

Visit of USI Delegation to China - A Report

Brigadier Arun Sahgal (Retd)

A four member USI delegation visited China from July 23 to July 27, 2007 in pursuance of ongoing annual bilateral dialogue with China Institute for International Strategic Studies (CISS), Beijing. This year, in addition, the delegation interacted with the Chinese Academy of Military Sciences (AMS), Beijing on July 23 and Institute of South Asian Studies (ISAS), Kunming on July 27. The last interaction with CISS took place in September 2006 at New Delhi. The aim of the bilateral dialogue is to share perspectives and gain better understanding of each others views on issues of common concern both in regional and bilateral context.

The USI delegation was led by Mr. CR Garekhan, IFS (Retd); and included Lieutenant General Chandra Shekhar, PVSM, AVSM (Retd), Brigadier Arun Sahgal (Retd), Deputy Director (Research), USI-Centre for Strategic Studies and Simulation; and Brigadier Vinod Anand (Retd), Senior Research Fellow, USI. CISS participants were led by Maj Gen (Retd), Cai Bingkui, Executive Director CISS; main paper presenters included Major General (Retd) Wang Haiyun, Major General (Retd) Luo Piesen and Major General (Retd) Zhang Lin and Senior Colonel Chen Wei, Director General, CUSS from the Chinese side.

Main topics for the one day Workshop included - "Role of Major Powers in South Asia: Implications for Regional Security", "Situation in Afghanistan", "Future of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation" and "Energy Security: An Indian Perspective". The Workshop with CISS was conducted on July 24.

Interaction with Chinese Academy of Military Sciences

Lieutenant General Qian Haiho, Vice President of AMS briefed the delegation on the role of the Chinese Academy of Military

A team of USI was invited to visit China in July 2007. The article carries the first hand impressions of the delegation's visit to China.

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Sciences (AMS). He had visited India and recalled fondly his meetings with senior Indian military leadership. AMS is the principle think tank of the PLA. It comes directly under the Central Military Commission (CMC). The AMS is premier national centre for military studies and PLA's highest-level research institute for doctrinal development and force transformation including Revolution in Military affairs. The National Defence University (NDU) the other major military institute is mainly responsible for the education and training of senior commanding and staff officers. It coordinates all programmes of PLA for military science and is in charge of research studies which give theoretical perspective to guide the PLA. It also conducts studies in international security problems and carries out research in the history of modern campaigns and conflicts including international militaries, to draw out useful lessons as China sets about transforming the PLA in terms of military capability development to meet contemporary challenges.

To pursue above objectives the AMS is organised into many departments which include Department of War and Strategic Theories, Department of Military Strategy, Department of Operational Theories and Doctrines and Department of Military Operational Research which carries out computer aided military analysis and war gaming. PLA is in the process of transforming from stage of mechanisation to informationisation wherein its leaders were taking action to promote RMA with Chinese characteristics. The twin goals of Chinese RMA are to develop informationalised force capable of winning what the Chinese term "information based local wars". Within the above construct the focus is on overall transformation from a mechanised to informationalised force. With the information being the driving force, the Chinese impetus is on developing information technologies, weapons and equipments, combat theories and associated concepts and doctrines, with the aim of fighting future wars as integrated air-land-sea-space warfare in an integrated operations of system versus system. The relevance of AMS lies in being the repository of integrated doctrine and concept development taking cognisance of the nature of future wars.

AMS is a consultative institution for decision makers particularly at the level of the Chinese Military Commission (CMC) headed by President Hu Jintao. Thus, the position of AMS in shaping the politico military discourse in the context of

overall national security is obvious. This was apparent from the tone and tenor of discussions. The other institution which provides inputs on military issues is National Defence University which acts more of a training laboratory where concepts and doctrines produced by the AMS are evaluated and refined through gaming and simulation during the courses run for senior PLA officers. It may perhaps be the reason that despite many requests from foreign armies including India NDU has not opened its doors to foreign officers, quite akin to our own operational level War College courses.

Major General Liu looking after development of operational theories and doctrines was appreciative of India's experience and development of Counter Insurgency and mountain warfare theories and doctrines. He was also appreciative of Indian Armed Forces experience in UN Peace Keeping Operations. On a query Chinese intimated that their counter insurgency doctrine was under preparation and was expected to be ready in about two years after simulation and experimentation. AMS leadership expressed interest in continuing mutual institutional exchanges with the USI.

