

# The charnel-house of crossfire

MUHAMMAD NURUL HUDA

THE so-called crossfire, primarily associated with the operations of a supposedly elite law enforcement outfit remains unabated, perhaps on a reduced scale and lately in semi-urban pockets and some extremist affected areas of the country. Protests and indignation against such apparently indefensible and incredible happenings by the human rights groups and concerned citizens appear muted and it would be difficult to convince the cynics that the campaign against the extra-judicial killing has not been given up. While the protests by civil liberation groups and human rights bodies may not be on the desirable wave and dimension, the clear condemnation and characterisation of such extra-judicial killing as an anathema in a democracy, by the British High Commissioner in recent times, is a sad reminder of the follies and failings of our politico-administrative institutions.

## Immediate relief vis-a-vis long term damage

While the government of the day may find justification of the above extra-judicial killings by referring to the so-called public jubilation following the death of alleged hardened criminals, the discerning citizen of any civilised polity will reach the inevitable conclusion that such an eventuality is indicative of the uncontrollable state of crime and the helplessness of the regulatory authority in this regard. Under such circumstances, it would not be improper to say that the failure to lawfully conduct the affairs of public order have necessitated these extra-judicial killings. Any farsighted consideration will convince us that such extra-judicial killing cannot be an effective and realistic method of crime control. The reasons are simple, because if we fail to protect the legal rights of the accused, we will not be able to ensure the rights of the innocent members of the public. A lawfully constituted government cannot resort to killing in this way and cannot issue licence to any outfit to indulge in such reprehensible killing. If this continues to happen then the criminal trial process and indeed the whole judicial system is bound to be dangerously undermined. The deaths

under the garb of so-called crossfire is only highlighting the failure of police and the judiciary.

It is not for the ordinary or gullible members of the public to take a deep look at such extra legal killings because their concern is one of immediate relief from the depredations of the local bully or the entrenched tormentor. However, a civilised government cannot be a prisoner of such damaging retrograde thoughts. A very significant aspect which demands serious attention is that the so-called terrorists killed in the crossfire were in fact politically patronised and blessed. As a result, there is no guarantee that such killings will prove positive as has been implied in some utterances of responsible establishment personalities.

the criminal justice administration of a democratic polity have failed to act and the state has forsaken one of its primary functions. Since no right-thinking Bangladeshi would reconcile to such a scenario that smacks of a failed government they have a duty to find out why some organs of the state have to resort to apparent vigilante action. The nation needs to know if law-enforcement personnel are deliberately deviating from the statutory directives in anti-crime operations.

Eulogising or praising the 'crossfire actions' have created a worrying environment wherein result-oriented investigating officers are increasingly getting inclined to resort to short-cut methods to please official boss or the political masters.

**If the government, in the persons of law-enforcers becomes law-breakers, it breeds contempt for law. To declare that the government may commit crimes to ensure punishment of criminals would invite terrible retribution. The objective of the civilised government is not to score points or play to the gallery but to ensure that justice shall be done. Law is the means and justice is the goal.**

The "operation clean heart" also resulted in the extra-legal killings of identified terrorists and criminals and that too happened after only one year of assumption of power of a civil government. The law and order or crime situation did not register much of a change for the better. In fact, extra-judicial killings have not succeeded in controlling crime anywhere in any country. Crime and terrorism do not cross the bearable limit on its own. There are always cogent and credible factors behind such abnormalities. One needs to probe into those with the concern of a protector. Extra-judicial killings cannot be a sensible alternative proposition.

## Decay of institutions

If as a civilised nation we expect our regulatory institutions including the police to regularly brush up their professional skills then we cannot be a party to willy-nilly facilitate the creation of a scenario wherein one would be willing to believe that those perpetrators of crime who cannot be brought under the law have to be dealt beyond the law. Needless to mention here that in such an assumption lies the suicidal admission that

The worrisome part is the threat to put an alleged criminal or an ordinary suspect under the so-called 'crossfire scenario' in order to gratify ulterior motives. Since most crossfire deaths are not seriously pursued for establishing the suspected culpability, the culprits in the enforcement and investigative apparatus discover a macabre win-win situation in such patently illegal acts. Elements of accountability and fear recede into background and investigation by the book becomes a pathetically low priority. Professionally speaking, this is an instance of heightened jeopardy because in Bangladesh the crime fighting machinery already stands accused of not cultivating a scientific modus-operandi and quite often relapsing into the untenable third-degree methods.

