

CEB on a suicidal course

According to some media reports, the CEB and the Ministry of Power are studying a proposal to build new thermal power stations to be run on Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) in place of coal fired power stations. The proposals under study will also convert the existing thermal plants to be run on LNG.

This will be the greatest blunder in the power sector and the worst national disaster although it will help some crooked politicians, senior officials and the commission agents to earn several millions of dollars at the country's expense.

If the new power stations are to be run on LNG and the existing power stations are also to be converted to run on LNG, the suppliers of LNG will have a grip on the entire power supply in Sri Lanka. The cost will be unpredictable as LNG prices change along with oil prices. Furthermore, the supply sources of LNG are very limited and a breakdown of its supply will result in a virtual power blackout in the whole country.

Malaysia is a country blessed with its own natural gas resources. Part of their resources was earlier used to run power stations. The natural gas was transported by pipelines in the gaseous state itself. Recently Malaysia has decided to preserve their natural gas resources for future use for non-power-generation purposes and embarked on building coal-fired power stations using imported coal. Whilst other countries with their own resources of natural gas are moving away from using natural gas for power-generation, the crooked policy

makers in Sri Lanka are moving in the opposite direction.

If Sri Lanka embarks on the building of new power stations and also converting the existing thermal power stations to run on LNG, it will be necessary to import this gas in the Liquefied form. For natural gas to become a liquid, it has to be chilled and maintained at 162 degrees centigrade below freezing point. The risk of fire is extremely high. Special ships are required for LNG transport. Special handling equipment will be required for unloading LNG and special tanks for storage. These will require huge investments up front and perhaps the promoters of LNG power stations will call upon the Sri Lanka government to meet such infrastructure costs. The total cost will be colossal and the power produced will be beyond the reach of Sri Lankans for commercial, industrial or domestic purposes.

Considering the above, it is very necessary for organisations such as the chambers of commerce and industry, the O.P.A, the Institution of Engineers, etc. to take up this matter as an urgent issue and ensure that the country is not sold out for the benefit of some crooked politicians, officials and commission agents.

The JVP is trying to clean up the corruption of politicians in particular. If so, they could help.

The media could also play a very important role by educating the general public on this impending national disaster.

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