumitra Mohan

One really fails to understand as to why India is so reluctant to accept third party mediation. If we have a strong case in Kashmir, there is no reason why we should develop cold feet in inviting third party mediation.

AS the dust raised by the nuclear tests in the Indian subcontinent settles down, diplomats in India and Pakistan are trying their best to normalise bilateral relations. But it seems that Pakistan has become more defiant after its formal acquisition of nuclear might and refuses to have any meaningful dialogue with India unless the latter recognises Kashmir as the core issue.

Islamabad's insistence on third party mediation to resolve the Kashmir dispute is not acceptable to India, which holds that the matter should be discussed bilaterally in keeping with the 1972 Shimla accord and without any outside intervention.

Pakistan's contention is that there has not been even a single instance when the two have been able to resolve their disputes bilaterally and whenever there has been an agreement, it has been through third party mediation. Two examples are cited by Pakistan: one is those of the Indus Waters Treaty and the Rann of Kutch dispute wherein the World Bank and the International Court of Justice played an active role respectively.

With Pakistan attaining nuclear capability, India should tread cautiously but vigorously. One really fails to understand as to why India is so reluctant to accept third party mediation. If we have a strong case in Kashmir, there is no reason why we should develop cold feet in inviting third party mediation.

Perhaps India is afraid that Pakistan might advance the hoary argument that according to the two-nation theory of partition, a Muslim-majority state like Kashmir should accede to Pakistan. It disputes the legality of Kashmir's accession to India saying that a Hindu ruler can not decide for a Muslim-majority state. It is to be noted that India advanced the same argument when the Muslim rulers of Junagadh, Hyderabad and a few states including Mangrol and Manavdar of Kathiawar wanted to accede to Pakistan and later forcibly annexed them.

Perhaps Pakistan is hopeful that a third party mediation might do what its three invasions and ongoing proxy war have not been able to do. But Pakistan is too naive for that. In international politics of today, it is very difficult for a revisionist state to invade and annex another state. India has realised to its chagrin after its misadventure in Kuwait, so

every state is likely to zealously guard whatever territory it has.

What India did in Junagadh, Hyderabad and Kathiawar was an astute exercise in realpolitik and had it not done so, it would have enclaves of disturbance breathing down its neck like Kosovo in former Yugoslavia today. The accession and annexation of these states by India is a settled issue today. And after losing more than 60,000 square km of land in 1962 to China, India can't afford to lose even an inch of land in Kashmir to an incho adversary like Pakistan.

Some analysts and laymen still wonder as to why India did not regain its territory in the 1971 war with Pakistan or at least why did it not resolve the dispute once and for all by forcing Pakistan to accept a formal and binding treaty.

Today, partition is left far behind and Pakistan's vain hope of somehow acquiring Kashmir is simply a wild goose chase. Kashmir is not only an integral part of the Indian union but is symbolic of her very existence.

The acceptance of Pakistan's claim over Kashmir would mean India's recognition to the already maligned two-nation theory predicated on religion and would strike a severe blow at India's secular foundation and may question the whole edifice of her composite culture. It may also lead to India's balkanisation which, if it comes about, would turn the whole of South Asia into a ball of fire.

India agreeing to a third party mediation does not mean that it would be coerced to accept something that is prejudicial to her national interest. Of course, Pakistan would definitely advance its Junagadh-Hyderabad argument but India should agree to a third party mediation by making it clear right in the beginning that it would not accept any correlation to its existing territories whose accessions are fait accompli.

Thereafter, India remains on a stronger footing than Pakistan because international law is on her side as the entire Kashmir including Pak-occupied Kashmir (PoK) is legally an Indian territory. India should vigorously start claiming PoK and during any such third party mediation, it should ask for the retrieval of PoK.

Again, third party mediation is not like arbitration where a judgement is given after hearing both parties. In mediation, only facilitate a dialogue leading to resolution of

the Kashmir dispute and would not be there to force a decision on either party advocating their respective cases. However, India has a stronger case with international law on her side.

If a third party mediation can lead to a breakthrough in the resolution of the Palestine dispute, why not try it out in Kashmir? India should not mind obliging Pakistan and should try to turn the tables on her by proactive diplomacy. This way India should hammer home to the world that the whole of Kashmir legitimately belongs to her and also expose Pakistan's complicity in aiding and abetting terrorism in Kashmir.

After all, today even the United States is veering round to the view that an independent state of Palestine is not feasible and practicable despite the fact that Palestine is a *de jure* state as it participates in United Nations proceedings as an independent state. If that goes this far, Palestine has to be content with an autonomous status, Kashmir can never be alienated from India owing to its legal claim over it.

Any solution of the Kashmir dispute that such mediation would entail, has to be round the recognition of the existing line of control (LoC) as the international border as was informally agreed between the Prime Ministers of India and Pakistan in 1972. Such a solution of the Kashmir dispute has a very good precedent in international relations. Trieste was a territory with similar status as Kashmir. It was divided between Italy and Yugoslavia with each claiming other's part of the Trieste as India and Pakistan do in case of Kashmir. After much acrimony, in 1954 both the countries agreed to retain their part of the territory.

