

LIGHTEN UP

The other side of diplomacy

Diplomacy is, in the main, executed by resident diplomats, and also increasingly in modern times by visiting dignitaries and peripatetic special envoys. A special envoy is entrusted with a specific mission, and is received by the host government at a level deemed appropriate, which could vary from head of government to senior officials.

MEGASTHENES

FOREIGN policy and diplomacy are terms that are cognate in concept, but not quite synonymous or interchangeable. Lord Gore-Booth, who headed the British diplomatic service during 1965-69, explained the difference very lucidly: "Foreign policy is what you do; diplomacy is how you do it."

Walter Lippmann once wrote that in foreign relations, as in all other relations, a policy "has been formed only when commitment and power have been brought into balance." The two essential ingredients for an effective foreign policy, or for that matter any policy, are thus commitment and capability, and these have to be in tandem.

In the 1960's the US had a well-defined Vietnam policy. There was commitment to the policy and also the capability to pursue it. When the policy seemed to be leading nowhere, commitment began to wane, although capability still existed. All too soon, the policy became untenable. When the USSR intervened in Afghanistan in 1979, it was surely in pursuit of a policy. The policy collapsed nearly a decade on, when both commitment and capability flagged. Developing countries are generally more susceptible to pressures that bear upon sensitive foreign policy issues.

The UN Charter is emphatic that all member states are sovereign equals. It does not follow, though, that they are also political and economic equals, or militarily equal. Conventional wisdom suggests that in international relations, a country should seek a role that is commensurate with its power. A small country, which cannot shape or significantly influence events external to it, has obvious constraints in the sphere of foreign policy. Often enough such a country may only stoop to

conquer.

In the area of diplomacy, however, countries enjoy greater latitude. Third world diplomacy, though, lacks the "tinsel and titillation" associated with diplomacy of major powers, a recent example of which would be the music diplomacy -- featuring the NY Philharmonic -- in North Korea.

Diplomacy of old was said to be a world of "nuance and scruple, influence and interpretation." Today, diplomacy is all that and more. It has lost much of its glamour, is more complex and, at times, even technical. Subtlety and skill in conveying a message or sentiment has always been integral to diplomacy.

Between late 1958 and early 1960, Prime Ministers Nehru and Chou En-lai exchanged a series of letters, which, in effect, constituted a "connecting thread for the whole diplomatic debate" on the Sino-Indian border issue. The exchange did not resolve the matter, but did culminate in a meeting of the two leaders in New Delhi in 1960.

Nehru's early letters used the salutation "My dear Prime Minister." This changed gradually to "Dear Prime Minister," which was construed as a less cordial, even coldly, formal salutation. Perhaps it signalled disappointment that the exchange of letters did not quite narrow the gap separating the two sides. In his invitation letter to Chou in 1960, Nehru was, of course, warm, and returned to the address "My dear Prime Minister."

It is even possible for diplomatic signals to be too subtle. By 1970, the US and China had begun to view each other in the geopolitical rather than the ideological context. Both countries moved charily to explore options that could lead to a fruitful bilateral relationship. It would be an epochal development in interna-

tional relations.

On China's national day in 1970, American writer, Edgar Snow, an old friend of China, and his wife were placed next to Mao Tse-tung on Tien An Men. Photographs showed Mao reviewing the anniversary parade with Snow at his side; the first time that an American had been so honoured. Only later did Henry Kissinger grasp the purport of this diplomatic signal: Sino-US relations had the personal attention of Mao. It was a signal, Kissinger would observe dryly, that was simply too oblique and subtle for "crude Occidental minds!"

Diplomacy is, in the main, executed by resident diplomats, and also increasingly in modern times by visiting dignitaries and peripatetic special envoys. A special envoy is entrusted with a specific mission, and is received by the host government at a level deemed appropriate, which could vary from head of government to senior officials.

