

# Gasping for Fresh Air?

## Media Briefing on Challenges of Air Quality & Mobility Management in South Asian Cities

*Organised by*

Centre for Science and Environment (CSE), India  
*together with* TVE Asia Pacific



**27 April 2011**  
**SLFI, Colombo 7**



# Asking Questions, Seeking Clarity



**Nalaka Gunawardene**  
Director, TVE Asia Pacific

[www.tveap.org](http://www.tveap.org)

# Why this event?



- Part of our on-going commitment to **mobilise media** for cleaner air in developing Asia
- Tap mass media's power to **critically support** individual, community, govt & industry efforts for better air quality
- Self interest: **breathe easily!**

# TVE Asia Pacific (TVEAP)

- Regional non-profit media foundation, est. 1996
- Using TV, video & web to communicate development
- Journalistic story-tellers
- Anchored in Sri Lanka
- Covering developing countries in Asia Pacific region

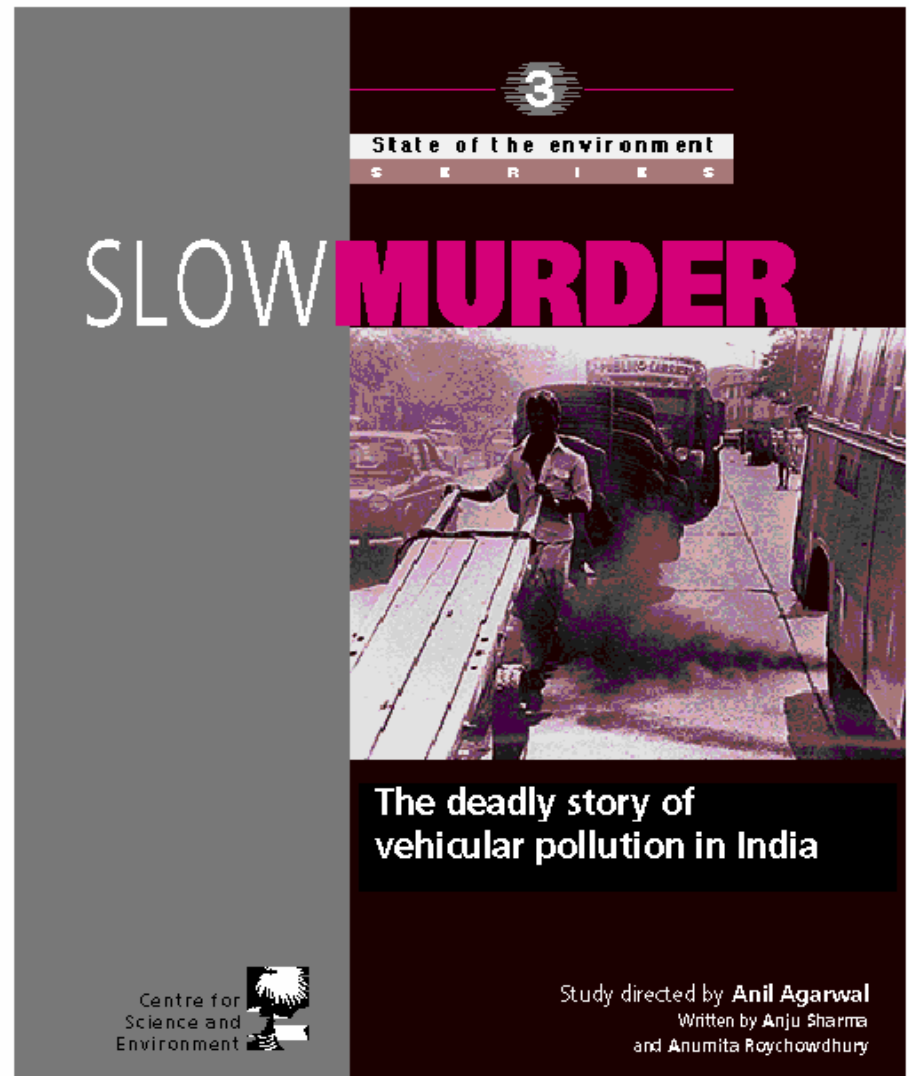


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Cartoon by Rustam Vania, CSE

# CSE: Long track record...





# Roll down the window of your bullet-proof car, Mr Prime Minister

## The security threat is not the gun. It's the air of Delhi



Hon'ble Prime Minister,

Here is something that just may convince you: while India's Gross Domestic Product has increased two-and-half times in two decades (1975-1995), the pollution load from industries has gone up four times and from vehicles a shocking eight times.