India should also stop harping on a solution within the framework of the Shimla accord and so should Pakistan stop insisting on the 1948 UN resolutions which are too outdated to be of any use now. If a third party mediation could lead to the resolution of such an intractable dispute as Kashmir, so good for both the countries, and for the whole of South Asia whose socio-economic progress has been held hostage to Indo-Pak hostility.

It has kept the embers of the cold war smouldering in South Asia which can anytime transform into a wildfire engulfing the entire subcontinent. Even their South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) can take off only if its

two giants facilitate the socio-economic development of the region.

Today, while the global arms expenditure has gone down by 36 per cent, for South Asia it has shot up by 12 per cent and is likely to shoot further in the wake of the recent nuclear tests.

According to the human development report, 1998, South Asia is home to more than 560 million poor people. There are more than 300 million people who do not have enough to eat, about 380 million are still illiterate, about 200 million lack access to safe drinking water and more than 800 million have no access to basic sanitation.

These figures are only reinforced by the recent findings of the Mahbub-ul-Haq's Karachi-based Human Development Centre, according to which South Asia has the largest number of poor and illiterate in the world, even more than the sub-Saharan Africa. While the per capita income is 555 US dollar in sub-Saharan Africa, it is a measly 300 US dollars in South Asia which is far below the international line of poverty — 365 US dollars.

These figures really baffle one when one contrasts them with the rich resources available in the region, both human and material. The region has about 20 per cent of the world population with the fourth largest pool of techno-scientific personnel. It has 22 per cent of the world's fossil and fuel resources, 460 cubic km of renewable water resources, 86 million hectare of forest cover, 250 million hectares of land, very rich and diversified mineral resources and largest animal population.

Again, there is a huge potential for cooperative development of energy sources in the region, with Nepal and Bhutan's hydroelectric potential and Bangladesh's natural gas reserves.

But despite the vast resources in the region and despite the vast potential for cooperation, SAARC countries still have a long way to go as intra-regional trade is a pathetic three per cent of its total trade.

This potential can only be recognised if India and Pakistan can somehow find a way to bury the hatchet and third party mediation may well provide the needed initiative to make this a reality.

— AFP/PTI Feature

Pak PM Cracks down on His Own Coalition Partner

The government of Pakistan has launched an offensive against what it calls the criminal and terrorist activities of the country's most powerful Islamic party. But as Gemini News Service reports, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has until now been reluctant to take such action because the party has helped prop up his own government. Yusuf Rafiq writes from Islamabad

SOME 800 people have been murdered in Karachi so far this year, but just one of these murders has prompted the Pakistani government to tackle the country's most prominent Islamic political party.

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif is blaming the Muttahida Qaumi Movement for the assassination of Hakim Said, a philanthropist and former governor of Sindh province.

The government has decided to contact Britain to request the extradition of the MQM's self-exiled leader, Altaf Hussain, on the grounds that he has been using British soil to damage Pakistan's security.

It is expected that the Nawaz administration will present tape-recorded confessions of the accused in Said's murder and documentary evidence that the MQM has stolen defence secrets to support its extradition demand.

The irony is that the Sharif government has cooperated with the MQM since coming to power in February 1997. The MQM is the strongest political force in urban Sindh. Despite countless allegations of terrorism, favoritism, insurgency and treason leveled against its leadership over the years, the MQM enjoys a huge vote bank and mass popularity, forcing every new government to attempt a political understanding with the party.