In February of this year the information minister of Senegal, Dr. Bacar Dia, visited Bangladesh as special envoy of the president of Senegal. He was received by the chief adviser. In March, Ambassador Bahattin Gurosoz visited as special envoy of the foreign minister of Turkey. He was received by the foreign affairs adviser. In September of last year, US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, John A. Gastright, briefly visited Bangladesh, not as special envoy but in his official capacity. The office of deputy assistant secretary of state is a senior position, comparable to joint secretary in the officialdom of Bangladesh.

During his crowded two-day visit, Secretary Gastright was received by the chief adviser and the foreign affairs adviser. It was important that Secretary Gastright should receive a first

hand account of what the government is seeking to achieve, the institutional reforms it has put in place, and its plans for elections and transition to an elected government. US support can be crucial in so many areas. Where national interests are concerned, one may not stand on ceremony.

On December 22, 1971, Pakistan's new President, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, dispensed with protocol to call on US Ambassador Farland at his residence. This extraordinary gesture, Bhutto explained, was to signal a new period of US-Pakistan relations. Farland's report on this meeting to Secretary of State Rogers was published in a collection of declassified US state papers. In November of 1973, Dr Kissinger visited Pakistan en route to China; his sixth trip to that country. Bhutto waived protocol and ceremony to receive him at Islamabad airport, with all honours normally due to a head of state. Diplomacy is a subtle instrument of state.

Last year, Bangladesh sent a highly respected former diplomat as special envoy to the US. He was given ministerial rank for the purpose of the mission. In Washington DC, he had discussions with a very senior official of the State Department. There are two aspects to any such mission, namely the message to be conveyed, and the level of the envoy's reception. The first is the substance, and the second, the show.

A special envoy, particularly for a one-off mission, does need a specific or notional rank, to determine his entitlements, and also to emphasise to the receiving state, the importance of the mission. There is a good reason though for this information not to be made public; if, for whatever reason, the envoy is not received at least at an equal level, it could grate on sensitivities.

The level at which a special envoy is received by a major power would depend on several factors: the nature of the mission, the agenda, policies and priorities of the major power, and the closeness of bilateral ties. Pakistan's relations with the US may be

traced in time to Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan's nearly month long visit to that country in May of 1950. Liaquat's decision to visit the US rather than the USSR -- which had invited him earlier -- was a pointer to Pakistan's foreign policy orientation. This trend would be reinforced in the years ahead.

Pakistan would become "the most allied ally" of the US -- Cento and Seato -- and the period 1954-62 would be the "aligned years" of Pakistan's foreign policy. In the early 1960's, President Kennedy described Pakistan as a friend of "immediacy and constancy." It was against this general backdrop of bilateral relations that, in October of 1969, Pakistan's Information Minister Maj. Gen. Sher Ali Khan, and the Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission, M.M. Ahmad went to Washington. Sher Ali was in the US for the UN General Assembly, and M.M. Ahmad for IBRD-IMF meetings; both sought appointments with National Security Adviser, Henry Kissinger. M.M. Ahmad had a letter from his president for President Nixon, which they wished to hand over to Dr Kissinger. Hal Saunders of the National Security Council addressed a minute to his superior on the request for an appointment: "No sooner had I successfully -- I thought -- begged off for you on Ambassador Hilaly's request that you see Sher Ali Khan than he was back at me with the following problem."

M.M. Ahmad is now in town with a letter from President Yahya to President Nixon... He and Sher Ali Khan feel some obligation to deliver this letter to you. I explained to Ambassador Hilaly the great pressures on your time and he agreed that it would be satisfactory if he brought the two ministers to my office for a long substantive chat, and then have them drop over literally for five minutes to put their letter in your hands. Substantively, this doesn't make a lot of sense. The problem is simply to have these fellows go home and say that they were able to deliver the president's letter directly to you." It was a can-

did internal memo, somewhat tart intone.

Clearly there are heavy demands on the time of senior members of the administration in Washington. The memo indicated how requests for appointments with them are handled. Only months later, Pakistan would assume the sensitive role of a conduit to facilitate Sino-US rapprochement.

