

Fighting greenhouse effect

BITTER TRUTH



ASADULLAH KHAN

Most people agree that conservation is the fastest and cheapest way to minimise emission of carbon dioxide until solar and wind power, which emit no carbon dioxide, are widely available. This calls for planting trees because trees are the best sinks for carbon dioxide. Efficiency, conservation practice and commitment could cut global carbon dioxide emission to 3 billion tonnes a year from 9.28 billion tonnes now, said Christopher Flavin, of the World Watch Institute.

ENVIRONMENTAL scientists are now certain that global warming poses a threat to mankind. Which means massive climate change will cause rise in sea levels, chaotic weather patterns like cyclone and hurricanes, catastrophic droughts in some places and torrential rains in other places -- all caused by small increase in global temperature.

Climatologists believe that this warming is mostly the result of human activity such as burning of fossil fuels. Because populations, economies and use of technology are all growing, global average temperature is expected to rise by 1 to 3.5 degrees Celsius by 2100. The effect will be complex, varying considerably from place to place. Of particular interest are the changes in regional climate, local weather and especially extreme events -- record temperatures, heat waves, very heavy rainfall or drought -- which will have staggering effects on populations, agriculture and ecosystems.

We know what it will take to save the world from the greenhouse effect; cutting emission of carbon dioxide.

One would therefore need to shut down the heater in winter and replace 100 watt bulbs by compact fluorescent lamps, which could nearly halve global demand for electricity, according to World Watch Institute (WWI). In affluent countries, people are trading in the dishwasher and clothes dryer for a dish drainer and laundry line.

We need commitment and motivation to avert the disaster that is waiting in the wings. When we build a house, we must work out ways to optimise the use of energy. At the same time we have to go for using fuel efficient cars, because for every gallon of petrol consumed, about 4 kg of carbon dioxide gas get injected into the atmosphere. We must walk and not drive if we go short distances, because car exhaust is a major source of heat-trapping gases that produce global warming.

In the global perspective, one way to meet the world's energy needs is to develop cheaper and cleaner sources. In India, there has been a boom in wind energy because the government

has made it easier for entrepreneurs to get the necessary technology and has instructed the national grid to purchase the power that wind systems produce. Wind is now the world's fastest growing power source. Experts say that that wind could provide about 12% of the earth's electricity within just a decade from now.

More than a decade ago, Denmark told utilities to purchase any available renewable energy and pay a premium price. Today, the country gets 18% of its electricity from wind. Germany and Spain have offered incentives for renewable sources. Europe today accounts for 70% of the world's wind power.

In Japan hundreds and thousands of households have installed solar roof panels since the government offered generous subsidies in 1994. Consequently, Japan has displaced the US as the leading manufacturer of photovoltaic. India established a fund that has lent \$1.1 billion to alternative energy projects. The country is now the world's fifth largest generator of wind

and solar power.

Other technologies can work their own miracles. Micro-hydroelectric plants are already operating in many countries. The systems divert water from streams and rivers and use it to run turbines without complex dams and catchment areas. Each plant can produce as much as 200 KW -- enough to electrify 200 to 500 homes -- and lasts for about 20 years.

Along with the efforts to develop alternatives, every individual has to shun energy profligacy in day-to-day work. We must turn computers off when not in use. We must switch off the lights and fans when the office closes down and especially the lights while sleeping. We must use public transport to go to office or markets

is going to be a scarce commodity if we haven't learnt to conserve it now.

Moreover, offices, business houses and homes are indulging in energy profligacy with indiscriminate use of air conditioners, which use hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFC) as the cooling fluid. This causes ozone depletion. Moreover, HCFCs release carbon dioxide when the generators are run to produce electricity. A model patented in the recent past by Albers Technologies Corp. of Arizona in the US cools air to 54 degrees Fahrenheit, dehumidifies it and removes contaminants. Most importantly, it uses water, not HCFCs, as coolant and draws half the electricity in conventional units.