CIISS Workshop at the CIISS

South Asia and Big Powers

Key note address in this session was given by Ambassador Garekhan on the role of major powers in South Asia. He highlighted the beneficial historical and civilization exchanges between rest of the world and India and especially cultural and scholarly exchanges between China and India. He deliberated upon demise of the Soviet Union, India's policy of non-alignment and questioned the relevance of NATO in post Cold War era. There was diminishing of interest amongst some powers in South Asia after the end of Cold War but the war on terrorism revived their interest in the region. SAARC predates end of Cold War. In its formative phase, given mutual suspicions and other factors, building SAARC, as a viable political and economic grouping has been a difficult process. Unless Indo-Pak differences are resolved SAARC's progress as a regional cooperative structure on issues of mutual concerns would remain limited.

Tracing the history of big power involvement the Ambassador highlighted that every time these powers have intervened in South

Asia it has only led to regional instability. Delving on propensity of some of the external players attempting to play balance of power politics he emphasised the fact that India has never been a hegemon; no ruler of India has embarked on voyage of conquest and India has never been an expansionist power. Even ancient India, despite its intrinsic political and military strength, concentrated on cultural and social integration rather than political.

Some external powers have sought observers' status which is quite significant but it would be legitimate to ask why these external powers which are much wealthier than SAARC countries, should be keen to establish formal relationship with it. External powers come to 'help' mainly to serve their own interests. It has always been mutually beneficial if bilateral approach is adopted (for instance, Simla Agreement of 1972) instead of seeking to counter balance with the help of external power.

External powers come to a region to address their own concerns, and not for altruistic pursuits. By the same token, external powers would do well to realise that when a South Asian state aligns itself with them it expects a definite quid pro quo. When Pakistan offered its territory to USA for all kinds of purposes in the American campaign against Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, Pakistan demanded, and got, not only massive economic aid and military assistance; it also received the certification, known to be wrong even at that time, regarding the nature of its nuclear programme. This obliged India to strengthen its defence capability.

Highlighting the need to diffuse conflict and build on positives of the growing relations, Ambassador gave the example of China-India trade which is poised to grow to 40 billion dollars by 2010. Leadership in both the countries has wisely decided not to wait for resolution of the territorial question in order to develop relations in other sectors. Same approach has been suggested to Pakistan. Developments in Afghanistan have brought NATO to our door step and Pakistan has become a major non-NATO ally of the US. US-India relations, though not very close in the past, have acquired a certain degree of salience because of sharing of some basic values. But it is also very evident that India will not allow itself to be used in any strategy of containing China. Further, it is also not very clear whether

the US has any such strategy in place because the US and China remain deeply engaged economically, despite occasional political rhetoric. China is also actively engaged in South Asia perhaps as much as, if not more than the US.

What is of particular interest and concern to India is China's strategic involvement with Pakistan for the past nearly 50 years especially in the areas of non-peaceful uses of nuclear energy and support in their military infrastructure. China has shown anxiety of rising incidence of terrorism in Pakistan especially in connection with Chinese workers. In the contemporary world, terrorism is one factor which unites us all. The experience in Afghanistan teaches us that encouragement of Jihad in neighbouring country would eventually boomerang. Highest priority of governments in South Asia must be to reduce and eliminate poverty. Peace will remain elusive so long external inputs to conflict generation do not cease. We would encourage extra regional powers to collaborate with regional players as partners through bilateral or multilateral engagement.

Chinese response to the address was cautious and left out issues of discord as outlined in Indian perspective. There was general agreement that peacekeeping by NATO has brought it to the doorstep of India, and China also feels the same way. Though external powers are welcome for economic relations but their interference in other activities does have a negative impact in South Asia. NATO has been seeking enlargement of its area of operations, and along with the US, is targeting Japan and Australia for establishing strategic relationship. This is in spite of the fact that some of the 'old Europe' nations were opposed to NATO's transformation. Chinese interlocutors were keen to know if India was developing any special relationship with NATO. It was clarified to them that India does not have any such relationship.