Last year, on November 15, the foreign affairs adviser, speaking at the launching ceremony of a think-tank on foreign affairs, stressed the need for a shift of focus in Bangladesh's foreign policy apparatus, from defensive to offensive interests. The adviser touched upon the possible role of policy research and advocacy groups in policy formulation. Speaking to the media, he assured that Bangladesh would move aggressively to pursue its strategic goals. Important speeches are usually tailored to the occasion. Brave words, good intentions and high objectives can be stimulating, can boost morale. The Adviser's speech and comments were most apposite.

Coincidentally, as he spoke, coastal districts of Bangladesh were struck by a hurricane of awesome ferocity. Sadr most certainly was not a diplomatic event, but it made two points that are not unlinked to diplomacy. Firstly, there was great goodwill and friendship for Bangladesh in many countries, which so generously and spontaneously extended much needed help for relief and reconstruction. And secondly, it cruelly underscored the vulnerabilities of small countries to elements over which they have no control. International relations are intimately related to power equations.

After Sadr, Bangladesh has diligently lobbied the US administration for the grant of temporary protected status to undocumented Bangladeshi migrants in that country. Bangladesh has pleaded that to apprehend and deport any undocumented migrants at this time would add to the heavy burdens of post-Sadr recovery. This is a bold



Extending hands of friendship and cooperation.

and innovative diplomatic gambit. It is bold because governments of countries that have undocumented migrants abroad are normally reticent on this issue. It is innovative because it seeks to retrieve something from what was an unmitigated humanitarian disaster.

Diplomacy has evolved and adapted over time. In the 19th century, Lord Salisbury saw nothing dramatic in the success of a diplomatist. Rather, his victories consisted of a "series of microscopic advantages, of a judicious suggestion here, of an opportune civility there, of a wise concession at one moment and a far sighted persistence at another, of sleepless tact, immovable calmness and patience that no folly, no provocation, no blunder can shake." Still largely true.

Nearly fifty years back, Chester Bowles emphasised the need for "total diplomacy," not simply "winning, dining, reporting, analysing and cautiously predicting." Very true. And more than two decades after Bowles, Sir Geoffrey Howe felt that the various elements of diplomacy, namely commercial, political, information and consular should support and strengthen each other for one purpose, to further national interests -- strategic or commercial. Absolutely true.

The trend in modern times is for diplomacy to focus on core areas of national interest. For Bangladesh

these would include access to markets, investments, transfer of technology, more substance in bilateral relations, the maritime boundary, a liberal regime for migrant workers, the environment and climate change. Effective diplomacy, while exploring all options and avenues, can only be constructed and premised on a robust sense of the realities. In other words, gaze on the horizon, and feet planted firmly on the ground.

Adlai Stevenson's Christmas cards to close friends would invariably contain a message selected by him, usually a quote from a philosophical tract or literary work, reflecting his concerns and thinking. For the Christmas of 1965, which he did not live to see, he had chosen his message, an excerpt from Max Ehrmann's best known work, *Desiderata*: "Go placidly amid the noise and the haste and remember what peace there may be in silence. As far as possible without surrender, be on good terms with all persons. Speak your truth quietly and clearly, and listen to others, even to the dull and ignorant; they too have their story. With all its sham, drudgery and broken dreams, it is still a beautiful world." The spirit and essence of diplomacy, and also its rationale, can seldom have been articulated more succinctly and felicitously, and with such clarity.

Megasthenes is a contributor to The Daily Star.

Eat some dal (lentil) with rice

It can be seen that for an equivalent dry weight, pulses supply the same amount of calories, but more of all other nutrients except niacin, compared to rice. The difference is most marked for protein, riboflavin and calcium, the first two of which are major deficiencies in Bangladesh, and calcium deficiency is acute in some pocket areas such as Chakaria.

HARUN K.M. YUSUF

P EAS, beans and lentils are leguminous crops known as pulses. Pulses have been used as food for thousands of years. The lentil was probably one of the first plants ever to be domesticated by humans.

A relatively cheaper food, pulses are 20 to 25% protein by weight, which is double the protein content of wheat and 3 times that of rice. For this reason, pulses are sometimes called "poor man's meat."

