

Don't keep CEB consumers in the dark

The above titled article which appeared in the government owned press - *Sunday Observer*, is both confusing and revealing. Regarding tenders called for the installation of three power plants by the private sector, spokesman of the Ministry of Power and Energy (M/P & E) has said that the CEB officials were consulted before seeking private sector participation.

This is contrary to the statement made by no less a person than the Chairman of the CEB, Mr. K. L. Ariyananda and his deputy Dr. Ranjith Cabraal, who deny vehemently such consultations.

On the other hand a senior official of the M/P & E says, "The Chairman, Vice Chairman and the General Manager of the CEB, were aware of the treasury decision to call for tenders." He asks, "How can the CEB officials say that they were not aware when Mr. G. S. P. Mendis, one of their officials was appointed to the Technical Evaluation Committee". The consumers who undergo untold misery, would wish to have a categorical statement from the CEB and Mr. G. S. P. Mendis who has since resigned, as reported, for reasons not known to the public yet.

It is true, as said at the beginning of the article in question that the "M/P & E has ruled out coal power as an immediate solution to the existing power crisis. The Norochcholai Coal Power plant comes in the long term plan to avert further crisis and also produce cheaper electricity. The most revealing factors on the Norochcholai Coal Plant has been given by the Chief Representative of the Japanese Bank for

International Cooperation (JBIC) Mr. Naomi Miwa. He says (it is absolutely necessary to quote the full text as appearing in the *Sunday Observer* for the benefit of those who missed reading this article and also to those who are concerned - the whole nation.)

"Giving an additional twist to the search for a solution to the Power Crisis? The chief representative of the Japanese Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) Naomi Miwa revealed that the government has not made a formal request from the Japanese Government to set up a Coal Power Plant project, although they have carried out a feasibility study in March last year". "If a request is made, we will review the position and decide to assist the new proposals that come from the Sri Lanka Government".

"Miwa pointed out that Sri Lanka began the project in 1999 when it was initially proposed it would have been around 900 MW to the national grid at present. Yet, if there is any idea of shifting the project to some other area, the feasibility study should be done again which will take another two years and additional heavy cost".

"The feasibility study of the project had cost around nine million US dollars (976m Yen) and was completed in March 2000. Three

units of 300 MW each were proposed and the loan agreement which was 500 million US dollars was signed in July 1994".

It is therefore quite clear that the government, which is insensitive to the suffering of the masses and is not concerned about the economic growth of the country for reasons better known to the rulers, has not approached the JBIC as at today.

The Bishop of Chilaw, who is the main stumbling block has been satisfied with the findings of the recent independent consultants report and wants a monitoring body to monitor environmental pollution. This could be easily agreed to by the Ministry of Power and Energy by including a nominee of the Bishop to the Committee on Environment aspects. It is therefore very clear from the statement of the Chief Representative of the JBIC that they are yet anxiously waiting for an official request.

All consumers would wish or demand a straight forward answer from the Chairman Mr. K. L. Ariyananda and the Secretary to the Ministry of Power and Energy to tell the truth of the matter to the public without keeping them in the dark. Silence would mean guilt.

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Opinion