

Power crisis due to non-implementation of Norochcholai project - NWP Minister

KULIYAPITIYA - If the Norochcholai Coal fired power plant had been implemented, there would have been no power crisis in the country at present, North-Western Provincial Minister of Transport and Highways M. H. M. Navavi said recently at a council meeting.

The meeting was presided over by Chairman D. M. Chandratilaka (PA).

The NWP Provincial Minister of Agriculture, Lands and Irrigation, the rape of forests was the main cause for droughts in particular and water scarcity in general. The politicians of every government in power, he said, were responsible for the destruction wrought on forests and the attendant drying up of fountains.

Forest conservation, he said, was necessary for water conservation.

The Provincial Minister of Fisheries and Cooperatives, Victor Biyanwila said that due to the sea erosion about 500 families from Thaldeka to Karandupona were displaced as their houses had been washed off by the sea. He said that they had to be provided with food and shelter.

He said he had reported the plight of the fisherfolk living along the coastal belt in NWP to the Ministry of Social Services, but the ministry had not taken any action. He said therefore had had to take up the matter with the chief Minister himself.

K. M. Nimal Herath (JVP) opening the debate on the motion said, "This council demands the

government to withdraw the plans to sell the water resources"

He said cabinet approval had been given for the National Water Resources Management Draft Bill, however following the protest campaign launched by those who really loved the country, the draft had been abandoned. However, he said that the danger was still there. He said around Year 2005, the most valuable resource in the world would be water. So the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank were planning to sell Sri Lanka's water resources to multi-national companies.

Two major irrigation schemes in Wayamba had already been handed over to farmer companies, he said. As a result the water users were at the mercy of these companies.

When the council met after adjournment, JVP members were not present.

The Provincial Minister of Fisheries and Cooperatives Victor Biyanwila said there was no need for pessimism over each and every issue. He said they were speaking as if they were frightened by a nightmare.

He said water management was essential for the conservation of water resources. There was no plan whatsoever to sell water resources, he said. The present generation, he said, had to conserve water for the sake of the future generation.

Somasiri Ekanayake (UNP) said the gravest problem of the day was the shortage of water. The

power cut had also resulted from water scarcity, he pointed out.

He said he JVP members of the council try were trying to play hero by moving what he called unnecessary motions. He viewed the motion in question as impracticable. However, he said that steps had to be taken to stop sand mining in rivers and clay mining in river valleys. The wells in the close proximity to Ma-oya had run dry due to sand mining, he said.

The Provincial Minister of Transport and Highways M. H. M. Navavi said the UNP opposed the alternative power-generating project for political reasons. Had the Norochcholai coal fired power station been introduced there would have been no power crisis at present he said.

M. Ayubkhan (UNP) said that the country was in the darkness during the PA regime. He said that according to a newspaper a large number of generators had been imported by kith and kin of the ministers.

He said hydropower would not be generated until generators are sold out. The UNP would come back to power shortly and dispel darkness caused by the PA, he said.

R. S. Wimaladasa (PA) said that the previous speaker had said nothing about the motion but was beating about the bush dreaming about UNP coming back to power. He said he and his party would not countenance the selling of water resources. He

said there would be an acute shortage of water within a few years unless timely action was taken to conserve water.

The Provincial Minister of Agriculture, Lands and Irrigation Athula Wijesinghe said that it was the duty of any government to conserve water resources for the future generations.

Unless proper water management was not embarked upon, Sri Lanka would end up being an "Ethiopia" in time to come, he warned. He said that it was timely that the motion had been taken up for debate following a severe drought. "We can well remember how our people," said he, "had to

fight a veritable war to get a little water to quench their thirst. We must conserve water for to avoid such a situation in the future."

K. M. Nimal Herath (JVP) said the World Bank wanted to introduce what he called water marketing. The danger of the government giving in to the World Bank still lingered and that was why the JVP demanded the government to withdraw that bill, he said.

The motion was defeated by a majority of 14 votes - 3 for and 17 against. The UNP members abstained from voting.