

Sydney Olympics and coal power

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We all witnessed the grandeur of the Sydney Olympics in Australia on the T.V. What has made me write this is to present the large number of coal power plants operating in close proximity to Sydney as well as to denounce the most disgusting falsehoods carried out by the anti coal lobbies declaring that coal causes cancer, physical deformation, mental retardation, deformed children born to mothers, destruction to marine life, and devastation of the country.

Following the outcome of the elections the business circles and economists have declared that as a first step the war should be quickly ended to boost the economy. To make a time frame to end the war is not practical or possible. The war has been going on for the past 17 years, while the talk of setting up a coal power plant has lasted 20 years. Setting up a coal power plant, a comparatively simple job, is entirely in our hands. Professors, PhD's, foreign funded environmentalists, selfish politicians, self styled social workers, and numerous NGO's are responsible for the disgraceful sabotage of this vital project. Let me give an account of the importance of the Coal Power Plant for economic development.

Coal Power

A few miles west of Sydney there is a large coal power plant Wallerawang 12.40 MW. Then in the north and south of Sydney there are a number of coal power plants. See the map. In the presence of these large number of coal power plants surrounding Sydney and now having witnessed the Sydney Olympics, can any one say that Sydney is a devastated city? Australia came fourth in the number of medals secured at the Olympics. So we can decide for ourselves whether there is any truth in the false propaganda carried out by the anti-coal lobbies here that coal power causes physical deformation and mental retardation. The Olympic games are essentially a test of a high degree of physical fitness and mental alertness. The other top medal winners are the USA, Russia and China where again the major power source is of coal.

Sri Lankans are said to be 92% literate, in Asia just behind Japan the second economic power in the world. Is it not a shame that people said to be so literate readily believe all the rubbish the anti-coal lobbies have been repeating to them for the past 20 years. This evil propaganda has prevented the coal power plant from taking off the ground, though the project should have been introduced as long ago as 1992 to follow the hydro power plants which were meant to supply peaking power in the Accelerated Mahaweli Project.

National Progress

Let me emphasize the importance of establishing a solid base load power plant, if meaningful industrialization is to take place. Here are the GNP/GDP performance indices of a few countries in Asia during the period 1960 to 1998.

Country	1960	1998
Hong Kong	310	25200
Indonesia	91	1100
Malaysia	280	4530
Singapore	443	32810
South Korea	152	10550
Taiwan	149	12797
Thailand	82	2740
Sri Lanka	152	800

It should be realized that in the case of the countries that have taken great strides, it was possible due to the large power plants - mostly coal-operated in those countries. Compared to them Sri Lanka's performance is pathetic. Even the figure 800 for Sri Lanka is not a real performance of national progress as the war effort is included in this figure.

Already the number of migrant workers in foreign lands has swollen to about one million. This is the result of a stag-

nant economy and the lack of job opportunities here. They want to return home, but since jobs are scarce and there is no alternative, they have to continue working abroad although social and family problems arise.

What is the reason for Sri Lanka's poor performance? The war is blamed, but this is not the cause. It is mostly due to the extremely poor power system. The countries, which have made vast economic strides, have large base load power installations.

Industrialization

We had a vigorous election campaign. We were promised all manner of wonderful goodies. Not a word was mentioned about electricity though it is the primary industry of all industries and only a stable power system can provide employment and stimulate progress.

Here there is an erroneous belief that industries should be first established in order that the power plant may follow. But this should really be the other way round. Electricity is the primary industry of all industries. So the existence of a power plant serves as an impetus to set up industries. Let me give a few examples.

- When India gained her independence it approached the World Bank to get the massive Bakhara Nangal Hydro Power Project constructed in Punjab. The World Bank questioned what they expected to do with all that power. They said a nitrogen fertilizer plant would be set up to use the power. The power plant was constructed. In a few years large scale industrialization took place in that region because of the presence of the power source. Then the fertilizer plant was scrapped and all that electricity was diverted to industries.

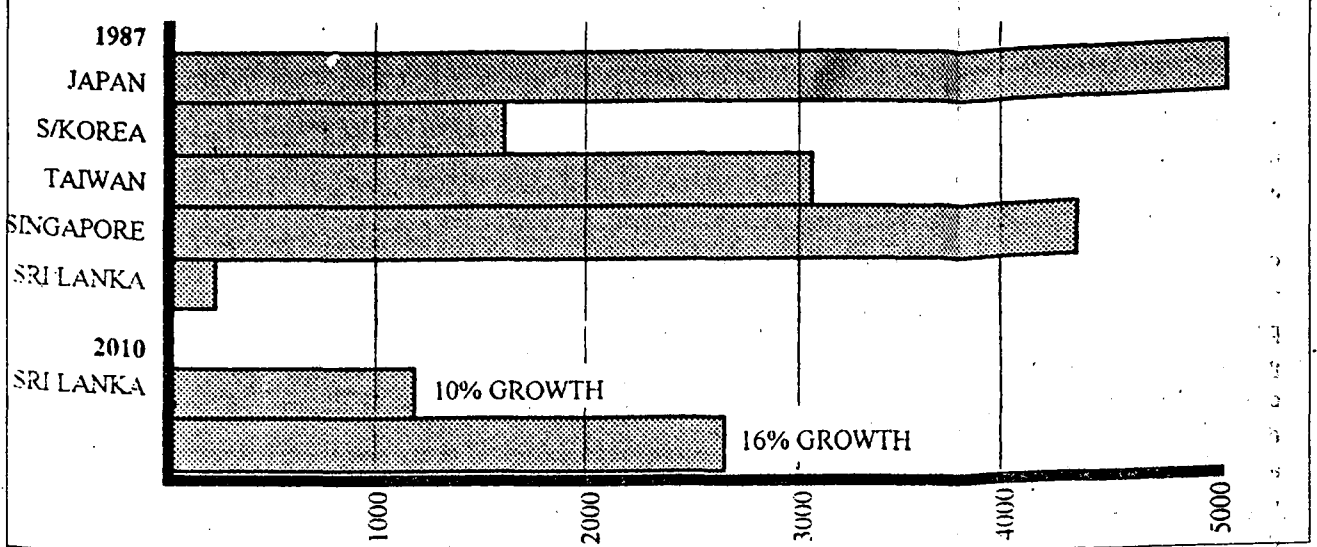
- A large coal power plant was set up by the Rehand Reservoir in Uttarpradesh. It was set in that badly under developed area so that industrial development would follow. At that time even to transport heavy power plant equipment from Calcutta there was no satisfactory road.