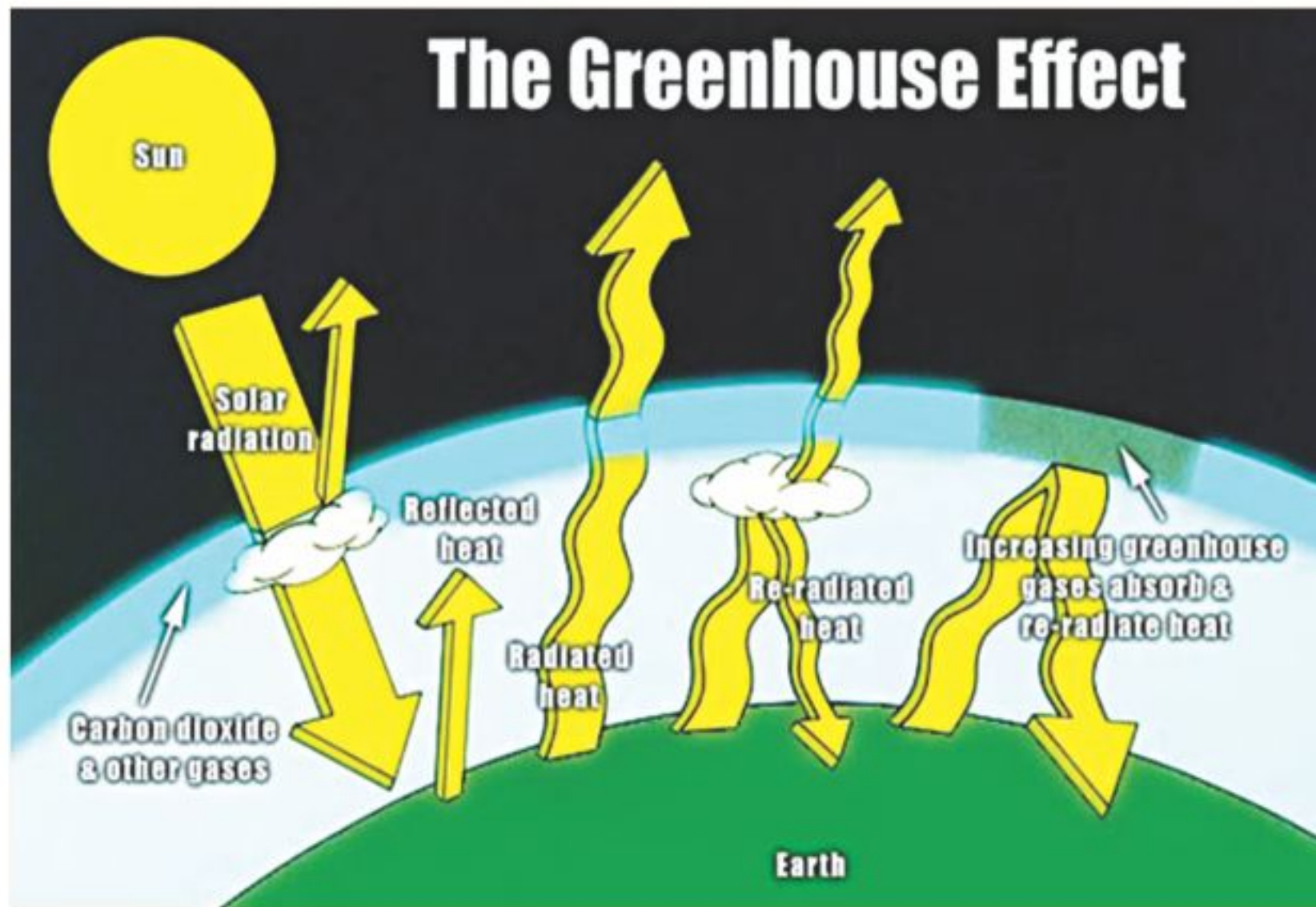
Scientists are concerned because the will to forestall the greenhouse effect is

in winter to help the environment.

We have got to take concrete actions because the World Resource Institute (WRI) revealed new data that suggest the greenhouse threat is more serious than has been realised. About fifty million acres of tropical forests are disappearing every year, said WRI. Deforestation is second only to burning of fossil fuels as a source of carbon dioxide.

