

3rd NOV 2001 Island

Power and Energy Shortage - planners, scientists, politicians, clergy and the civil society

I had just returned from attending a seminar conducted by eminent scientists and engineers, held at the SLAAS, where the subject of governers, power energy was discussed. I left with a heavy heart, seeing and hearing the devoted services they have rendered and continue to render and efforts made by them to convince and persuade the authorities, the government, to accept their advise.

Unfortunately their efforts are not known to the general public, the most effected. Some politicians and parties do not seem to understand the gravity. I say so after hearing and seeing over the TV one extreme left party suggesting or recommending ocean thermal energy, solar, wind and also another party who speaks for the major community. This clearly shows their thinking that supply

of electricity is only to the domestic sector. I presume their target is voters.

Then comes the clergy, the Buddhist, Christian/Catholics. I had a very embarrassing encounter with a highly respected chief Buddhist monk and also a Catholic priest. They seem to think that electricity is only for the households, offices and work places.

It is very unfortunate and unforgivable that the Catholic Church is against the setting up of a coal plant at Norochcholai. Perhaps the clergy is well looked after, clothed, fed and provided with all amenities by the followers and do not feel the pinch. Has anyone of our Mahanayaka Theros spoken a word on this miserable power cut? And the much talked of coal plant?

What do the common man know of the cause of the power crisis? Talk is spreading

among them that a politician's son has imported deisel generators and waits till all the generators are sold to go ahead with the major project. While another said that a politician and his associate have imported large stocks of candles and awaits the entire stock to be sold to commence work on major schemes. Another says that CEB is purposely releasing water in the reservoirs for other purposes on the direction of higher ups, to encourage deisel and natural gas lobbyists to come in with deisel plants, as a 'quick fix'. All these show how ignorant those close to the people, the politician, the clergy are.

In my view these eminent scientists, engineers and the CEB should step outside their lecture halls, auditoriums, meet the Mahanayaka Theros, Christian priests, Archbishop of Colombo and all heads of reli-

gious bodies and convince them of the necessity of their participation in the drive to come out of darkness. Nowhere have I heard of the CEB approaching the Archbishop of Colombo to make the Bishop of Chilaw to agree to setting up of the coal plant at Norochcholai.

Request all 'Imams' in all mosques who conduct Jumma prayers on Fridays to tell the congregation and pass the information or message of the gravity of the situation. So should be to 'Kurukals' in Hindu kovils.

Bring about an awareness among the civil and business society to accept and implement the programmes so carefully prepared and presented to government, as not a single party had brought a motion in parliament to press for the implementation of the coal plant at Norochcholai. Perhaps those now in the

opposition want to take credit by undertaking the project when they come to power.

Or will they too under pressure and for the sake of a handful of votes betray the entire nation and go in search of new locations thus delaying the project, without caring a damn for the suffering masses. Even at this late stage it is considered that Bishop of Chilaw is approached to change his stand for the good of the people, which I am sure he will after all the pains taken to do several studies done to convince and please him.

There was a period in this country when a head of the state, no sooner he came to power said he did not want professors, engineers, lecturers but he wanted *Baasunnehes*. Atleast he did some work, but what of the present?

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