Chinese scholars raised the issue of India attempting to enhance its extra regional role. In this context, they questioned on India's base at Ayni in Tajikistan and satellite facility at Madagascar. It was clarified that only some infrastructure improvements have been done in the Tajikistan air base at the express request of the Government, and the earth satellite station established in Madagascar is of non-military nature, to deal with maritime piracy particularly in the notorious Somalian waters. Delegation also highlighted some of the Chinese activities in the Indian Ocean

Region including earth stations in Sudan and other key locations in Africa.

Chinese concerns were also raised on the forthcoming Malabar Exercise comprising Quad plus One (US-Australia-Japan-Singapore) naval exercises in the Bay of Bengal and the Andaman Sea. It was emphasised that the exercises were a part of traditional exercises that all navies indulged in. The aim was to improve interoperability, enhance skills and learn from each others experience and the emphasis of manoeuvres was in non-traditional areas of security. It was emphasised that similar maritime exercises were carried out by Chinese Navy along with Pakistan Navy and Navies from same other nations in Arabian Sea during March 2007, codenamed AMAN-07. Chinese perspective also included the issue of decline of Russian relations with the US and the west and assertiveness of President Putin. In their view these were efforts to counterbalance hegemony of the US and to help shape international situation; in short an emergence of multipolar world rather than a unipolar world dominated by the US.

Chinese perspective also stressed that India-China relations are on fast track and growth of the relationship would be of far reaching significance to the region at large. Common purpose of India and China is to resolve border dispute which is a left over of history. China is pursuing a good neighbourly foreign policy and wishes peace, stability and development in the region. India and Pakistan relations are improving and the improvement would have a positive impact in South Asian region. Differences of views in India-China relations can be reduced through exchanges, dialogue, people to people contacts and interaction through circle of strategic establishments of which the USI-CIISS dialogue forms a part.

Future of SCO and Situation in Afghanistan

Major General Wang Haiyun (ex-Defence Attache to Russia and now adviser to National Development Centre of SCO) remarked that India has taken active interest in the activities of SCO and will play an important role in SCO. The main theme of his presentation revolved around three points. First, SCO is a new type of organisation with new concept. Second, it has made great contribution to world peace and harmony and third, it enjoys good prospects of development. He highlighted the achievements of

the SCO in the areas of economy, security and trade and strategic consultations. He also emphasised on the cooperation between SCO members on issues of terrorism and conduct of joint anti-terrorism exercises. He believed that expansion of SCO is inevitable but it may not include countries outside the region (reference to US attempts at gaining observer status). He highlighted that the joint SCO and CSTO military exercise to be held in August 2007 would be of far reaching significance for peace and stability in the region and is indicative of strong determination to crack down on terrorism. In short he painted a very rosy picture of the current status and future prospects of the SCO. Another issue of emphasis was on the creation of energy club within the auspices of the SCO to deal with energy issues of the region. He mentioned that Memorandum of Understanding has been prepared and secretariat worked out; this organisation is poised to takeoff shortly.

From Indian perspective, SCO has witnessed cooperation and competition in terms of divergence in the interests of member countries as well as competition from overlapping security structures like CSTO, OSCE, and NATO's partnership for peace programme. In the ensuing discussions Chinese conceded that the SCO has not been as effective as envisioned in its charter but nonetheless had tremendous potential. India, as an observer in the SCO, is keen to intensify cooperation on economic and energy issues besides development of North-South transportation corridor.

Chinese perspective on Afghanistan is that the situation is relatively stable since the take over by Karzai government. Karzai has been endeavouring to forge all round diplomacy and cooperation with its neighbours. It has become member of SAARC and has a special relationship with the SCO. The problems of Taliban resurgence, the question of drug production and use of funds by Taliban through drug dealing and kidnappings were highlighted. NATO forces' difficulties and tactics were deliberated upon. Internal difficulties of Karzai government including shortage of developmental funds were also highlighted.

Major General Zhang Lin also spoke on Afghanistan but confined himself to the role of NATO as a peacekeeper in Afghanistan. He made three points; first, military action of NATO

has transformed from security assistance to fighting insurgency/ countering terrorism. Second, Afghanistan is a symbol for NATO influence in Asia-Pacific and third, it serves the interests of the US. This was the first time that Chinese perspective on role of NATO was so well articulated.

