

## *Berkeley Non profit's Commitment to Clean Drinking Water*

As the current century progresses, the worldwide availability of safe drinking water will be under increased pressure from growing populations and contamination by unwise industrial and agricultural practices. In Berkeley such concerns are being addressed by the nonprofit, the International Institute of the Bengal and Himalayan Basins, or IIBHB, located at 2507-09 McGee Avenue. The founder of the IIBHB, Dr. Rash B. Ghosh, was born into a position of wealth, status, and great privilege in one of the world's most impoverished nations, yet he has always avoided the opportunities for an easy life. In Bangladesh he gave the lands he inherited to those living on them and went abroad for an education that would allow him to better serve much larger populations of the world's disadvantaged. He earned a Ph.D. from the University of Manchester at Salford, in the United Kingdom, studying the hydrodynamics and ecology of the polluted Mersey River estuary and the Liverpool Bay. After this, he returned to the Bengal Basin in Bangladesh and India and accurately assessed the causes of increased levels of arsenic and other toxics in the drinking-water resources and developed both short- and long-term solutions to these problems.

Dr. Ghosh's studies have increased the understanding of surface and ground waters, and the solutions he has developed go beyond the immediate causes of the problem. His proposals call for improved watershed management practices that restore surface water quality by flushing trapped arsenic from the shallow aquifer into the Bay of Bengal as well as environmentally responsible housing for the poor. This project in turn is to be a model for other regions in the world, a proposition that is all the more credible considering the great diversity of ecosystems which stretch from the highest peaks on the planet, the Himalayas, to the Bengal Basin, one of the world's lowest regions, which is threatened by global warming and sea level rise. Dr. Ghosh's plan includes a pilot project in Napa County. (We have a serious arsenic problem in California which this work will immediately benefit.) The next steps involve the gradual implementation of a much larger project in the Bengal and Himalayan Basins encompassing India, Bangladesh, and large tracts of the adjoining nations. What is learned from this large-scale project on the Indo-Bangla subcontinent will provide a model for the entire planet.

Dr. Ghosh has had the opportunity to work with, mix with, and learn from scholars on three continents on projects and studies concerning the Bengal, Liverpool/Manchester, and San Francisco basins as well as superfund sites in California, and he has helped to develop meaningful solutions to urgent problems such as arsenic toxicity in the drinking water. His dedication to his mission and his extensive work with many scientists in different parts of the world have earned him wide respect and made him a very persuasive spokesman for his cause. He has been able to bring a number of the world's greatest scholars together with world leaders. –He has obtained the backing of Nobel laureates in chemistry and physics, Drs. Charles Townes, Glenn Seaborg, and Linus Pauling, as well as influential political figures in the United States, India, and Bangladesh, including present and former heads of state. The IIBB has held multiple conferences on toxic mitigation, global warming, sea level rise, and the protection of aquifers, as well religious tolerance and the rights of women, minorities, and those of least privilege. Concern for these issues and the equitable distribution of water resources is of paramount importance in this new century where growing population, sea-level rise, and the increasing scarcity of potable water will make conflicts over water more likely.