The question is, do we want sustained laborious action under the law to strengthen our democratic foundation or do we need rash desperate action without the cover of law? The crossfire actions, undoubtedly, do not fit in with the first proposition. We need to be absolutely clear about that.

## Crime and desperation

The ultimate punishment in the alleged 'crossfire' about whose credibility many are not convinced, appear as summary response from desperate executives of law enforcement. The legality of actions leading to such extreme action apart, any responsible citizen might like to know if in our often over-zealous anti-crime operations, we are just treating the symptoms without venturing to study and assess the objective conditions promoting criminality. We do not need sociologists and criminologists to tell us that present-day crime is a complex social phenomenon caused by a multiplicity of factors and determining culpability is an extremely mind-exacting task.

Everyday life experience tells us that quite often the fun-seeking

delinquent of yesteryears turn into uncontrollable don of the day due to the patronage of powerful quarters and the unexplained inaction of the enforcement outfit. Therefore, when deaths occur in the so-called 'crossfire' some myopic elements may be satisfied but a civilised society which wishes to live by the canons of law cannot but be concerned.

The alleged deaths in 'crossfire' are forestalling the benefits of thorough investigation wherefrom the citizens could have known the pathetic as yet compelling factors behind the growth and maturing of criminals, the shady role of the patrons and the alleged inertia of the regulatory units. The apprehensive public may have known about the unstoppable lure of huge cash of sleazy transactions in some sectors of the economy and the mechanics of retaining control over such illegal extraction of unaccounted money. The fact that successive governments have failed to put any effective brake on such unlawful activities in the sensitive sectors raises disturbing doubts about the sworn commitments to control crime and corruption. Under such circumstances, it is difficult for the worried

public to believe that the fearsome deaths in the 'crossfire' should be the preferred alternative. Spectacular but dangerous palliatives cannot understandably be the substitute of painful sustained action.

What we need is adequate provision of witness protection and victim support in the criminal justice administration. To make those effective we need large injection of governmental funds. Any further delay will only swell the ranks of summary-justice seekers and the admirers of vigilante action. The decapitating adversity of the victims of crime demand mainstream support of the system.

## Means and goals

Sadly enough, we now have misguided citizens and law enforcers in our midst who think that if a criminal is known, whatever be the process of such identification, there is not much harm in doing away such element for the good of the society. Little do they realise that their logic is queer because in such eventuality the worst criminal on earth can also justify the blackest crime on the pretext of good motive.

If the government, in the persons of law-enforcers becomes law-breakers, it breeds contempt for law. To declare that the government may commit crimes to ensure punishment of criminals would invite terrible retribution. The objective of the civilised government is not to score points or play to the gallery but to ensure that justice shall be done. Law is the means and justice is the goal.

The crisis of our law and order have not sprouted overnight and as such the solution will not be instant. The creation of so-called composite elite force and the dubious desperado action indulged may succeed in temporarily keeping some terrorists on the run and the authorities may get some credit from unsuspecting public on this count but the real problem will remain in situ with root and branches. The residue of large scale violations of human rights by the guardians would be a shameful and painful memory to live with. It is time to ensure an effective halt to this continuing dark episode of our nation.

Muhammad Nurul Huda is a former Secretary and IGP.

# Remembering Karim Uncle

**Karim Uncle loved his profession and perhaps that is why he was so successful at it. He was born to be a diplomat. It thus seems apt that he died as one too. Barely two months after he had been reassigned as Ambassador, Karim Uncle died on 29th October in Cairo.**