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All countries can meet their energy needs without fouling the environment. "But that won't happen," asserts Thomas Johansson, an adviser to the United Nations Development Programme, "without the political will of the governments of the countries involved." To begin with huge government subsidies for fossil fuels must be dismantled to level the playing field for renewables. Policy makers must factor in the price of pollution; for example, coal plants are more expensive than renewable power. Factoring in all the disasters like cyclone, hurricanes, tsunami, flood and drought, renewable energy is necessary for the assurance of life on earth.



instead of using car.

While doing house hold chores or farm activities, we must use either sprinklers or drip irrigation services for watering gardens, lawns or crop fields. Water

yet to take root in people all over the world. Even in America surveys have shown that only about one fifth of the Americans questioned would keep homes warmer in summer and chillier

Social safety net

M. MIZANUR RAHMAN

WHY do the governments use social safety net programmes? Someone very humanistic will say that it is to help the poorest and marginalised survive, others may say that it is to improve the standard of life of this group, and many will claim that it is to help those who are not involved with the capital market so that they can be connected with the market by being consumers or producers. However, in whatever way we define the objective, the implication is that it is a kind of public expenditure for the most vulnerable people of a state so that they can live in a better way.

So, the objective is very generous indeed. But when we see that these safety net programmes are becoming the means of doing business, corruption, and politics by some local government people, they lose their merit. The right people are not getting the benefits from social safety net programme due to massive corruption in targeting. Some pessimistic people say that those in the local government are the primary beneficiaries of safety net programmes. These impressions have multi-faceted implications in strengthening the local government system as well.

However, the point is that we need proper targeting for social safety net programmes and, at the same time, we want to see that our local government system is stronger, transparent, efficient and pro-poor. Can there be one solution to both of these problems? The mixture of community-based targeting strategy and use of technology can be such a solution.

By using community-based targeting, according to the World Bank (2000), we can get the benefits from utilising local and real information and from incorporating local notions of deprivation. It will also minimise the possibility of programme capture by local elites. So, at first, with the facilitation of the union parishad, community-based participatory targeting can be done at the local level and the list of beneficiaries can be sent to the concerned department or ministry which will manage these programmes.

Ninety eight safety net programmes being implemented with different ministries lack coordination. So, first of all, we can establish a single ministry or a separate department under the finance ministry for dealing with the safety net programmes, and the number of the programmes can also be reduced significantly. Establishing one ministry or department for dealing with the welfare of these people (17% of the total population is extreme poor) with 15-20%

With the digitised system, policy formulation for these people will be easier for the government as well. The strategy of community-based targeting for safety net will not affect the empowerment of the local government and the digital application will minimise the error in targeting, thus safety net will be accessible for the appropriate people.

of the total budget is not irrational.

The union parishad can send the nomination electronically by putting the data through software developed to capture and analyse the data. This data will be put in line with some specific indicators which are pre-set to assess centrally and electronically whether that particular applicant is eligible or not. The indicators will have some logical connections among themselves and also specific weight for each. Based on the logical connection and specific weight of the inserted data, the software will be able to select individual beneficiaries objectively and, at the same time, it will fix the programme under which funds for the eligible person can be allocated.

Once the nomination from the union parishad is done, a central dataset and Management Information System (MIS) will be prepared automatically, with the help of which government or the concerned ministry/department will be able to target the most vulnerable and eligible people for safety net programmes as the software will, within a moment, filter the eligible people -- the bottom five, ten or fifteen per cent.



Why media fixate on the West

This selection process will have minimum error and with the application of this system no area specific targeting will need to be done. For example, one union of Sathkhira may have double the allocation of a union of Sylhet as more eligible applications may be received from Sathkhira than from Sylhet. So, union-wise fund allocation by the ministry will vary based on the actual demand of the people in one particular area, and coordinating and monitoring by the ministry/department will be very easy.

Now let us see how this system can help the local government system be stronger, transparent, efficient and pro-poor. Collecting and distributing safety net cards seem to be the only task of the union parishads, at least my recent observation and visit to a number of union parishads and local government people shows so. These cards are at the centre of all their business but, unfortunately, many of them have forgotten that they have some other responsibilities apart from this. The safety net card allocation is one of the major reasons for the UP leaders being corrupt. Once the primary selection is done in a participatory way and the final one is done digitally and centrally, the local government will be free from corruption to a great extent.

