

Coal for power generation

An anonymous reader has, on your April 18 edition, mentioned my letter published on April 5. I am afraid he has not caught my point. I am not having any brief for coal power and is fully aware of effects to the environment. But what are the options left for us. The prices of imported fossil fuel is spiralling up, the hydro power generation is at the mercies of the climatic vagaries. Are we going to suffer staggered power cuts and close down whatever industries started even meagrely in the country.

Coal being comparatively cheaper is the best option at this juncture. And furthermore, surveys and feasibility studies have been done at much cost to the country. Are we going to abandon this venture just because some unreasonable minority of the populace are throwing their political clout. Almost all the developed and developing countries in the world are harnessing coal to obtain power. Are these countries burdened with environmental hazards due to emissions and by-products or have not these countries controlled or minimised these problems.

We are presently facing a crisis and have shortfall of at least 250 MW. What are the options offered by the Catholic Church and the environmentalists?. We are too tolerant and as a result these NGO's and regionalists interfere too much in state affairs. It is not the fault of any religion but the fault of the people who control various religious institutions. They are hypocritical and obdurate.

This reader mentions wind power as an option. I would request him to see for himself the windmills in action at Hambantota. He also could join the technocrats at the CEB, who were naive to recommend this project, to try conclusions with the non-functioning wind mills like some modern day Don Quixotes. Wind Mills are a catastrophic failure in the tropics and have been proven to be so in India. About solar power and bio-gas they are possible in a small way but does not suit industrial power requirements.

This anonymous reader goes on and finally writes about the uprooting of people. Does he know how many people have been uprooted lock,

stock and barrel to allow the construction of the major reservoirs like Victoria, Kotmale, Mousekelle even Samanalawewa, Chandrikawewa, Uda Walawe and major and minor reservoirs done by the Irrigation Department. If someone does a real cost estimation and a cost benefit evaluation it could be seen that the cost hardly commensurates the benefits. And further, the repairs to most of these edifices have risen to twice or thrice the construction cost. So that is about major hydro power. I have not mentioned the environmental and ecological damage done.

As a Third World rated poor country we do not have much options and we cannot be experimenting. We need energy very fast. Kalpitiya was programmed for 2000 AD and its stage II was to be completed in 2005. As is evident we are going into big trouble by 2005. Maybe, our confused politicians would request the Catholic priests to pray for the extra Mega Watts of electricity.

G. S. Hemaratne
Nugegoda.