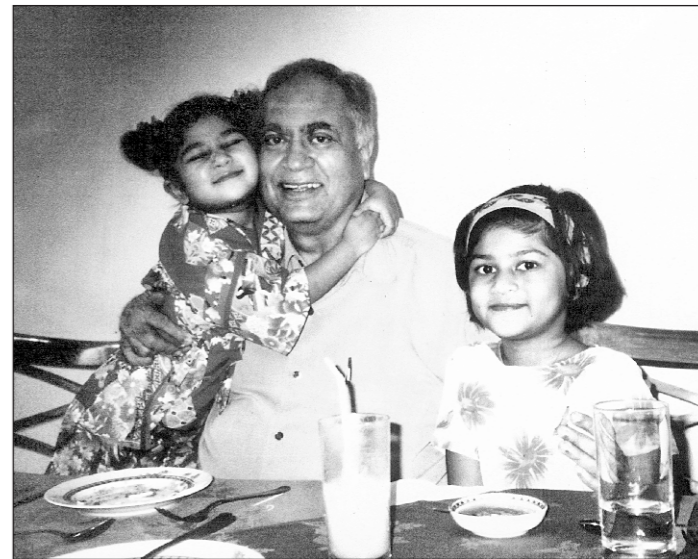
MUNIZE M. KHASRU

A little over two weeks ago, a wonderful man died and left many of us bereft. He played an active role in our childhood, not least of which was he would lovingly address his daughter and all her cousins and friends as "beti". Currently in our mid thirties, childhood feels eons past. But with Karim Uncle's death, our childhood is truly now a 'lifetime' away. Karim Uncle's lifetime. There is no one to call us "beti" anymore.

As a diplomat, Karim Uncle spent a great deal of time abroad in some posting or the other. Sometime in the early eighties, he came back to Dhaka. It was during this period that I got to appreciate all the roles he would juggle. I still remember his evening routine after work. He would go to his mother's room and spend some time with her. Then he would sit and chat with his children and their friends. After which he would relax with Salma Auntie for the evening or they go out together to a diplomatic function.

Coincidental or not, Karim Uncle started his walking-stick collection about the same time his teenage daughter started turning heads. The sticks would be in grand display in the living room. It seemed a fittingly diplomatic way of keeping the boys away! Today the collection comprises of 360 walking sticks from all over the world. They were such his pride and joy that Salma Auntie teased him for loving the sticks more than her. To which he replied that he loved her "360 times more". That was Karim Uncle through and through. Unabashedly, openly loving.

His big build notwithstanding, all of us children loved him like a big teddy bear. When we had children of our own, they loved him even more. He would offer to babysit them although he could barely walk due to his knee problems. He loved to have



Ambassador Rezaul Karim with grand-daughters

the toddlers clambering all over him until we would be exhausted from watching them. But then, most of us got exhausted just hearing Karim Uncle's schedule for the day! And this was when he was supposedly 'retired'.

Karim Uncle had always been busy with some kind of work or the other. He spent his entire life in the diplomatic service, a profession with no set hours. He was at office during the day and entertaining diplomats during the evening. After retirement, we thought he would slow down. But he guffawed at us and continued at his usual high-octane rate. He wrote articles, books, memoirs. He started a little farm in Shalna. He raised funds and founded a college in Kushtia. He headed a non-profit organisation. He had multi-faceted roles as advisor, consultant, and counselor. If anything, Karim Uncle was busier in his 'retirement'.

As testimony to his accomplishments and dedication, people flocked to him all day, every day. The Karim residence was like a 'magic dip'. One never knew who one would bump

into. There would be needy people from Kushtia, political aspirants from Dhaka, or visiting diplomats from another country. Sometimes there would be different collections of people in different rooms of the house! But true to nature, Karim Uncle would be a gracious host to them all.

Karim Uncle loved his profession and perhaps that is why he was so successful at it. He was born to be a diplomat. It thus seems apt that he died as one too. Barely two months after he had been reassigned as Ambassador, Karim Uncle died on 29th October in Cairo.

We used to joke with Karim Uncle about his capacity to eat and the growing size of his girth. But after his death when I saw all the people from different segments of society, country and world that paid condolences to the Karim family, I realised he had one other part which far surpassed his generous midriff. It was his heart and the capacity he had to give.

May Allah forgive Karim Uncle and have mercy on him and grant him an abode in Jannath. Ameen

## LEST WE FORGET

# Syed Badrudduja: A matchless orator

SYED ASHRAF ALI

NOVEMBER 18 is a day of remembrance for the entire Muslim community of India. It was on this day in 1974 that Syed Badrudduja, the tireless fighter, the most faithful and dedicated comrade of the Muslims in India, had at last sought refuge in eternal rest.