Apart from this, the UP leaders will have more time to concentrate on other important responsibilities like increasing the income of the government, especially from collecting tax; settling disputes; promoting collaborative actions in the communities and so forth, which will eventually benefit the society in general.

Again, there is a conception in the society and allegation against the UP leaders that they earn illegally, especially while allocating the safety net cards, which is embarrassing for the honest ones who are many in number. So with this approach, these honest people will not be embarrassed and the UPs will be free from this type of allegation, which will encourage good and honest people to be involved with the UPs.

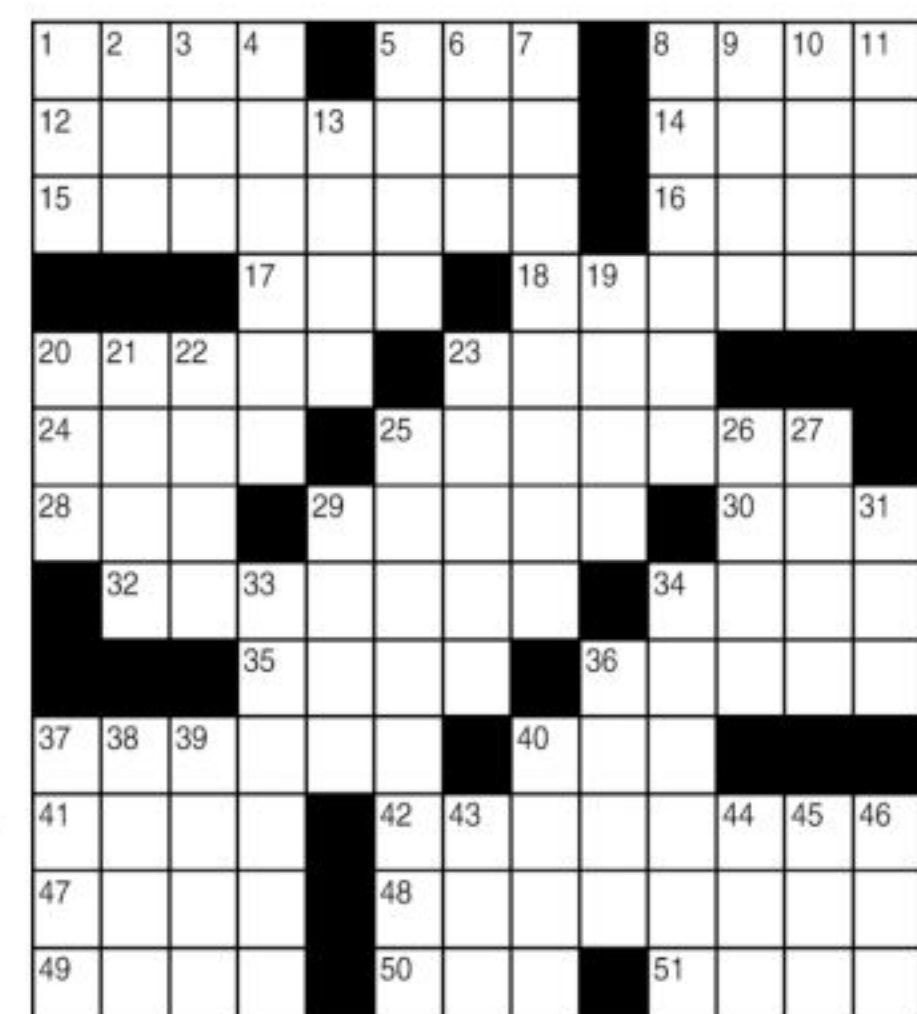
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THE WRITER IS A DEVELOPMENT RESEARCHER AND A TECHNICAL COORDINATOR AT CARE. THE OPINION EXPRESSED HERE DOES NOT, IN ANY WAY, REFLECT THAT OF THE ORGANIZATION.