A study by the Centre for Science and Environment shows that the number of people dying due to air pollution went up by almost 30 per cent in four years between 1991 and 1995. An estimated 52,000 people are dying due to air pollution every year - about 10,000 of them in Delhi itself.

One person dies every hour due to air pollution in the city.

In Delhi vehicles are responsible for 70 per cent of the pollution load. Because of the high toxicity of fumes from transport fuel, one out of every 10-15 people living in Delhi is likely to get cancer.

Your government has failed to arrest this deterioration of air quality in Indian cities. Worse still, it contributes to the pollution in a big way by producing low quality fuel in state-owned refineries. Improving fuel quality is a short-term measure which will go a long way. Vehicles using clean fuel will pollute less.

Seeing your government's inability to tackle air pollution, we present you with a peoples' charter for clean air. This will help to immediately improve the quality of the air we breathe.

Mr Prime Minister, 50 years into Independence, please give us our right to clean air. We hope you will take our concern seriously.

Yours sincerely

Centre for Science and Environment  
November 2, 1998

### PEOPLES' CHARTER ON CLEAN AIR FOR AN IMMEDIATE IMPACT

#### ✓ PRODUCE CLEAN DIESEL ON IMPORT

Diesel emissions contain deadly particulate matter with traces of the strongest carcinogen known till date. Indian diesel is 250 times dirtier than the world's best.

#### ✓ REMOVE BENZENE FROM PETROL

India is moving towards unleaded petrol. But this fuel contains too much benzene. Though we use one hundred times less petrol than USA, the total amount of benzene emissions from Indian vehicles is the same as in the US.

Benzene causes blood cancer and air should have no benzene at all, says WHO. Yet the level of benzene in and around Connaught Place in Delhi is 10 times higher than the European safety limit. If you live in Delhi, your chances of getting blood cancer are twice as high as people living in Bangalore, Chennai and Mumbai.

#### ✓ STOP PRIVATE DIESEL CARS

Registration of all private diesel models should be banned in cities like Delhi. Cheap government diesel means more diesel cars, including luxury models.

#### ✓ TAX TO IMPROVE VEHICLE TECHNOLOGY

Penalise vehicle manufacturers for producing polluting technology. Tax vehicles according to their emission level. Manufacturers will then invest in cleaner technology.

#### ✓ INTRODUCE EMISSION WARRANTY

Make the industry accountable for the life-long emission efficiency of all vehicles they produce.

#### ✓ MAKE EMISSION LEVELS PUBLIC

Manufacturers must inform buyers of the exact emission levels of their vehicles.

#### ✓ MONITOR ALL HARMFUL GASES

Improve air quality assessment. A wide range of poisons are not monitored till date. Alert people about pollution levels in the city. It is done all over the world.



#### Register your protest to the Prime Minister today

PMO, South Block, New Delhi 110 001  
Tel: 301 8939 Fax: 301 6857, 301 9817

#### Join CSE's Right To Clean Air campaign



Centre for Science and Environment  
41, Tughlakabad Institutional Area, New Delhi 110 062  
Tel: 698 3394, 698 1124, 698 6399 Fax: 698 5879  
Email: cse@cseindia.org Website: www.cseindia.org

# Stories in the air?



As professional 'story-tellers'...