However, Pakistan's role in aiding Taliban was conspicuous by its absence in any remarks, when the USI delegates highlighted the role of Pakistan in providing sanctuaries and other kind of aid, the Chinese side offered no response. On being quizzed on their assessment on the likelihood of NATO and the US forces withdrawing from Afghanistan and China's response, the Chinese side was not very forthcoming. Chinese speculated that US-NATO forces may withdraw in 2009 (after the elections in the US); however they did not give any response on whether SCO would be willing to contribute to the regional security. They felt that Afghanistan is a strategic bridge between Central Asia and South Asia and the Americans would not give up so easily. It is for these reasons that the US has promoted the concept of 'Great Central Asia' with pipelines, transport corridors and power lines running from Central Asia to South Asia. It appeared that there was an underlying desire that current status should continue as the consequences of Western withdrawal were too far reaching which they would rather not discuss.

Energy Security: An Indian Perspective for Asian Energy Security Regime

Brigadier Arun Sahgal (Retd) provided the key note address on the topic. The main issues highlighted by him are given in the succeeding paragraphs.

India is the sixth largest energy consumer in the world. It is in the process of defining the energy security policy. A look at the external sourcing of energy supply suggests that Asia looms large; therefore India has high stakes in the Asian energy markets. This level of commercial energy requirement entails an annual growth of 5.2 to 6.1 percent over the commercial energy supply level in 2003-04 to sustain a minimum percent growth rate of GDP. India imports oil from twenty-eight countries, however nearly 70 percent imports are from West Asia. Clearly, India has very high stakes in Asia, its major supplier. Given the foregoing perspective Asia

thus will retain primacy in Indian energy security, despite the global search for diversified energy engagement. Thus, it is in India's interest to develop a proactive energy diplomacy where the state facilitates market based strategy and promotes integration of demand and supply side of the Asian energy market to ensure Asian energy security.

Asia has assumed significance in the geopolitics of global energy because Asian hydrocarbons are increasingly moving to Asia. Even Russia's direction of energy trade is increasingly shifting towards Asia, with Iran emerging as the new centre of gravity. The intra Asian hydrocarbon flows is increasingly inducing creation of a corresponding intra regional energy infrastructure e.g. port, pipelines, shipping etc and also energy security infrastructure i.e. safety and security of sea-lanes, maritime trade and increasing naval presence. The global energy architecture is in the process of transition. From the perspective of Asian energy security, the diverse stakeholders could be put in a hierarchical order. An overview of the present profiling of energy strategy of these stakeholders on Asian energy market suggests that while USA may not be hugely dependent on supplies from the region, it perceives energy as an instrument to promote its high strategic stakes in the region. Influence over Asian energy supplies is required undoubtedly to meet the growing imports. USA intends to use the energy clout, to maintain global status quo. The new reach of Russian energy both towards West i.e. Europe and the East i.e. China, Japan, besides their efforts to retain influence on Central Asian energy and energy routes are perceived as detrimental to the US global and regional clout. This also means further de-scaling its energy security stakes in the Persian Gulf region at least in, short run. Russia - German energy relations are indicative of the buoyancy of Russia's European relations but Moscow has been candid in declaring its growing interest in Asian market to diversify its energy exports.

The three leading Asian consumers namely China, Japan and India are principal players in the Asian theatre, their needs, assessment and approach is going to be central in defining the regional energy security agenda. China-Japan race for energy tie up in Siberia, in South China Sea, in Central Asia and Persian Gulf has not been mutually beneficial. Japanese and Indian anxiety over the enlarging profile of China's quest for energy emanates from China's energy frontiers reaching to their strategic space.

Chinese energy relations with the Persian Gulf countries are much more voluminous and comprehensive though China is a latecomer to the region. Japanese anxiety with the Chinese rise in energy supplier's territories of Asia, including Central Asia, Persian Gulf and Africa emanates not from the fear of diversion of energy supplies but from being replaced from the primary positions. The new energy strategy has placed high premium on energy diplomacy to strengthen ties with oil rich countries by linking trade agreements as instrument of energy security policies.

Given the fact that in short to medium term, India will be heavily dependent on external supplies, India has no choice but to work towards a global and Asian energy order that protects and insures its energy stakes. Indian energy security thus critically hinges upon the Asian supplies. Accordingly, it is in India's interest to formulate a coherent Asian energy policy. From Indian perspective it is possible to create an equitable Asian energy order particularly as Asia consumes 25 percent of oil and Asia possesses 40 percent of global oil reserves. Asia is thus oil surplus. The potential of energy interdependence however could be realised only if the Asian energy potential is explored and brought to the Asian market. The former requires massive investment and the latter energy infrastructure. Asian suppliers thus have to have engagement with the international oil companies, for the technology and resources.

