

Build coal power stations without delay - *Dinamina*

Lakbima: DISCUSSIONS A STALEMATE

Discussions begun on Sunday between the PA and the UNP on reaching a consensus seem to have bogged down in a stalemate. But, in the meantime, President Chandrika Kumaratunga has declared that in deference to public opinion, she humbly accepts the need for the two main parties to join for the sake of the country. If both the government and the UNP are in earnest to serve the country's urgent needs, they need not debate hair-splitting issues endlessly.

As we see it, the issue before these two parties is the distribution of positions. The proposal on Joint Premiership aptly exposes the insatiable greed for power. Mutual mistrust between these two parties is another reason for the difficulty in reaching a consensus. Both parties seem to be marking time until a General Election is called, giving themselves a chance to grab total power.

Lankadeepa: WHY NOT ACCEPT OPPOSITION STAND ?

President Chandrika Kumaratunga has said recently that she was prepared to join with the UNP for an year or two to solve the current crisis in the country. She had also said that when joining, priority should be given to solving major issues and not to seeking positions. We, too, affirm this priority. It is also the considered opinion of the general public.

The Opposition has clearly spelt out its stand on this crisis. It has not indicated bargaining for positions. As such, we fail to understand why agreement cannot be reached on the conditions laid down by the Opposition. A government should be far-sighted. This is a situation that requires the cooperation of all parties. To receive the support of the UNP, a fair chance should be given to the stance taken up by the Opposition.

Divaina: DON'T WASTE TIME

The government appears to be willing to hang on anyone for its own survival. In its search for the party with which it could obtain maximum benefits, it is wasting a great deal of time. This indecision and vacillation could make the government lose the support of all parties it is trying to woo. Instead of making a committed effort to save the country from the current crisis, the government is wasting time and effort to retain power.

The SLMC left the government due to ill treatment. The LTTE is the main enemy. Leading members of both the government and the UNP think talks between them could end without a result. The JVP has said it will never join the government as such, but supporting conditionally for a probationary government. With such a grave crisis at the very doorsteps, it is most cruel and inefficient to waste time talking without taking effective action to remedy it.

Dinamina: IS THERE NO SOLUTION TO POWER CUTS ?

There is no indication of power cuts ending soon. Power cuts are imposed only as a last resort. The incapacity of hydro electricity to serve the entire need of the country was identified several years ago. We have also been using thermal power as an alternative for many years now. However, the exorbitant price of crude oil is forcing us to look for other alternative to thermal power.

The only viable alternative is to use either nuclear power or coal power. Whenever efforts were made to set up coal power stations, NGOs protested vehemently. Some of them may have protested with genuine motives. However, genuine concerns should not make eyes shut to reality. Some NGOs are effective only to the extent of

impressing foreign sponsors. They try to show these foreign sponsors that they are very active here. How long are we going to allow this situation to go on? Relevant authorities should concentrate on the question of building coal power stations without delay.

Thinakaran: CONSENSUS IS VERY VITAL

The Communist Party has all along given creative suggestions and far reaching plans whenever national crises emerged in this country. The party has consistently assessed the situations correctly. The statement released by its General Secretary Dew Gunasekera recently is a testimony to the party's vision.

It is very vital that finding a solution to the ethnic issue should be given priority over all other issues. It is the most urgent issue today. The main reason for the present disarray is the Constitution of 1978 brought by President J. R. Jayawardene. The PA and the UNP should arrive at a consensus to amend this Constitution. All those who are interested in the country expect this to be done. It is for the two major parties to fulfil the aspirations of the people.

Virakesari: WHEN WILL THE COUNTRY RECEIVE RELIEF ?

The PA and the UNP are in the process of meeting with the objective of ending the present crisis. The people are eagerly awaiting the outcome of these talks.

Donor countries will also be watching. However, no indication has been made about the direction in which the talks are moving. Today's discussions will finally decide whether the deliberations will bear fruit or not.

Meanwhile, the UNP is alleging that the PA is bent on retaining power and that the on-going talks are only an eye wash. According to them, the government is not keen to share power. It is still eyeing the JVP for support. For any talks to succeed, there should be a give and take policy and certain sacrifices have to be made. It is now evident that neither of these parties is willing to do so. In any case, top priority should be given to solving the ethnic issue. Only that can bring relief to the people.

Thinakkural: NOTHING WILL COME OUT OF IT

Political activities in this country are devoid of any direction. The on-going talks between the PA and the UNP is yet another example of endeavours without commitment. No one is confident that the talks would produce good results. It is because major political parties in this country are noted for wasting their time and energy in useless rhetoric and discussions.

The government cannot expect the UNP to prop it up and the UNP is not going to be satisfied until they capture power, fully. With a majority in Parliament, they can smell blood. It is, therefore, necessary for the government to carefully consider the proposals put forward by the UNP as a condition to let the government remain in power. Public opinion is moving towards the argument that in the present context, these proposals are worth considering. It should also be borne in mind that the proposals are being backed by the entire Opposition. It will not do to refer these proposals to Select Committees and kill time.

The UNP has said that today's crisis is not connected with the Constitution but, personally with President Chandrika Kumaratunga. In this context, it is not easy to find any solution to the present crisis through the ongoing talks, or otherwise.