Collaborative and better management of renewable resources:

A holistic scheme of joint management of shared commons (waters resources, forestry) is suggested as the best possible way of addressing the myriad issues. Such an approach will also spread into:

- Creating massive employment of human resources.
- Taming rivers.
- Expansion of existing irrigation channels.
- Creating water conservation reservoirs.
- Generating hydro-electric power from small to medium-sized hydro-electric projects in a series of barrages that would need to be set up to better manage the waters.
- Preventing land loss.
- Restoring forestry (potentially 25% of the land area).
- Reviving and expanding carbon sequestration zones.
- Reviving and opening up the rivers to better and more optimised used of river transportation.
- Linking/extending infrastructure for people-to-people communication and trade

Such a holistic and integrated approach would automatically synergise linkages between the various activities mentioned above.

Politics and Economics:

Much would depend on the respective, and collective, political will and attitudes of people and political leaderships. In South Asia, the reality is that economics is very much hostage to the political dynamics. The economic engine of any regional or sub-regional cooperation in South Asia will not run without its political spark plugs firing in unison.

Better management and optimising use of non-renewable resources:

The BBIN sub-region has estimated natural gas reserves of 190 billion cbm, coal reserves of over 900 million tons, oil reserves of at least 513 million tons, limestone reserves of over 4.3 billion tons.

Harnessing and proper management and utilisation of these resources would serve to dramatically transform the sub-region, and drastically eliminate the causes that lead to internal strife that have adverse effects for security and stability of the region.

There would be additional beneficial spin-offs that would inevitably follow in the wake of the holistic program suggested above. The incentives of trade, whether intra-state, inter-state, or border trade, would increase dramatically, while ancillary supportive infrastructure would be developed; rivers that are otherwise stagnating or literally dying would be rejuvenated, and open up supporting avenues for human activities without risk of environmental degradation.

Additionally, people-to-people contacts would be exponentially spurred, promoting better understanding and overall be conducive to peace, stability and cooperative development.

rial system of Bangladesh are by far the most important.

They all need training and better management, but piecemeal attempts at taming rivers simply will not work. Rivers have a dynamic and force of their own, and only collaborative efforts, involving people living along the rivers from their respective headwaters to their mouths, need to be engaged simultaneously and in tandem.

Suggested in the following page is a new paradigm of collaboration on better and more efficient management of renewable resources and optimising use of non-renewable resources in the sub-region.

Can We Do This?

Yes, we can. If we have the will and the gumption! Bangladesh and India were finally able to resolve the seemingly intractable issue of sharing the Ganges waters. India and Nepal were also able to similarly resolve their own dispute over the Mahakali River. India and Pakistan share the waters of the Indus River through a treaty brokered several decades ago by the World Bank that has withstood the tests of time and several wars between the two.

The same model may well be applied, with some adaptations to fostering sub-regional cooperation. The people of the region and policy makers need to shift from a mindset of reacting to crises to anticipatory thinking.

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