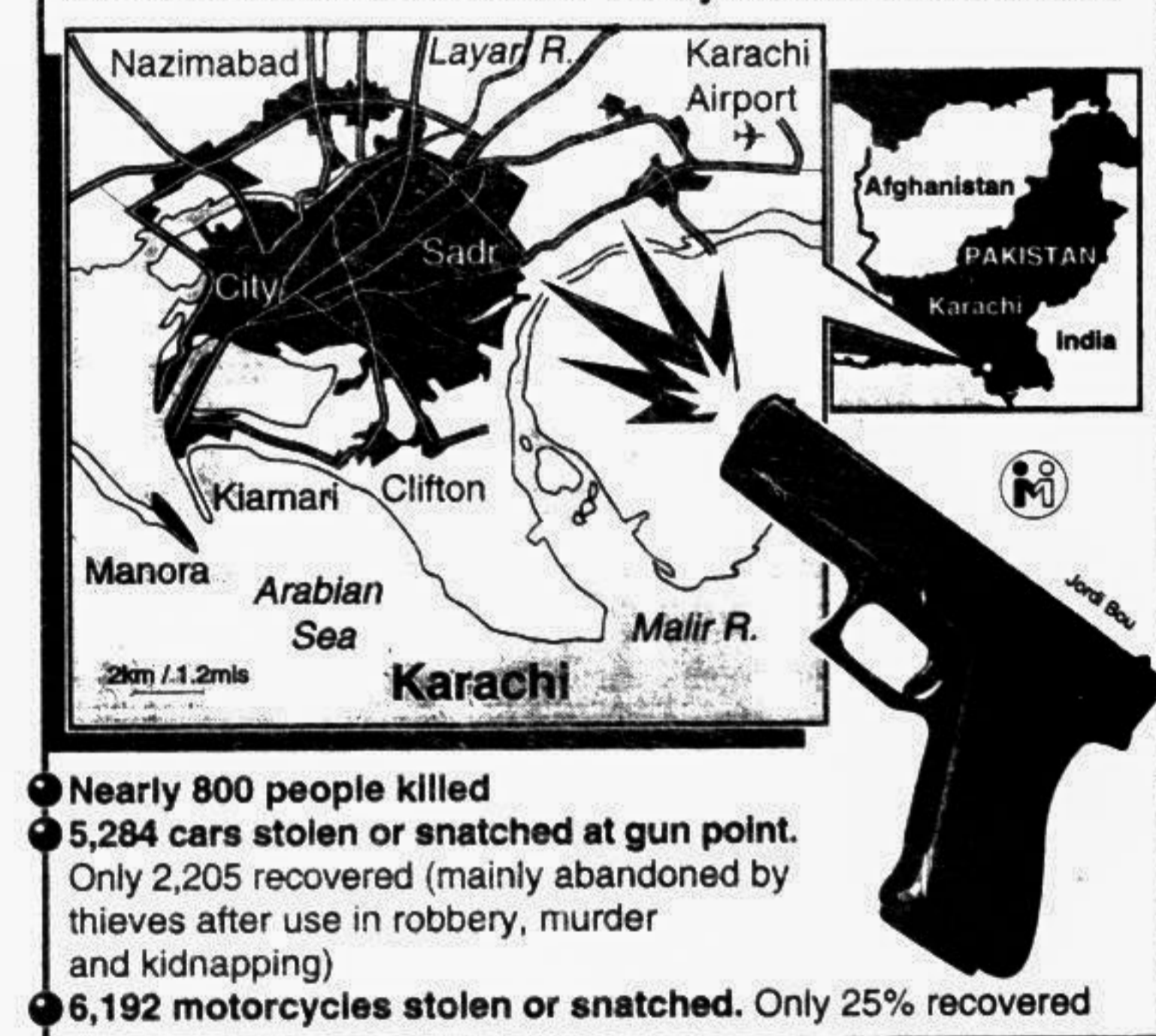
MQM got a lot out of the deal with the ruling party. Its workers were given financial compensation, MQM party-men facing terrorist cases were released, and administrative reshuffles were made according to MQM's desire.

Members within the ruling Pakistan Muslim League have been advising the prime minister to disassociate from MQM and launch an operation against the party to stifle its alleged terrorist activities. Sharif drew criticism for protecting the Sindh coalition and its hand-picked chief minister at the cost of a chance at peace in the crime-ridden city of Karachi.

Sharif waited for 18 months, giving the MQM plenty of time to help restore peace to Karachi.

Crime capital

Pakistan's government faces a crime wave in Karachi. In the first nine months of this year statistics show:



Ifikhar Gillani said the dictatorial step taken by the government would have dangerous ramifications. "It is regrettable if an elected assembly is suspended merely on the failure of the ruling party."

For its part, the MQM says Said's murder was a conspiracy to start an operation against it.

No matter who is to blame for Karachi's crime wave, the 12 million people in this bustling business-dominated port city live in perpetual insecurity, and in conditions overwhelmed by uncertainty.

According to one Karachi dweller, just getting home from certain parts of the city at the end of the day is a major achievement these days, when a stray bullet can end one's life as easily as a car accident or a targeted killing.

The people of Pakistan want answers, not solemn looking faces announcing for the 800th time this year the government's resolve to restore law and order with an iron hand," declared the English daily *The News*. "For once actions should speak louder than words."

The city has long waited for able representatives with the commitment to seek urgent remedies. The rise of the MQM in the mid-1980s offered a promise that still remains unfulfilled, as the party found itself playing a junior partner in one coalition after another.

Increasing ethnic and sectarian violence in Karachi compelled many settlers to flee back to their homes.

Former law minister Syed

The biggest exodus took place from the late '80s to early '90s. Most of those who left belonged to the moneyed class who could afford to leave and resettle. As soon as things start settling down again, entrepreneurs and laborers once again begin trickling back into the city in search of better opportunities.

This latest "clean up" marks the third operation against crime in Sindh in the past seven years. The army conducted one in 1992. In 1995, the Pakistan People's Party government of Benazir Bhutto pulled out the army, leaving a former interior minister, the civil administration and rangers to spearhead the second operation against MQM in Karachi.

That operation proved a failure. The authorities were slack in nabbing the most-wanted criminals. Will things be different this time? Former Chief of the Army Staff General (Retd) Mirza Aslam Beg said Governor's Rule will bring short-term quiet to Karachi but he fears a strong resistance by the MQM. "It's going to be a temporary peace and things will get settled for the next few days but later political necessities and expediencies will come in the way to further complicate the situation," Beg maintained.

Political analysts say the biggest task now facing the Sharif administration is tackling the crime wave.

The writer is a reporter for Pakistan's Frontier Post.