

Power crisis: Learn form Old Testament

"The children of this world are more prudent in dealing with their own generation than are the children of light" (LK 16:8).

We have no control over nature. Monsoon failure not only affects our power generation, it also affects our industries, economy and our domestic life. We have to pray and wait for the rains during the months of November and December to fill our reservoirs full.

Should we let our power generation be affected by the failure of monsoons? My opinion is that this power crisis could have been averted had we acted with wisdom.

In the Bible, we see a similar situation in the Old Testament.

We could take a lesson from it. This incident is related in genesis chapter 41. Pharaoh, king of Egypt had two dreams. In one he saw seven fat cows coming out of the river Nile. Later seven other cows, skinny and ugly came out of the river. They ate up the seven fat cows. The king had a second dream. He saw seven heads of healthy and good grain on a single stalk. Then he saw another seven heads of grain scorched and dried up. These scorched up grains swallowed up the healthy ones. King was worried as to its meaning. He consulted his astrologers. They failed to give him an explanation.

Then the chief cup bearer of the king, told the king of a young Hebrew, Joseph who interpreted dreams, whilst he and another servant of the captain was in prison. Joseph had interpreted those two dreams correctly.

Immediately, Joseph was taken out of the dungeon and brought before the king. Joseph was asked to interpret the two dreams of the king. Joseph said, "I cannot do it. But God will give Pharaoh answer, he desires" (vs 16).

Pharaoh related his dreams.

Joseph said that both dreams were one and the same. God has revealed what he was about to do. There was to be seven years of great abundance in the whole of Egypt. It would be followed by seven years of drought and famine, famine would be severe and ravage the land. The matter had been firmly decided by God and he would do it soon.

Pharaoh, though an infidel, was sensitive to God's word that came from Joseph's mouth. On Joseph's advise, he took quick action and averted

the disaster that was to come on his people.

God throughout history has spoken to man in different ways; through visions, dreams, prophets and lastly through Jesus Christ. Today too God speaks to us in different ways: Through incidents, people, etc.

Now let us come to the present power crisis. The Ceylon Electricity Board engaged Mr. Carlo Fernando as a Power Development Consultant in 1977, who had over 30 years of local and international experience in hydro power and water resources. As far back as 1970, he was speaking of some vital aspects of hydropower development in Sri Lanka, at a London conference. And also about "1000 MW base load Coal Power plant for Sri Lanka to be developed in stages". These articles were published in the journal "Engineers" of the Institution of Electrical Engineers in Sri Lanka in 1978. Is it the voice of God that came 23 years ago through one of our own citizens. But these early warnings have gone with the wind.

In the year 1992, CEB published a very comprehensive book on "Coal Power for Industrialisation and National Progress in Sri Lanka". Highly qualified and experienced engineers have contributed articles to this book.

A full coverage was given of all aspects of Coal Power production and its safety. There it shows how the world power systems are changing over to coal power. The idea of the use of coal power was to have it as a continuous base load and to use the other sources as Hydro and Diesel power for peak load purposes when necessary.

With all these information given during the past 23 years, why hasn't the CEB taken any action to start a Coal Power Station? Even today what action is being taken in this regard?

Trincomalee was the best site for a Coal Power station. But it was abandoned due to security reasons. There was also the organised insidious and environmental protest, against this power plant. These protests and false propaganda poisoned the Sri Lankan mind and instilled fear in them. Mawella in the southern coast was the second best site for a coal power station. There again environmental protests were staged. Due to these protests, President asked CEB to suspend the work and to look for alternative sources of energy.

Alternative sources available were solar, wind and biogas. These could never be used for industrial purposes. Then the third best place was Dungalpitiya in the Negombo area. This site was simply ignored; and CEB proposed a new site at Norochcholai in the Kalpitiya area.

Here too protests were made by the people, led by the Bishop of Chilaw. It was a blessing that the President cancelled the Norochcholai plant and ordered to look for another site.

It was the worst site possible due to security reasons an easy target to LTTE bombs.

Today, our neighbour India uses 60% Coal Power, about 25% hydropower and about 10% gas, other sources are negligible. Then why should we not follow India's example and introduce coal power in our country.

By keeping the coal power out, the diesel lobby can make a fast buck by importing diesel plants. Is it about these people that Jesus said, "The children of this world are more prudent in dealing with their own generation than are the children of light" (LK 16:8).

Considering the grave situation the whole country is plunged into, the President should use her executive powers and arrange with the help of the Japanese government to get a well experienced Japanese firm to construct the required Coal Power Station first at Mawella in the South, then another Power Station to follow at Negombo.

Studies have already been done on these two sites by competent and qualified consulting institutes. They have recommended these two sites.

At the same time we have to educate the people on the benefits and advantages of coal power. The people should be educated on these benefits. This could be done by the politicians and the religious bodies otherwise our factories will have to be shut down; industries and business will come to a standstill.

Thousands would be unemployed. Our younger generation would have to leave the country in search of employment. Tens of thousands of more Sri Lankan girls would join those thousands who are already doing menial jobs in Arab countries as housemaids.

Let us strive to avert the power crisis.

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19/11/01 Island.