Prices of foods have increased in Bangladesh, as elsewhere in the world. Table 1 shows changes in price of coarse rice and pulses, the major food of the poor, between 1991 and 2005.

The prices started increasing at the beginning of the year 2008, and now they are selling at Tk.35 and Tk.100, respectively. Under the circumstances, it seems that people, especially the poor, will soon have to forget the tasty and nutritious food mix of rice and dal

| Nutrients | Rice (50 g) | Lentils (50 g) | Difference (3) - (2) | Nutrient per Tk. from rice | Nutrient per Tk. from lentils | Difference (6) - (5) |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|----------------|----------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Cost (Taka) as on 20th March 2008 | 1.75 | 5 | 3.25 | - | - | - |
| Energy (kcal) | 176 | 176 | 0 | 100 | 35 | -65 |
| Protein (g) | 3.2 | 12.5 | 9.3 | 1.82 | 2.5 | +0.68 |
| Fat (g) | 0.2 | 0.4 | 0.2 | 0.11 | 0.08 | -0.03 |
| Calcium (mg) | 4.5 | 30 | 25.5 | 2.57 | 6.0 | +3.43 |
| Iron (mg) | 2.0 | 2.4 | 0.4 | 1.14 | 0.48 | -0.66 |
| Vitamin A (I.U.) | 0 | 75 | 75 | - | 15.0 | +15.0 |
| Thiamine (Vit.B1)(mg) | 0.1 | 0.23 | 0.12 | 0.06 | 0.05 | -0.01 |
| Riboflavin (Vit.B2)(mg) | 0.04 | 0.25 | 0.21 | 0.02 | 0.05 | +0.03 |
| Niacin (Vit.B3)(mg) | 2.0 | 1.2 | -0.8 | 1.14 | 0.24 | -0.9 |

(pulses) that they have been eating for generations.

However, if we look at the level of nutrition of pulses, then our frustration will perhaps ease out a little.

It can be seen that for an equivalent dry weight, pulses supply the same amount of calories, but more of all other nutrients except niacin, compared to rice. The difference is most marked for protein, riboflavin and calcium, the first two of which are major deficiencies in Bangladesh, and calcium deficiency is acute in some pocket areas such as Chakaria.

Lentils supply 4 times as much protein, 6 times as much riboflavin and 7 times as much calcium as rice. In Bangladesh, we eat a lot of rice, over 460 g a day. A person replacing his rice intake with pulses by 50 grams would not lose anything in terms of calories, but would gain 9.3 g of protein (required for growth and maintenance), 0.21 mg of vitamin B2

(riboflavin) (required for energy generation from foods) and 25.5 mg of calcium (required for bone formation during growth and prevention of bone loss during old age).

In addition, he would get some extra vitamin A (required for good

On the other hand, pulse proteins are deficient in the essential amino acids methionine and tryptophan, which rice has in good quantities. Rice and pulses together, therefore, complement each other's proteins, and combined together the two would make complete proteins,

| Food | 1991-1995 | 1995-2000 | 2000-2005 | 1991-2005 | Annual incremental rate, 1991-2005 (%) |
|--------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|--|
| Rice, coarse | +26.4 | -11.3 | +16.3 | +30.3 | 2.02 |
| Pulses | +40.28 | -2.9 | +13.0 | +54.0 | 3.60 |
| Coarse rice | 6.0 | 14.6 | 14.7 | 31.5 | 40.2 |
| Pulses | 40.7 | 7.2 | 5.7 | 13.4 | 52.7 |
| | | | | | 26.35 |

vision and immunity to diseases). The gains are also retained for most nutrients even under the present price situation (nutrient per Taka), particularly in case of protein, calcium, and vitamin A.

The extra protein from 50 grams of lentils will not only contribute to quantitative increase in protein consumption, it will also complement the basic rice protein to give the consumer a considerable qualitative advantage. Both rice and pulse proteins are by themselves what is called "second class" protein, in that their essential amino acid profiles are not as complete as the animal proteins.