- In Canada it was around a coal power plant that the Winnipeg City grew up. Today that power plant can be seen in the centre of the city.

- When the first settlers landed in Australia they found it a desert. Coal which was present on the east coast was developed for various small industries, heating and cooking. Then coal acting as a fertilizer made grass grow. A small coal power plant was set up. Around this power plant the Sydney City grew up. The world famous Sydney Harbour Bridge is located just across from this power plant. The original power plant now stands abandoned as other large coal power plants have been constructed around Sydney.

The bar diagram which illustrates per capita electricity consumption of a few countries in Asia, shows the miserable position of Sri Lanka compared to the other countries in the region. This is a diagram prepared in 1992 with the statistics obtained from the UN Publications of that time. Some of the coal power plants I have visited in this region are Hong Kong - Castle Peak 4000 MW, Lamma 2000 MW; Taiwan -

PER CAPITA CONSUMPTION Kwh/annum



Hsinta 1300 MW, Talin, Nanpu; Malaysia - Port Kelang.

Protest

When for effective development, coal base load power plants had to be constructed to meet the demand with the hydro power plants providing peaking duties in the Accelerated Mahaweli project, it was found that wherever coal power was introduced it was sabotaged by all shades of anti development lobbies - foreign funded environmentalists, self seeking politicians, etc. The result is that no worthwhile power project could be implemented after the Mahaweli project, and thus we have nothing to show but a stagnant economy.

In their deceptive anti coal propaganda the protesters have been falsely declaring that all over the world coal power is being given up and the existing plants are being scrapped. The statistics on coal power additions in a few countries over the next few succeeding years, obtained in 1990 are given here.

Australia	18813 MW
USA	42000 MW
Egypt	4130 MW
India	18980 MW
Indonesia	6530 MW
Italy	18280 MW
Japan	10921 MW
S./Africa	23794 MW
Spain	4120 MW
Taiwan	2615 MW
Turkey	4540 MW
W. Germany,	11519 MW

At the United States Presidential debate held on 13th October 2000, the Presidential candidate Governor Bush, regarding energy said that there is an abundant supply of coal in America and he will definitely promote clean coal power plants (The Island - 14th October 2000). Here the great deception carried out by anti - coal lobbies is exposed. Remember that this straightforward job which is entirely in our hands has been dragging on for the past 20 years. Then how can we expect the war, which is not entirely in our hands, to end as we desire?

False Solutions

Now every Tom, Dick, and Harry comes out with engineering solutions to meet the serious power shortages. Their solutions are the so called sustainable power, like solar power, wind power, wave power, OTEC, Bio gas, etc., but all very ineffective for a national power system. Because of this mess created by all kinds of elements, the CEB is now forced to confine itself to installing oil burning power sets - diesel and gas turbines. None of them are suitable for base load operation. The people can judge for themselves the suitability of these power sources from the following unit costs - Rs. Per unit (Source - CEB's Generation Expansion Plan - 1998).

Solar Cells	35.76
Wind Power	10.12
Gas-turbine diesel	8.64
Combined cycle LNG	6.07

Combined cycle diesel	5.90
Oil Steam	5.82
Coal steam.	3.38

The unit costs have been worked out in 1998 when oil cost was about \$ 15 a barrel. At today's high oil prices - about US \$ 35 a barrel - all oil based power generation is very much more costly per unit than those indicated in the table. The public will have to bear these high costs.

Lesson

Susanthika's remarkable success at the Sydney Olympics is greatly appreciated by all of us. It brought fame to our country. Susanthika did not fall prey to negative thinking. In the present context of poor economic performance as indicated in the GNP/GDP indices, it is most advisable that we learn a lesson from the success story of Australia. The predominant contributor to this success is the string of coal power plants operating on the East Coast of Australia. The population centres, coal mines and coal power plants and her vast agricultural lands are all sited together as is visible around Sydney. So let us not believe the blatant lies and falsehoods that coal power will only bring disaster to Sri Lanka. Let those who profess to be patriots, the people of Ruhuna invite the CEB to set up the coal power plant at Mawella. Then we can seek out the real patriots from the hypocrites and traitors.

However anti coal hypocrites will continue to enjoy the luscious apples, oranges and grapes; also consume the milk, cheese produced in the coal belt in Australia and imported in large quantities into Sri Lanka.