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ACROSS

- 1 Bygone Peruvian
- 5 Decibel increaser, for short
- 8 Jewels
- 12 Green-house structures
- 14 On
- 15 Caviar provider
- 16 Volcanic outflow
- 17 "Eureka!"
- 18 Not as short
- 20 Dishes
- 23 Ratio phrase
- 24 Little one in the litter
- 25 Tough puzzle
- 28 Affirmative
- 29 Diarist
- 30 Beta Kappa
- 32 Learner
- 34 Adolescent
- 35 Prod
- 36 Cause, as havoc
- 37 Expose, in a way
- 40 Hawaiian garland
- 41 Any minute now
- 42 Obdurate
- 47 "Zounds!"
- 48 Cook on a grill
- 49 Novelist
- 50 "This tastes awful!"
- 51 Leftovers
- DOWN
- 1 "Monty Python" opener
- 19 \$ dispensers
- 2 Seine
- 3 French vineyard
- 4 Immoderate
- 5 Neighborhood
- 6 "O Sole—"
- 7 Woman's two-piece?
- 8 Fast gait
- 9 And others (Abbr.)
- 10 Relocate
- 11 Practice boxing
- 13 Turkish title
- 20 Weep
- 21 Colors
- 22 "Meet Me—Louis"
- 23 "Try—see"
- 25 Passes
- 26 Duel tool
- 27 Actress
- 29 Commotions
- 31 Pen filler
- 33 Kampa-la's country
- 34 "Survivor" squads
- 36 "MacArthur Park" composer
- 37 Addict
- 38 Nixed, at NASA
- 39 Complain
- 40 Hide in the bushes
- 43 Greek cross
- 44 Autumn mo.
- 45 Regret
- 46 Fresh