Essential amino acids, as the name implies, are those amino acids (the building units of proteins) that cannot be synthesised in the body and must, therefore, be supplied with food. Rice protein is deficient in the essential amino acid lysine, which is abundantly present in pulses.

with nutritional value as good as egg or milk protein.

In addition to nutritional qualities, pulses also have important health advantages for consumers. The recently published findings of the famous "Food Habits in Later Life" (FHILL) study undertaken in Japan, Sweden, Greece and Australia showed that the pulses are the most important dietary predictor of survival in older people of different ethnicities.

Another long-term study in seven countries -- USA, Finland, The Netherlands, Italy, former Yugoslavia, Greece and Japan (the famous Seven Countries Study) showed that legume consumption is highly correlated with a reduced mortality from coronary heart disease.

Harun K.M. Yusuf is a professor of biochemistry and human nutrition, University of Dhaka. And currently Nutrition Advisor, FAO-National Food Policy Capacity Strengthening Program, NFPCSP.

Herculean effort the prescription for climate change

Much of the technology for renewable energy sources -- solar, wind, geothermal, tidal and renewable fuels -- is intact or is being energetically pursued. We need economic incentives and subsidies for clean-energy technology, not the antiquated, non-renewable systems of energy production that have gotten the Earth into this dire scenario.

BILLY I. AHMED

A T a recent alternative energy/climate change symposium presented by the Wallace Stegner Center for Land Resources and the Environment at the University of Utah, findings revealed the most current information concerning the decline of climate stability and the magnitude of effort required to prevent the planet from being knocked by human pollution of the Earth's climate.

It is clear that scientists have underestimated the scale and pace of climate demise. Change is coming much faster and more fiercely than climate modeling projected even a year ago. Jim Hansen, the NASA scientist who first presented data to Congress 20 years ago, offered in December a mind-blowing bottom line for climate stability: 350 parts per million of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. This is the number that might shield climate stability, the number that might prevent the planet from sliding over the precipice, the number that might give humanity and some of Earth's species a fighting chance.

To understand the significance

of 350, it is important to know that pre-industrial levels of carbon in the atmosphere were roughly at 275 ppm. When Hansen first did his climate modeling he could only hypothesise what would put us in danger, and that number was 550. With that number in mind, scientists, policy makers and economists believed that we could hogtie climate change, but only with genuine effort, an effort that was largely overlooked.

In recent years, after observing the melting of glaciers worldwide, scientists concluded that 450 ppm might be a more accurate number upon which to base their models and influence world leaders that action was necessary to avert disaster by limiting, for example, the number of coal-fired plants being built and increasing fuel efficiency standards for automobiles.

But then the data for the summer 2007 Arctic ice melt came in. The polar caps melted at an amazing rate and magnitude, far beyond scientific modeling, and the Greenland ice sheet, which reaches depths of 2,800 meters, is beginning to break up and slide into the ocean. The data was striking, and

scary enough to cause lowering of the acceptable concentration of carbon in the atmosphere to 350 ppm. The current measurement of carbon in Earth's atmosphere is 384 ppm.