Popularly known as the "Edmund Burke of India," the fame of Syed Badrudduja as an orator spread throughout the length and breadth of the entire sub-continent. Amazing and extraordinary indeed were his speeches. In 1938, before an intimate and select gathering at Shantiniketan, Syed Badrudduja addressed a meeting assembled to honour the new Cabinet of Bengal under Sher-e-Bangla AK Fazul Huq. Rabindranath Tagore was presiding over the meeting. Syed Badrudduja spoke in Bengali. The greatest literary genius of Bengali language and literature, Rabindranath Tagore was listening with rapt attention and admiration to this speech of the unknown non-descript young man. At the end of the speech, the great maestro said emotionally, "What new words have you uttered today! I have never heard anything so beautiful and so eloquent." In reply Badruddujavery humbly said, "Maestro, you are the embodiment of Bengali language and literature. What can a humble person like me tell which is new to you?" To this the great Tagore said, "My dear son. I can scribble a few lines but I cannot speak like you. This is the gift of God!"

In April of the same year, Badrudduja spoke at the Open Session of the All India Muslim League in Calcutta. His was the penultimate speech of the meeting just before the speech of Mohammad Ali Jinnah, President of All India Muslim League. The inimitable choice of words, fiery oration and sincere idealism of the young man of forty startled the audience.

Mohammad Ali Jinnah himself was so moved that he embraced Badrudduja lovingly with great appreciation and the whole audience of nearly a quarter million rose to its feet to greet a leader in the making.

Once during his young days Badrudduja addressed a religious conference presided over by no less a person that the legendary Nobel laureate Sir C.V. Raman. As Raman had an appointment elsewhere, he asked Badrudduja to be brief. Badrudduja replied politely, "Yes, Sir, I shall be brief, reasonably brief." He frequently asked the chair in the course of his speech, "Sir, shall I stop?" No, go on my young friend," said Sir C.V. Raman every time. When

after a long time Badrudduja concluded his speech, Sir Raman remarked, "I was to leave earlier for an appointment but this bright young speaker kept me spellbound."

The historic presidential speech delivered at the All India Muslim Convention held in Aligarh in October 1953, however, marked him out as the finest orator in the subcontinent. The momentous speech took the entire sub-continent by storm. The neglected Muslims of India had heard nothing better, nothing more inspiring, nothing more soothing since the fateful partition in 1947. His deliberations continued for nearly four hours at a stretch, but the vast ocean of a million listeners remained calm and tranquil the Sehr Bayan



tively. He spoke uninterrupted for nearly three hours. He not only defended his character and integrity but also declared his patriotism in no uncertain terms. He also challenged the government to prove the allegations against him. The judge remained calm and quiet, listening in rapt attention to the magic flute of the great orator. When Badrudduja stopped, it was almost the small hours of night (the Commission decided to try Badrudduja not during normal office hours but late a night). The bemused judge had a simple poser, "Mr Badrudduja, do you have anything else to say?" When Badrudduja shook his head, the Judge smiled and said, "You are free, you can go back home if you like. The formalities will follow."

**As an orator Syed Badrudduja indeed had few parallels in the world of eloquence. His exquisite and fiery oration was matchless and inimitable. The peerless iridescence of his eloquence always kept the audience spellbound. His choice of words was amazing and immaculate.**

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He spoke both in English and in Urdu. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, the finest and greatest orator in Urdu, himself was moved, when excerpts were read out to him. He gracefully acknowledged Badrudduja as his equal in the domain of Urdu oration, an honour which no other orator has yet been blessed with. The gist of the speech, in English, was circulated throughout the length and breadth of India and even in the Middle East. The government of India, however, did not relish this unmasking of India's secularism. As a result, this speech was proscribed throughout India.

In consequence of the speech, Syed Badrudduja was put behind bars under the Preventive Detention Act on February 1, 1954. After about three months, a one-man commission comprising a justice of the Calcutta High Court was formed to try the "rebel child of Indian politics" on the grave charges of conniving with a foreign government and passing on secrets of strategic importance to them. When the judge wanted to know if Badrudduja had anything to say in self-defence, it was again the amazing power of eloquence which helped the "rebel" to nail to the counter and quash the canard effec-

Rahman, whose political views were totally different from those of Syed Badrudduja, was an ardent admirer of the great orator's inimitable eloquence. When Badrudduja shuffled of his mortal coil and set sail towards the Great Unknown in November 1974, his son, this writer, then a Director in Bangladesh Betar, was called in at the Ganobhaban. The then Prime Minister not only eulogised Badrudduja as a "great leader" but also took an unprecedented generous step to personally grant foreign exchange for the son to enable him to arrange a befitting Chelhum in Calcutta.

