I feel the private sector has the ability to help resolve our energy crisis.

**Are they being hindered in any way?**

If you see the laws and policies of Bangladesh, then the answer is no. But if you see the actual attitude of the government or of the utilities, the answer is yes.

We as a nation must embrace the free market economy and democracy at the same time. Democracy and the free market economy go hand in hand and it seems like we [Bangladesh] have accepted democracy to a large extent, but the free market economy, not so much.

To accept the free market economy, the politicians and the bureaucrats must have much broader understanding and acceptance of the free market economy, which would be reflected in their attitudes by enabling and allowing the private sector to implement solutions for the economic problems of the country.

**What is the way forward for private sector-led energy growth in Bangladesh?**

Specifically speaking, we have too many bottlenecks and layers of bureaucratic red tape before a large project of any nature can be implemented. In the case of power, there are six layers, first, the tender committee of the utility or the power cell, second the board of directors of Bangladesh Power Development Board, then the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources (Power Division), then the cabinet purchase committee, then the honourable prime minister, and subsequent to that, after the negotiation of contracts, the vetting by the Ministry of Law and Parliamentary Affairs.

So we are talking about six layers and in each place there are at least ten people who are required to concur unanimously on all the conditionalities.

In any country that would be a challenging prospect and in Bangladesh they usually don't succeed and in the last nine years these 50 or 60 people could not concur on a single large project.

**How would you change the system to make it more effective in the long run and more active in the short run?**

The Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources needs to take up a proposal to the cabinet of the People's Republic of Bangladesh that they need to cut the red tape and instead of six different institutions concurring there should be one or two layers.

There could be one layer at the utility level where the tendering committee and the board could make a decision and then the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources should be empowered to accept or reject it.

It would be two layered and it would be amongst people who would be connected with the power sector. What happens now is as it goes to the cabinet purchase committee and the Ministry of Law, there are other influences that come in, and sometimes there is not a full understanding of the need or economics of the project.

**People have talked about putting forward expressions of interest rather than traditional tenders to help expedite the process of power generation, what are your views on the issue?**

I would imagine that a lot of study should precede removing an existing system; we have a system which is not bad. The implementation of the system is bad, our tendering process has not failed, it is the number of layers that we have put in the tendering process that has failed. So I do not feel that expressions of interest or short-term measures sidestepping the existing methodology are necessary or important.

**Do you think a regional power grid is a viable option for Bangladesh?**

In the short run the regional grid or the connectivity with India will not provide solutions for Bangladesh. But in the long run this would be a stepping-stone to the resolution of a lot of electricity crisis across the board among all the regional countries. So while the discussions today may not bring in solutions for the next year, this has been a huge step forward towards regional cooperation, opening of minds, towards creating an inclusive subcontinent where each nation provides support to each other for their development.

**Do you think something will actually come about?**

I am a strong believer in hope and change. Immediately after the Second World War nobody thought that there would be a European Union and even that was not too long ago. Things could open up in a single day. I am happy that the governments of the region are coming forward to support each other. Geographically, the subcontinent is together and they need each other's support to reap the benefits of this geography. I firmly believe that we must rely on each other and support each other to develop together.

**There is a lot of talk about the need for power generation, but if and when that extra power is generated do we have the proper infrastructure to distribute and transmit it?**

Electricity has three phases: generation, transmission, and distribution. Fortunately for us, at