

A SMALL PRICE!

CLIMATE CHANGE IS GOING TO have a disastrous effect if the world continues to do 'business as usual', with temperatures rising by 3 to 6 degrees centigrade, and catastrophic results including rising sea levels, melting glaciers, water shortages, floods and decreased agricultural yields.

That's the bad news in the scenarios revealed by the world's leading climate scientists in the third and most interesting report of the Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), released on 4 May in Bangkok.

The good news is that steps can be taken to avert the climate chaos at relatively low cost. It would take only 3 per cent of world income in 2030 to carry out the major changes needed. That works out to a reduction in the growth of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of only 0.12% per year until 2030.

A very small price to pay, to keep Earth going, for the sake of humanity's future. But the changes needed would be revolutionary. It would need changes to energy systems, technology, transport, buildings, industry, agriculture, how people treat forests and seas, and to lifestyles.

The ultimate aim of these changes is to quickly bring down the emissions of Greenhouse gases (the main one being carbon dioxide), which are the causes of rising temperatures.

With current policies, global Greenhouse gas emissions will continue to grow in the next decades, with carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions from energy use rising by 45 to 110 per cent between 2000 and 2030.

That would be disastrous in the effects it would have on raising temperatures. The present global temperature is already 0.7 degrees above the pre-industrial level.

Many scientists now believe that if the global temperature increases by more than 2 degrees above the pre-industrial level, there would be irreversible climate changes with very adverse effects. With changes above 3 degrees, there would be catastrophic changes. But policymakers are not listening. Without a sustained Green Movement, it is next to impossible to force the unwilling governments to undertake drastic economic, technological and lifestyle changes. □□□