Similarly none of the Asian countries have military power to sustain the Asian energy order by military force. Yet the Asian energy has to flow either by sea or by pipelines. Asian energy market has to be integrated. Currently bulk of Asian energy trade is carried by sea. Energy cooperation thus becomes the key to manage the risks. Asia's energy situation in particular demands a collective response. Oil consuming nations should cooperate on energy security, reducing volatility in energy prices and sharing energy-efficient technologies. If either side of that equation fails, the energy market will be put to great risk.

At another level, Asian energy security has to address the high risk associated with maritime energy trade. Clearly Asian, approach towards energy security has to be premised on regional perspective. The collective Asian energy security doctrine has to be based on the assumption that energy trade being cross border and transnational in nature could be transformed as the source of security than the cause of insecurity. Further the above-defined Asian doctrine of energy

security presupposes promotion of regional energy interdependence not only between consumer and supplier countries but also among the supplier's and consumers too.

Comments and Discussion

Most of the Chinese scholars appear to endorse the broad thesis of creating an Asia centric energy order. However this was peppered by putting the issue in larger geostrategic perspective. Important issues that emerged included: -

- (a) Energy is a strategic resource hence the demand and supply of energy is inextricably linked to global geo political and economic perspectives. In 21st Century cooperation and collective security mechanisms and cooperation must become the drivers for sustained socio economic development.
- (b) India and China face common challenges in so far as energy security was concerned therefore imperative that they cooperate to meet this common challenge as indeed they are so doing. Importantly Japan was specifically excluded from this arrangement of mutual cooperation.
- (c) On the other hand there were scholars from CISS, who highlighted the unjust international order with very little say for developing countries like China and India. Western countries with their stakes in predominant oil producing areas were seen as dominating low cost energy resources, forcing developing countries to seek oil and gas in far off unstable areas with increasing risk and costs. In addition Western oriented oil cartels controlled energy markets impacting the energy security of developing countries.
- (d) There has been no let up in demand by developed countries; if at all, it is going up. Increasing urbanisation and industrialisation leads to high energy consumption, inevitably leading to high energy transfers.
- (e) Given the growing energy consumption in Asia, and increasing Russian stakes in Asia, these countries are looking upon India, Russia and China as potential threat. It is in this backdrop the Chinese scholars appreciated the suggestion of new Asian energy order. Toward above, they highlighted the importance of SCO energy club which could become a pivotal organisation in shaping such an order.

(f) In terms of energy dependency Chinese made a point of only 50 percent dependency, which they believe could be managed by enhancing production and conservation, particularly coal. They pointed out Chinese 11th Plan target of cutting down energy consumption by as much as 20 percent as their commitment toward energy conservation. It was pointed out that Indian dependency too was limited but high in terms of hydrocarbons.

(g) Issue of security of SLOC was highlighted particularly the Malacca Straits. One Chinese scholar who had been a DA in Indonesia went at great length to highlight the importance of SLOC's in South China Sea and growing Chinese vulnerabilities. While they did not comment specifically on concepts like Chinese 'String of Pearls', they did mention about Indian Ocean as an important part of their overall energy security construct.

Interaction with Institute of South Asian Studies (ISAS)

This year the USI Delegation specifically asked their hosts to schedule visit to areas on Sino - Indian periphery to get first hand perspective of the developments in these regions and to interact with local scholars specifically focusing on South Asia.

ISAS, which is part of Yunnan Academy Social Sciences is the only institute specialising in South Asian studies in Yunan. It is one of the twelve institutes under Academy of Social Sciences. It is comparatively a new institute having been established in the year 2000 though research work has been in progress since 1960s with emphasis on opening up of Yunnan since 1990s under Yunnan Academy of Social Sciences. Research is focused on economic cooperation between China and South Asian countries, opening up of Yunnan towards South Asia, technological, cultural and educational cooperation, international corridor linking China with South Asia and regional cooperation.