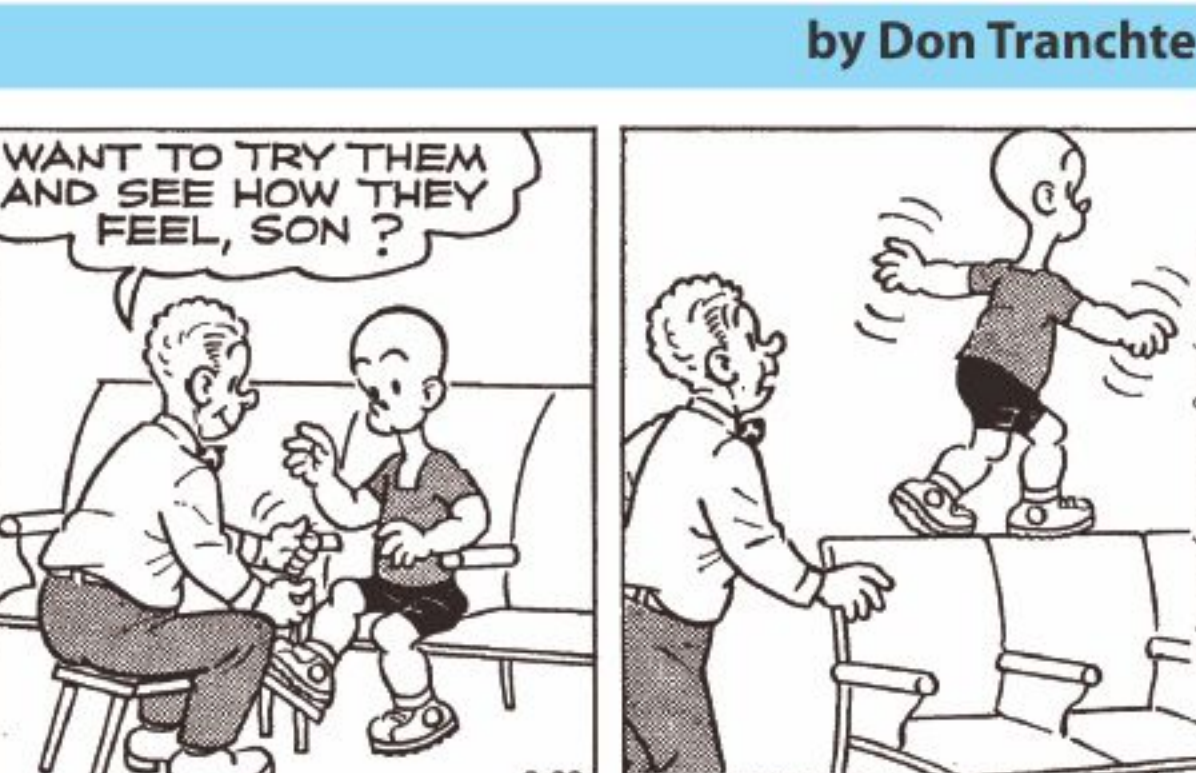
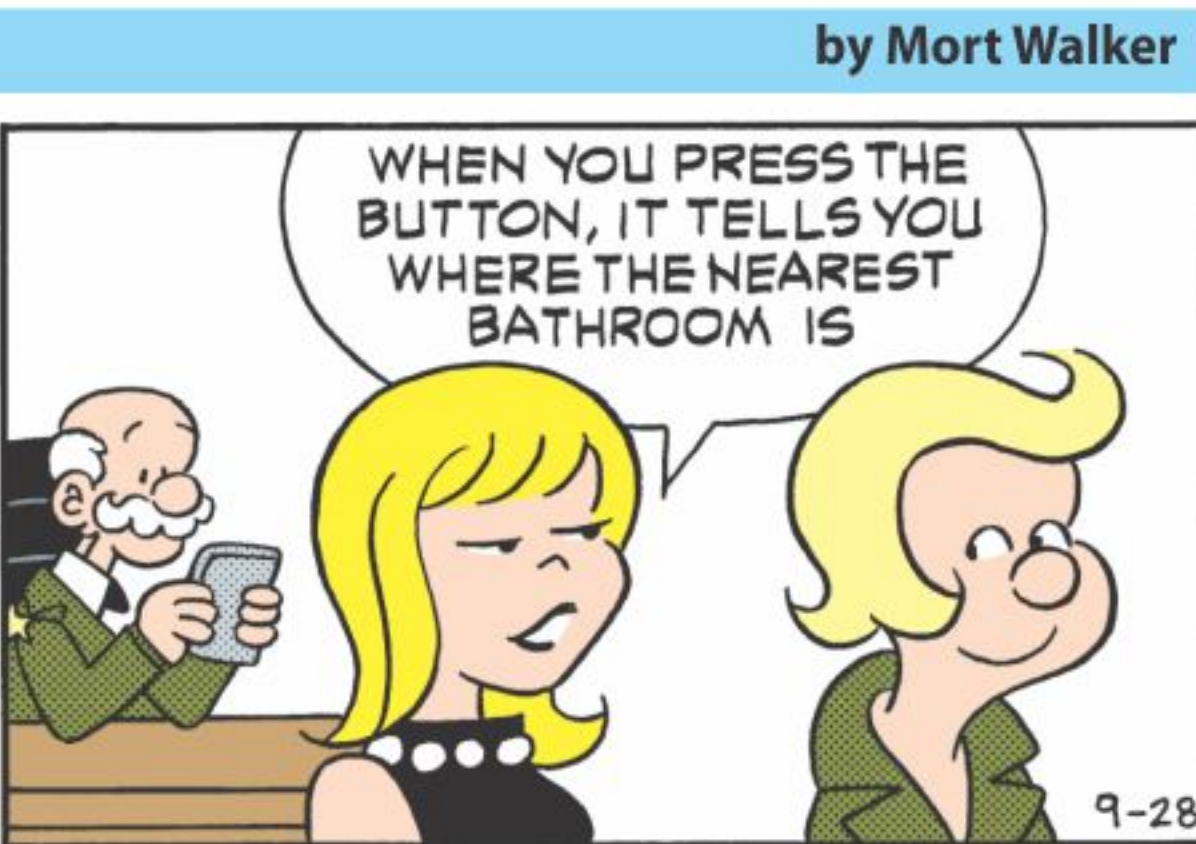


CRYPTOQUIP
YQC ZVOCVZ'O YJVW SVDEC
DOI'Y FCKK-DIUJWZCE CIJVSQ.
D WCTKKM FDOQ YQCM'E
UDIE T ECNCIY EJNCIY.
Saturday's Cryptiquip: IT'S NEVER CLEARLY EVIDENT TO ME WHICH KIND OF PORK I PREFER. I GUESS I'M VERY HAM-PIG-UOUS.
Today's Cryptiquip Clue: D equals I

BEETLE BAILY



HENRY



QUOTABLE Quotes

Mahatma Gandhi

"Freedom is not worth having if it does not connote freedom to err. It passes my comprehension how human beings, be they ever so experienced and able, can delight in depriving other human beings of that precious right."