Shahid Ziaur Rahman also eulogised Badrudduja's fiery eloquence on a number of occasions. The late President took keen interest in the Mujahid's siblings. He not only selected his eldest daughter, Syeda Sakina Islam, as a member of Jatiyo Sangsad but also helped another daughter, Syeda Razia Faiz, to win a bye-election and become a member of the same Jatiyo Sangsad.

As an orator Syed Badrudduja indeed had few parallels in the world of eloquence. His exquisite and fiery oration was matchless and inimitable. The peerless iridescence of his eloquence always kept the audience spellbound. His choice of words was amazing and immaculate. In Bengal, celebrities like Sher-e-Bangla AK Fazul Huq, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, Shyama Prasad Mukherjee and Bidhan Chandra Roy hailed him as the Bipin Chandra Pal of Modern Age.

In English, great and skilful speaks like Maulana Mohammed Ali Jauhar, Hussain Shaheed Suhrawardy, Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, Sir Anthony Eden, Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan, Krishna Menon and Dean Rusk compared his fiery and captivating oratory with those of Edmund Burke and Winston Churchill. Whether in English or Bengali, Urdu or Persian, the fascinating and sparkling oration of the "Nightingale of Cordova" (as Sher-e-Bangla lovingly called him) had always been, in the words of the great poetess and politician Sarojini Naidu, "as fresh as the first flowers of the springtime and as enchanting as the music of moonlit streams." He was the Mayor of Calcutta during the British regime, the Calcutta Corporation, Bengal Legislative Council, Lok Sabha and Bidhan Sabha resonated the fiery eloquence of this matchless orator for more than four decades.

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Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur

# China-South Asia factor in global environmental politics

A. TARIQ KARIM

CHINA has a population of 1.3 billion people today. Along with India with its population of over 1 billion, these two Asian giants together account for almost 44 percent of the world's total population today. China has topped annual GDP growth rates of over 7 percent in the last few years and, in South Asia, India is expected to reach similar growth growth shortly. Significantly, South Asia already has an affluent middle class (over 30 percent of India's population alone), but this number is expected to increase progressively in the coming decades, with accompanying expansion of a consumption-based culture aspiring to mimic Western life styles and standards of living resulting in more energy demands per capita and increasing cravings for more cars, more air conditioners, more refrigerators and the like.

China's oil demand in 2004 was 2.4 million barrels/day (mbd) of oil (2004 vs. 1.38 mbd in 2003). China currently imports 40 percent of its total requirements. By 2020, it will experience a net shortfall of 50 percent. By 2030 its domestic oil production will start declining rapidly, resulting in a net shortfall of 75-80 percent. India currently imports about 60 percent of its oil requirement; this is projected to increase to about 85 percent by 2010, and about 92 percent by 2030. By 2030, it is estimated that developing Asia's oil demand will exceed that of US and Canada combined, and account for 26 percent of world total, 21 percent of world incremental gas demand and 80% of world coal demand.

An exceedingly grim scenario, if ever there was one, confronts us, considering that as of now the world's hydro-carbon resources are known to be available in very finite figures and in few places! Nevertheless, aspirations for development must be accompanied by ready availability of sufficient energy resources to meet such vaulting ambitions in the global South. How can industrially aspiring but densely populated Asia, particularly the teeming billion plus in South Asia, seize upon this opportune moment a la Cleanegales, and prepare for the coming dialogue (slated for November 2005)?

South Asia as a whole, alone is host to 23 percent of global population, 39 percent of global poor, as well as the largest absolute number of people living below the poverty line (over 400 million by last count), but accounts for a paltry 2 percent of global GDP. The region

already faces critical shortages of energy and water and a rapid deterioration of the natural environment. In terms of energy resources, India has the highest coal deposits (providing 70 percent of fuel for its present power generation), followed by Pakistan (5 percent of fuel for power generation) and Bangladesh. Natural gas is a potential source for filling part of the energy deficit. Bangladesh may possibly have, according to some estimates, the largest reserves (estimates vary from at least 31 TCF to over 58 TCF, but statistics of proven reserves are fiercely contested and highly politicised domestically); India is estimated to have 50 TCF and Pakistan

whatever name we chose to address Him in our diverse region, would be too pleased at our ascribing all blame to Him for the misdeeds of our making.