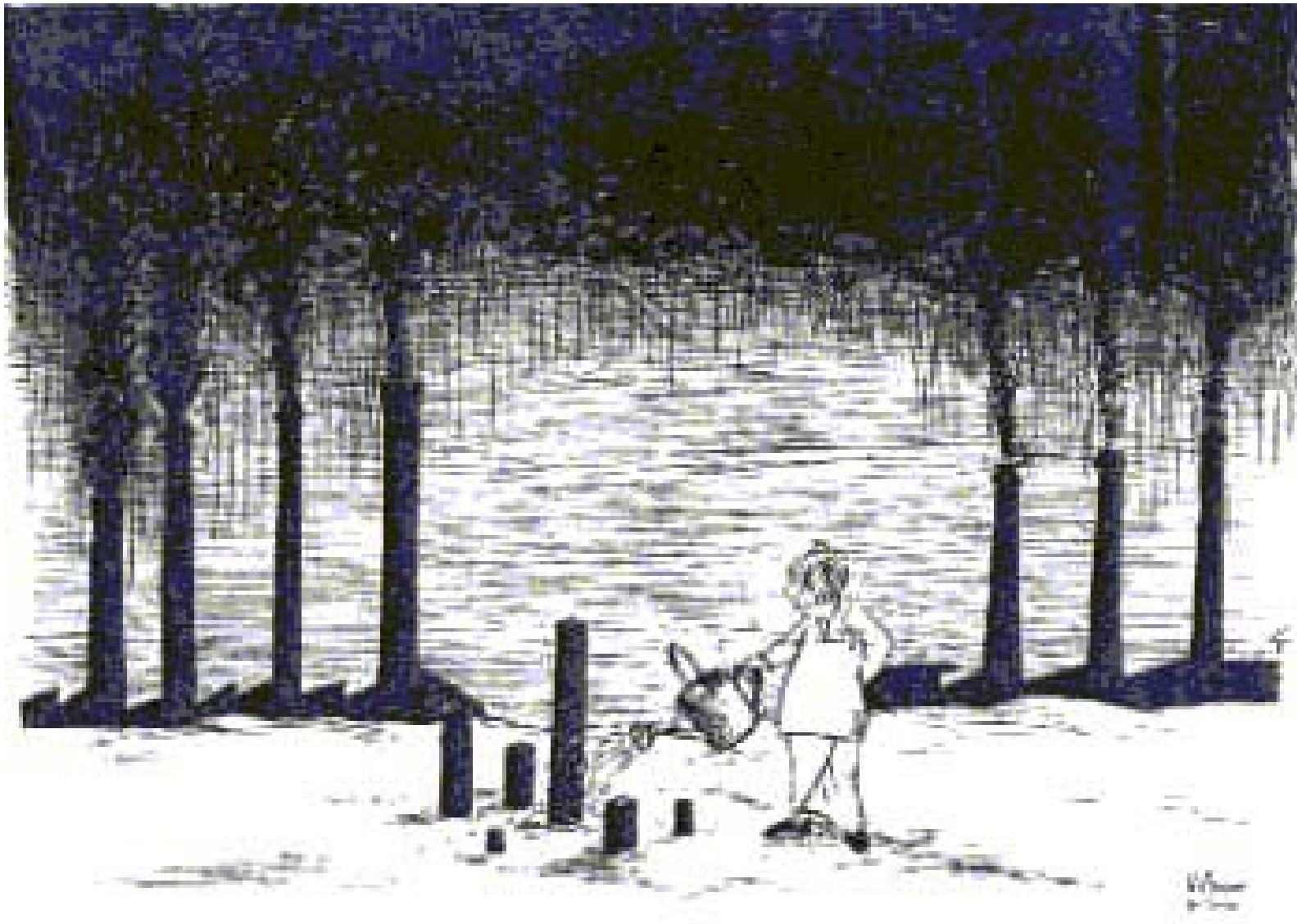
- How can we **see air quality stories** beyond most obvious?
- Where do we **dig for such stories**?
- What are they **worth**?
- How **best to tell** often complex & evolving stories?
- What pitfalls to **guard against**?



# Look for bigger picture...



- It's more than a 'pollution' story
- **Complex links** to govt policy, regulation, industrial lobbies, tech options, etc, etc.
- Strong vested interests: **money, power, intrigue!**
- At stake: **Health, wealth & lives**
- Hype & disinformation abound
- But **success stories** too!