Presently, ISAS was engaged in conducting research ^{on} ~~in~~ Bangladesh, India, China, Myanmar (BICM) initiative and Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS) project. Although research is generally confined to economic issues it also covers non-traditional areas of security. Many academic exchanges between ISAS and institutes

from Bangladesh and India have taken place. Yunnan compared to the coastal areas was relatively backward but has now made considerable progress with a per capita GDP of US dollars 1000. The distances between Yunnan and Indian border, through the old Stilwell Road was only 500 km and via Mandalay to Manipur was 960 km. Thus, BICM initiative was part of the Chinese attempt to develop trade and commerce with India's North East, Myanmar and Bangladesh through trade corridors providing linkages to Yunnan and eventually South West China. This needs to be seen from the wider perspective of GMS, which is being developed as a communication and trade initiative linking South East Asian hinterland with China and providing South - West China access to warm water of the Indian Ocean. Chinese were candid in mentioning that there was some reluctance on part of India to join the initiative however they highlighted that there appears to be a gradual change. Chinese perspective was that good conditions for full cooperation exist as there is no conflict in the area. Therefore there was a need to look for ways to enhancing economic cooperation.

India's perspective encompasses laying stress on both bilateral and multilateral cooperation as part of its policy of reintegrating itself with regional economies. India has promoted Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), Ganga-Mekong initiative and trilateral dialogue with Myanmar and Thailand as part of India's 'Look East Policy' besides engaging with other countries of South East Asia through ASEAN and ARF. In principle, BICM or Kunming Initiative finds support from a large portion of our academic and strategic community. This can be gauged by the fact that Sixth Conference of the BICM held in New Delhi in end March 2006 was attended by Indian Government's then secretary East in MEA (Mr. Rajiv Sikri) even though it is a Track II initiative. It was mentioned that for a more meaningful dialogue it would be more appropriate if proposal for cooperation came from Beijing rather than being seen as a Chinese provincial initiative. It was also proposed to ISAS that since goals and objectives of BIMSTEC and BICM are the same it may be possible to merge both the initiatives. Chinese side seemed to like the idea and expressed readiness to explore the same. Chinese scholars also expressed apprehensions about India's naval exercises (similar to the concerns expressed in workshop with

the CIISS) with a number of countries and the question of Dalai Lama's presence in India.

Conclusion

It is noteworthy that besides the ongoing dialogue with the CIISS, USI established dialogue with PLR's Academy of Military Sciences which has considerable influence within the CMC. Exchange of views with ISAS, Kunming has also been beneficial to understand the Chinese strategic discourse on regional cooperation. During the interaction with Chinese scholars and military officers it was felt that even though they are becoming more open in expressing their views yet they tend to confine themselves to within the parameters of official policy/ party line. The common refrain among the Chinese scholars was the concern expressed by them on some kind of 'axis of democracy' emerging between the US, India, Australia and Japan (as reflected by Malabar series of naval exercises) which may be designed to constrain Chinese power. However, the strategic import of the Malabar exercises in Bay of Bengal vis a vis increasing Chinese inroads into Myanmar with concomitant strategic influence was not lost on them. It could also be construed as a political message to military junta in Myanmar and the evolving Sino-Myanmar relationship.

On the other hand, even though Indian concerns about China-Pakistan nexus on strategic and defence cooperation, besides excruciatingly slow movement on settling the boundary issue were highlighted during the exchanges; it needs to be understood that China is not some kind of a 'sinister' power. In the anarchic international system it will pursue its national interest through hard power and is meticulously working towards acquiring comprehensive national power. India also needs to build up its hard power capabilities to pursue its national interests. It will not be prudent to rely on benign outcome or benign nature of a rising power. Even though India has remained historically attracted to soft power, its utility needs to be fully evaluated; hard power remains the most potent currency in the international system, increasingly based on national interests.

Overall it was a useful visit which provided a good understanding of the of the Chinese perceptions and concerns.

Chinese were meticulous in their arrangements and hospitality and took pains to make the delegation comfortable. Beijing was marked by full scale preparations for the next year's Olympic Games. Apart from number of infrastructural projects people are being prepared to act as good hosts to players, delegated and other likely to participate in the games. Having said that it is also true owing to Olympics property prices are shooting up and increasingly getting out of reach of even the middle class. Pollution remains another problem, a thick pall of haze seems to be engulfing the skyline of Beijing, an issue of concern for the Chinese authorities.

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