South Asia is an important contributor of GHG emissions despite comparatively extremely low economic activity, and its overall share of global CO2 will increase exponentially as its various ambitious industrialisation and development schemes are progressively realised. In the meantime, due to non-availability of alternative fuel sources for meeting with the demands of everyday existence, increasing deforestation has been taking place over the last century, and no doubt will continue to take place

**Given the current concern and debate on increasing global energy consumption and global warming among governments and peoples of most of the industrialized countries, it would be pertinent to ponder whether the G-8, and the global South (particularly South Asia), will be able to think "outside the box" in addressing the thorny issues of increasing energy consumption and growing demand on finite hydro-carbon resources by awakening Asian giants and the consequences for global warming.**

25 TCF. If these optimistic estimates are eventually proven to be correct, the entire region's cumulative reserves may well be able to meet its demands for the next 40-50 years, provided they are adequately and effectively harnessed -- but that still remains very much in the realm of speculation, and the bickering domestic and regional politics is likely to continue to prevent this buried potential of such assumptions from any meaningful translation into reality.

Additionally, let us not lose sight of the fact that all these conventional hydrocarbon-based sources would still continue contributing, in exponentially increasing measures, to the current ongoing process of adding more GHGs to the global atmosphere, with consequences yet unknown, but largely thought to be fearful. Should South Asia, with its teeming millions and densely packed population (with Bangladesh now declared to be the most densely populated country in the world) be fearful of climate change and environmental degradation and act now to face these challenges? Or should we simply bury our heads in the sand, and ignore the phenomena of retreating glaciers in the Himalayas and recurring but devastating floods of recent years in the plains as acts of God beyond man's control? I am not sure that God, by

further in the present century as well, resulting in progressively increasing environmental degradation. This has already had seriously negative spillover effects in other areas as well -- increasing soil erosion during times of heavy floods (a regular feature), and increasing siltation of riverbeds which in turn further exacerbate flooding. Overall, this results in environmental diversity being increasingly at stake (South Asia is home to 5 percent of the world's flora and fauna).

Considering India alone, it is already the fifth largest economy in the world, and is widely expected to become one of the fastest growing economies in the next two decades. However, in this growth spurt, while it is expected to be registering a 5.8 percent average annual energy consumption increase annually, its domestic energy production rate is anticipated to grow by only 2.33 percent a year. It has a current energy deficit of around 100,000 MW -- which will deteriorate further in the years and decades ahead. In 1999 India imported about 2/3 of its crude oil requirements, and was a net importer of coal. By 2020, its demand for commercial energy is likely to increase by 2.5 times over current levels, with highest growth rate of energy consumption predicted by 2010. Closing the gap with nuclear

energy is a viably clean (relatively speaking) option -- India already generates 2860 MW through such means. While further development of this sector is likely to be stymied not only by fears of further nuclear expansion in the region further exacerbating the vitiated regional politics -- although the agreement between the United States and India recently does make this possibility more feasible -- the real problem of nuclear waste disposal in a heavily populated region with sparse expanses of uninhabited land would be the real challenge to this option. Looking at the heated debate raging within the United States on the proposed move of all nuclear waste to the federally owned Yucca Mountain repository in sparsely populated Nevada, one may expect very robust environmentalists in India as likely to try their level best at forestalling any meaningful expansion of this sector.

However, where a dramatic breakthrough could be achieved, and realistically so, is in developing and bringing onstream the region's hydropower potentials -- estimated to be in excess of 200,000 MW. At present, the region has 31,826 MW installed capacity and actual utilization of only about 13.2 MW -- so the region overall harbours an additional 180,000 MW or more of feasible but untapped potential hydel power. South Asia has some of the world's largest river systems in the world. At the same time, ironically, vast areas served by these same rivers are plagued by drought and aridity during the dry season and floods during monsoons, and potable water is an increasingly rare and precious commodity -- all these factors impact adversely on the quality of life in urban living as well. In short, a crisis is foreseen confronting the region's growing population in this century.

Given the current concern and debate on increasing global energy consumption and global warming among governments and peoples of most of the industrialized countries, it would be pertinent to ponder whether the G-8, and the global South (particularly South Asia), will be able to think "outside the box" in addressing the thorny issues of increasing energy consumption and growing demand on finite (and fungible and diminishing) hydro-carbon resources by these awakening Asian giants and the consequences for global warming.

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