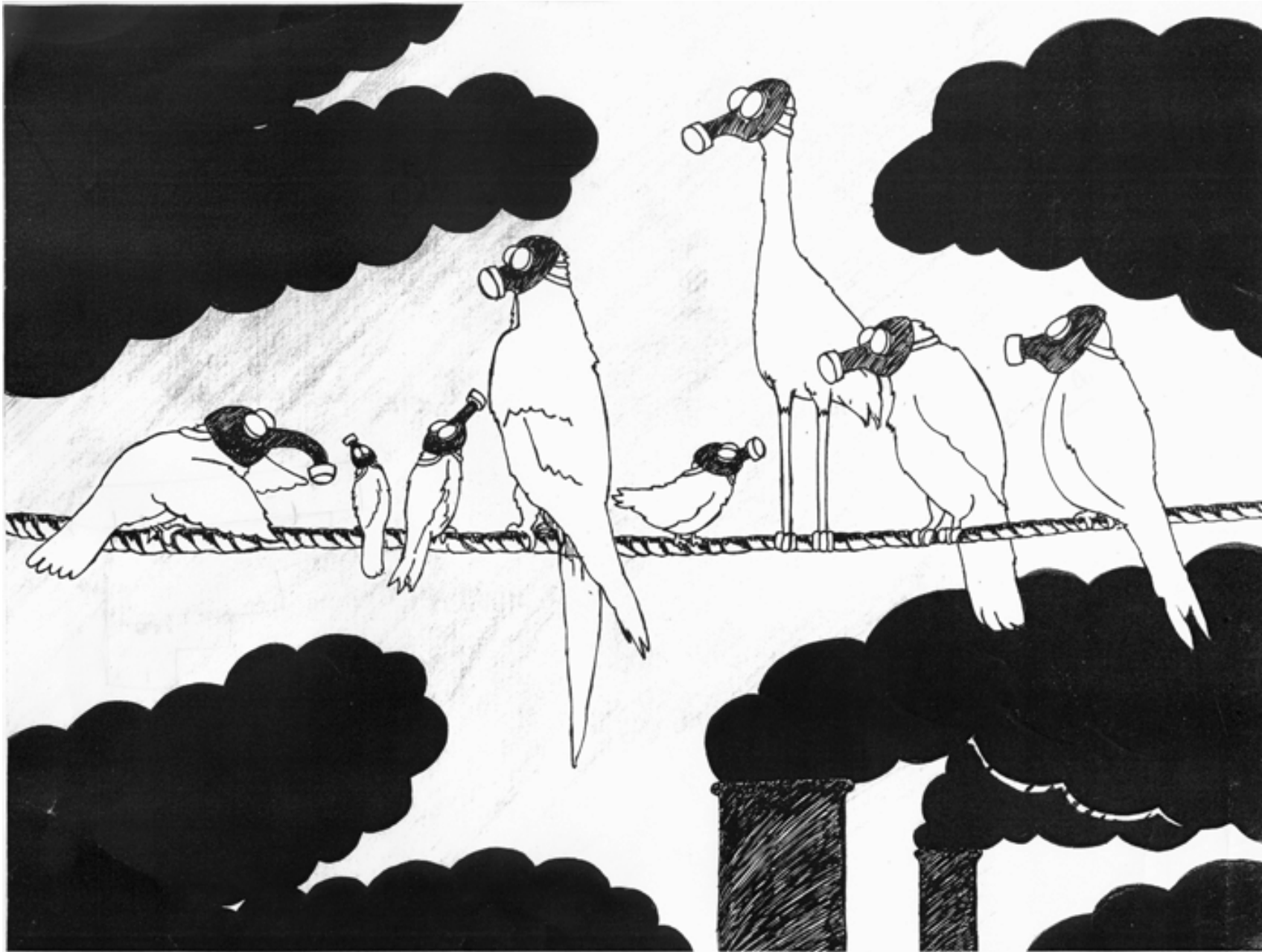


**Cartoon by W R Wijesoma, *circa 1990***



**Cartoon by W R Wijesoma, 1993**

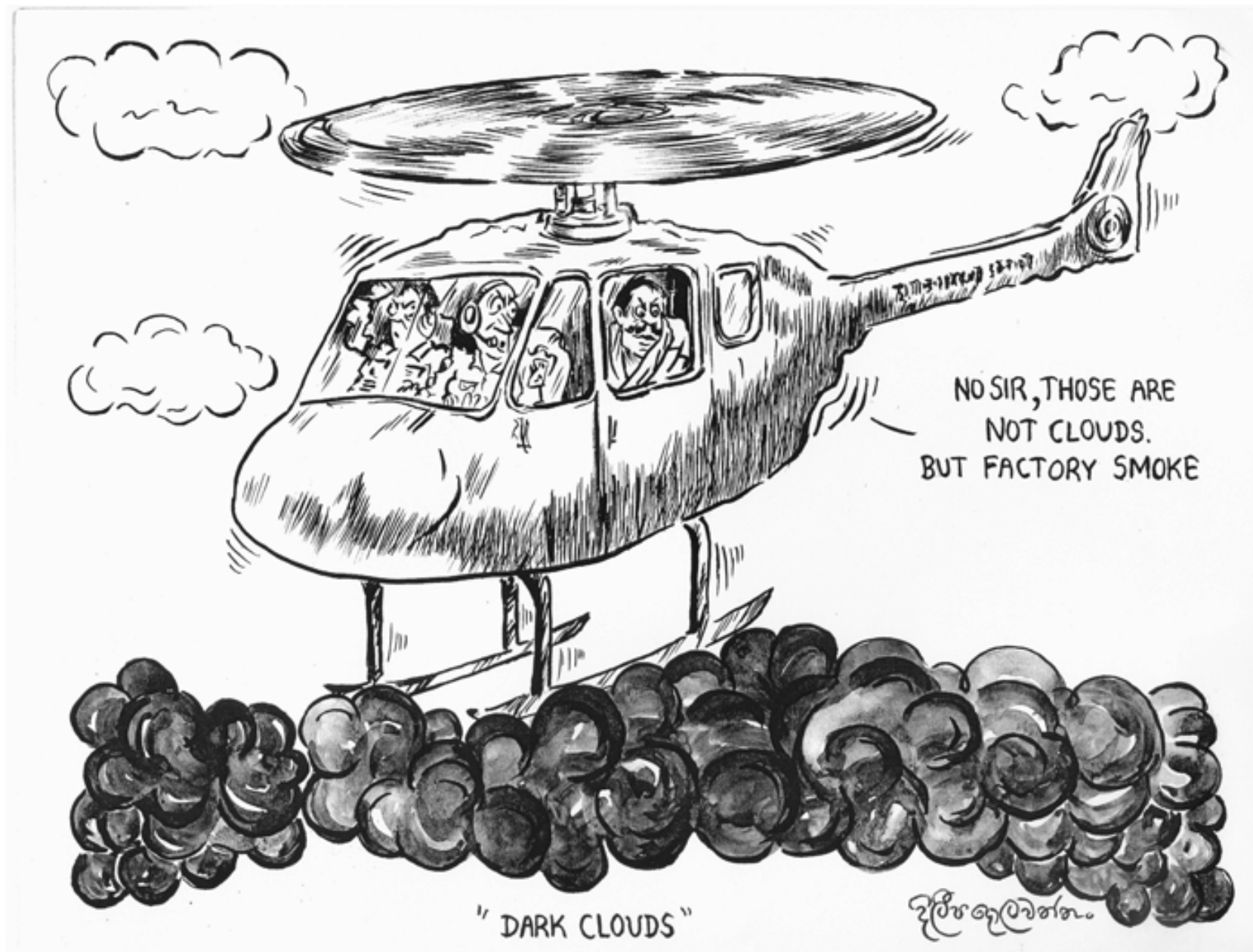




**Cartoon by Ramesh de Silva, 2010**

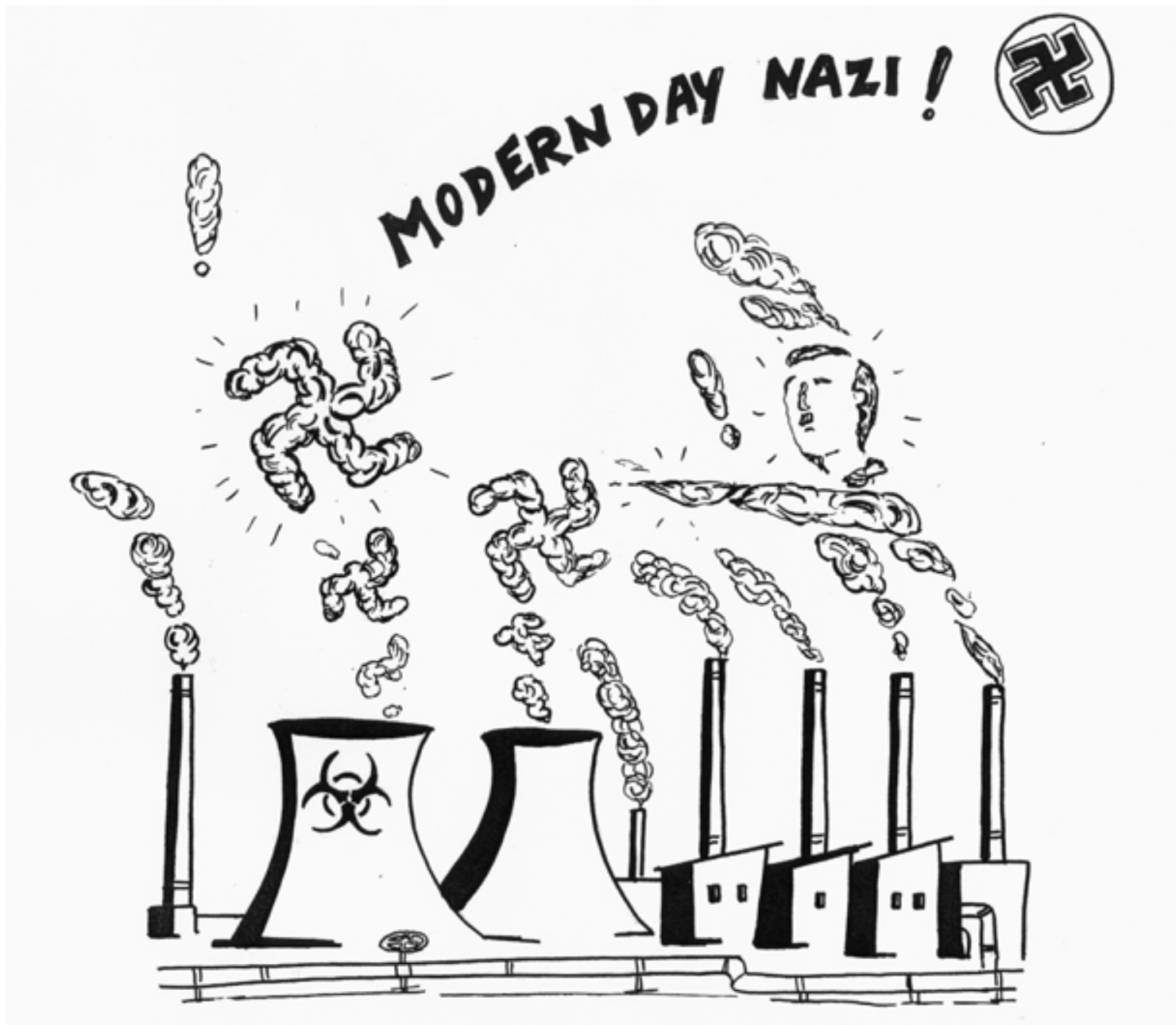


**Cartoon by Darshana Priyanth Malwattage, 2010**



**Cartoon by M M D M Dileepa Dolawatta, 2010**



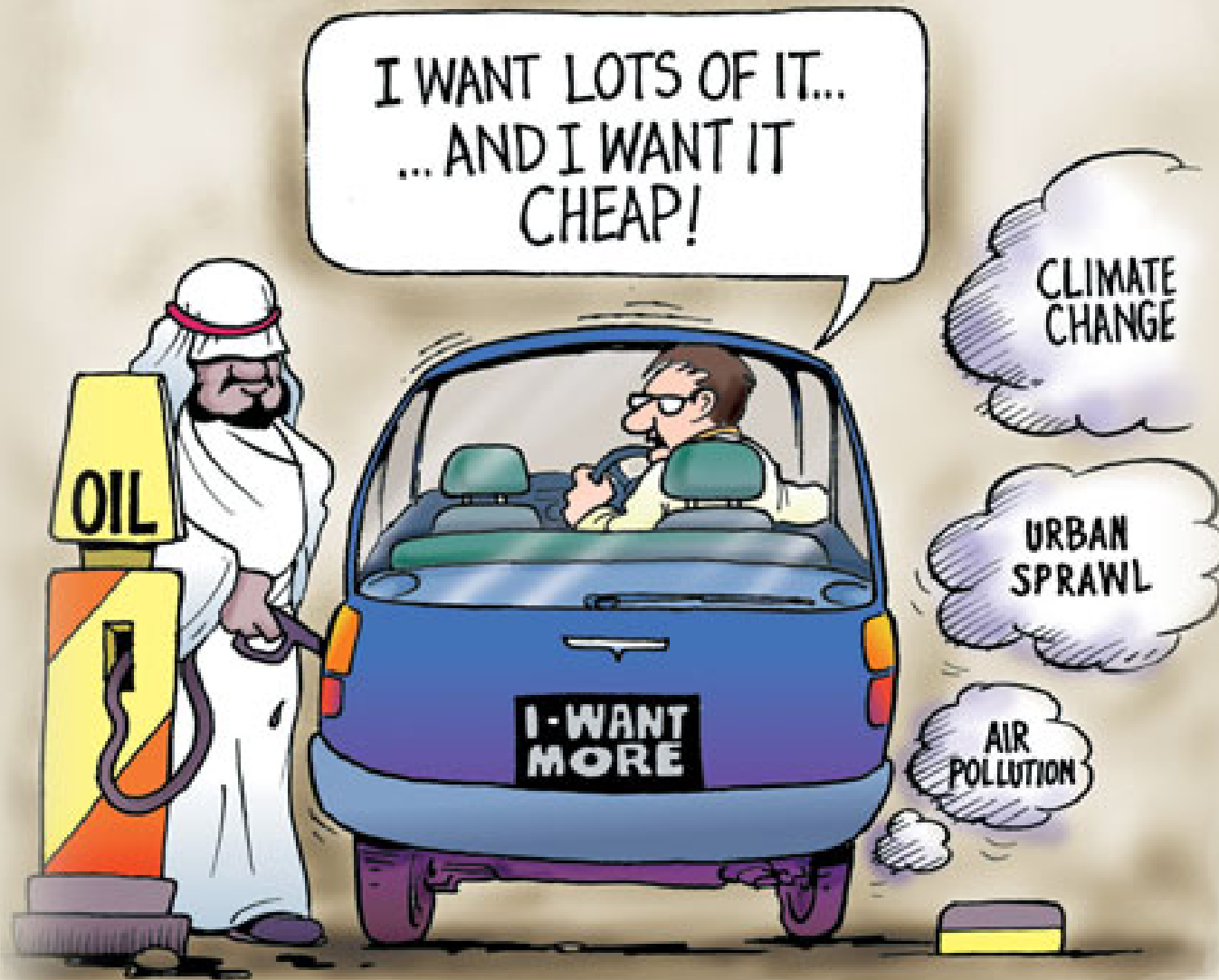


**Cartoon by Fazrina Fara Mohamed Mubarak, 2010**





# FOSSIL FOOLS



Cartoon from *Down to Earth*, CSE India

# Clean Air stories: Science + politics + people



- Many stories **science**-based...
- Ideal coverage: informed by science, but not immersed in it!
- Also pursue **political** angles...
- Clean air: environment + business + health + politics +
- Green; Brown; Black & White!



# Engaging Media...



Media for Cleaner Air in Asia Training Workshop  
@BAQ, Yogyakarta, Indonesia: Dec 2006

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# Wanted: Human Face!



“Scientific data, technical analysis and statistics alone cannot engage the public on air pollution and its mitigation...”

“To be effective, media coverage of air quality needs to **include the human dimension and human interest.**”

- Participants at 2006 Yogyakarta w/s  
Details: <http://tiny.cc/GoodAir>

# Taking it personally...



Saneeya  
Hussain  
(1954-2005)  
Journalist,  
Social activist &  
Asthma refugee



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