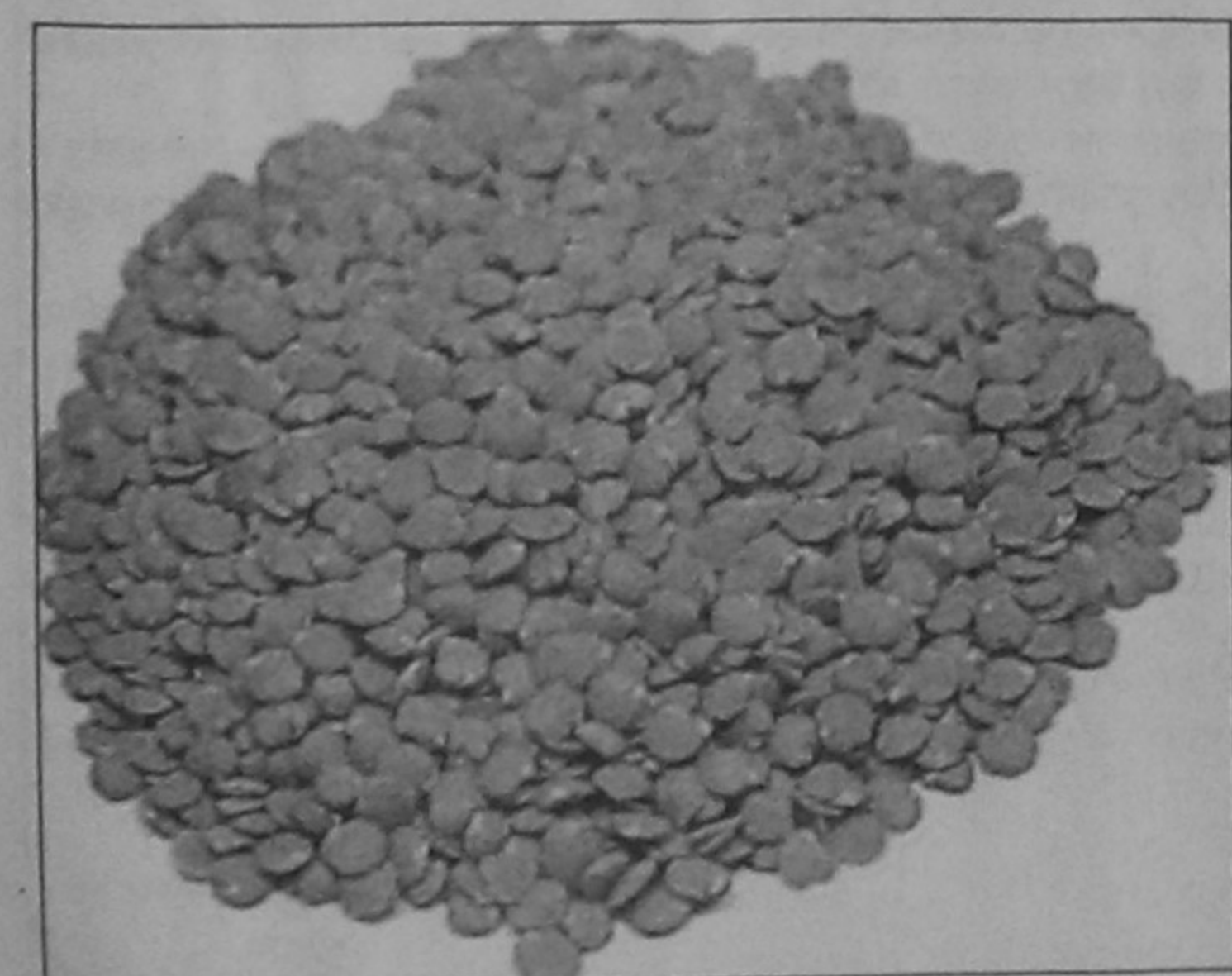
What this means is that we have gone too far. We have caused an Arctic albedo flip, where the heat-reflective capacity of the polar ice caps is vanishing, but the heat-sink capacity of the oceans is increasing. The rise in sea level, currently responsive to expansion by temperature increase, will now increase dramatically, many meters by century's end or sooner. Sea levels of this degree will inundate petrochemical refineries and energy infrastructure around the globe. Massive international social turmoil and migrating refugees will cause wars and civil collapse.

We are faced with a Herculean effort, one that involves every person, every government, every brilliant innovative thinker, and every entrepreneur. The effort has been compared to nothing less, and most likely more, than the World War II challenge when production of consumer goods was halted and all manufacturing went into the war effort.

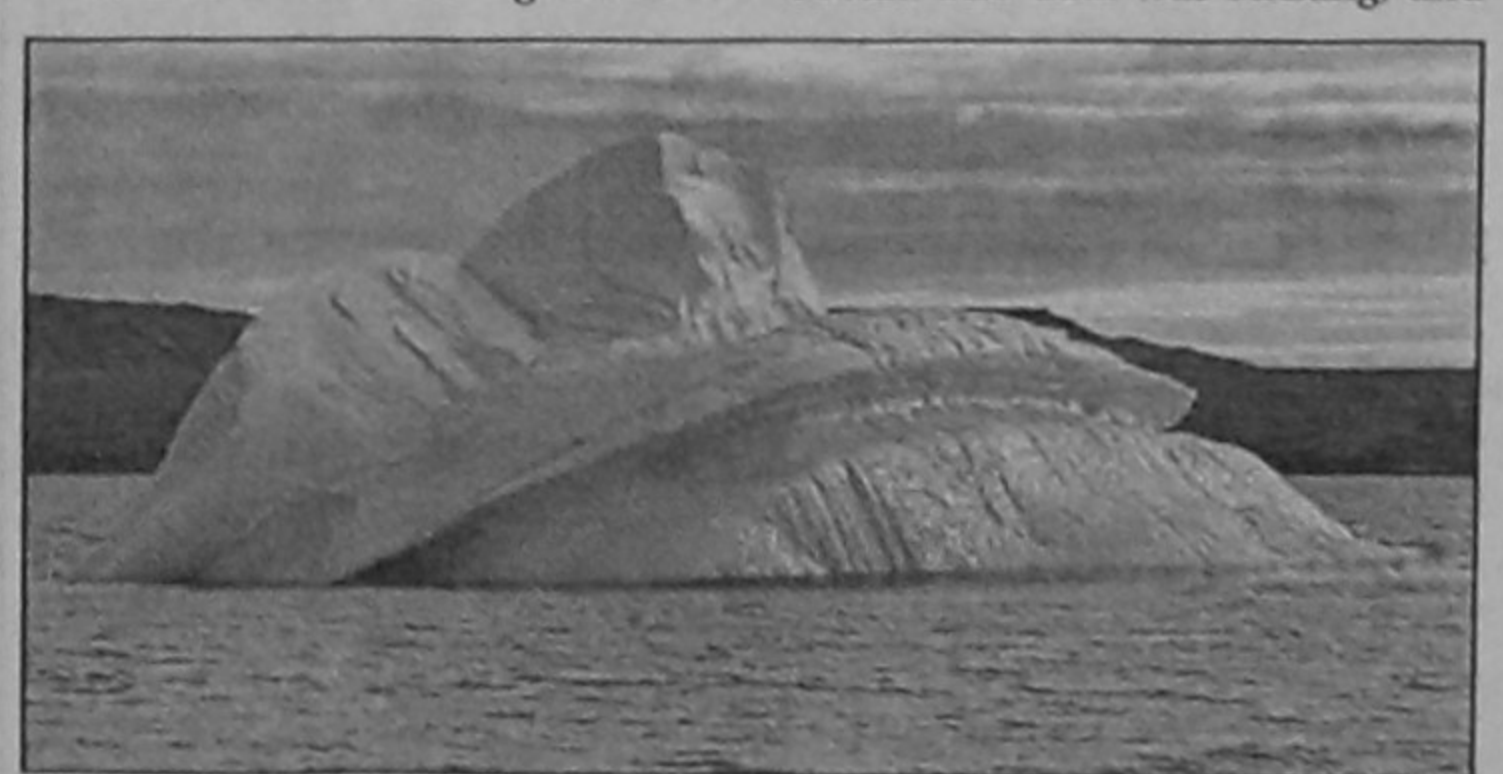
Much of the technology for renewable energy sources -- solar, wind, geothermal, tidal and renewable fuels -- is intact or is being energetically pursued. We need economic incentives and subsidies for clean-energy technology, not the antiquated, non-renewable systems of energy production that have gotten the Earth into this dire scenario.

Above all, we need an enlightened approach to enable all of us to make the dramatic and transformative shift in the way we live our lives on every level. This is asking a lot, and it is entirely possible that humanity will not come to the plate and swing at the hardball being thrown at us. It's entirely possible that we will lose, but we have an unprecedented opportunity to create amazing technical solutions and to embrace change with dignity and grace to sustain life on this exquisite blue orb.

Billy I. Ahmed is a tea planter, columnist and researcher.



Dal is good for you!



Melting glaciers -- threatened world.