

18/08/99
The Island

Southern Development Fiasco

By E. Carlo Fernando
Former Senior Engineer, Water
Resources Board.
Former Power Development
Consultant, C.E.B.

Having experienced the two deadly insurrections which erupted in the South East Dry Zone (SEDZ) it was realised that this dangerous situation had resulted in badly neglecting that region. Therefore the consensus was that priority be given to the economic development of Ruhunu Rata. For any real development, the two vital requirements are water and power. But these two important components are not present in the south. Still no meaningful attempts are being made to establish these resources there.

Water

It is not that the SEDZ has no resources available for development. It has some excellent resources, better than those found in other areas. For the basic water requirements, it has the Kalu Ganga which has an annual flow of 6,294,000 acre feet which is available for diversion, while the Mahaweli Ganga has only 4,306,000 ac.ft. and Kelani Ganga 5,807,000 ac.ft.

Here you see Kalu Ganga has 1 1/2 times the flow of the Mahaweli. Now by setting up

the Kukule run-of-river hydro power plant, this large flow of water, after producing only a little power is sent wastefully into the sea. This plan is not something we should feel proud of, because with the setting up of this power plant the chances of solving the water requirements of the SEDZ are extremely remote. The most absurd solutions to solve the water problem in the SEDZ are being adopted here. For example, resorting to desalination, when this is not a desert country; diverting the Menik Ganga, which has no water even for bathing purposes at Kataragama and the diversion of the Uma Oya, when that water has to go to the Eastern Province in the Mahaweli Master Plan.

Power

Regarding power, in the present circumstances Mawella/Kudawella is an excellent site for the coal power plant, especially because of the deep water, natural harbour facility available to receive 60,000 dwt. coal ships just by the shore in the Kudawella Bay. Such an advantage is not found anywhere in Sri Lanka except in Trincomalee.

Work on this vital project was sabotaged in the most disgusting manner by the interested elite in Colombo. The innocent people in the SEDZ were duped by false anti-coal propaganda carried out from Colombo. Now a

fisheries harbour is being constructed in the Kudawella Bay, maybe with the intention of giving the final death blow to this great power resource.

The present pathetic plans adopted to solve the power requirements are to promote windmills, bio gas, wood thermal, solar power, diesel sets, small hydro plants. These are all absurd propositions for the meaningful economic development of this region. This is in compliance with the prescriptions dictated to us by foreign funded environmentalists, whom the government considers experts on every project, ignoring the sound advice given by experienced engineers.

Diversion

Let me say more about the Kalu Ganga diversion. The Irrigation Department had all along stressed the need for the Kalu Ganga diversion. The Engineering Consultants Inc. Denver in its Three Basin Report in the 1960s had stated that a feasibility study of the Kalu Ganga diversion should be carried out before undertaking any work there. Later TAMS, New York, made a Kalu Ganga water resources study 1984-87 and recommended the diversion over any hydro power development.

I have been stressing on this vital diversion for a long time. One of my early articles "Choice between lights for Colombo and

water for dry South — short-sighted water resource planning" appeared in The Sunday Island — August 17, 1986. Another article "Southern Development and Power Development" was published in the Institution of Engineers Journal in 1991. In this article I had mentioned — "If we BLUNDER now by keeping to the present plan — a hydro power plant at Kukule and sending all that water to the sea, the SEDZ will never be developed."

Today we see the result — absolutely no progress has been made after 15 years of attempts to develop the SEDZ. The civil engineering consultant, M. S. M. de Silva, who had been engaged in water resources projects since the Gal Oya Scheme, constantly stressed in the newspapers and at seminars the need for the diversion, instead of the Kukule hydro power plant. His article "Kukule single purpose hydro power project" in the Daily News, April 27, 1991 states — The CEB is apparently convinced that the generation of hydro electric power to meet its future electric demand by utilising the water of the Kukule Ganga is more important than the urgent need for the supply of water to the thousands of acres of arable land in the SEDZ, which could only be developed if water is imported from the Kalu Ganga and the neighbouring

basins."

False start

Those who were entrusted with the development of the SEDZ must have acted on the assumption that Stage I developments, i.e. water and power had been achieved with the absurd propositions being promoted, as mentioned above. They then proceeded to Stage II development i.e., expressway — Colombo-Matara, Galle harbour international airport at Hambantota, international harbour at Hambantota, development of Hambantota to a mega city, etc. But at the end of the 17 years UNP rule in 1994, it was found that nothing had been achieved, because they were trying to put the cart before the horse.

In the PA 1994 election manifesto one of the principal items was the desire to adopt a massive development strategy for Ruhuna. The PA received almost a 100% mandate from Ruhuna, endorsing this plan. Then to execute this development speedily the Southern Development Authority (SDA) was established. It was given practically an open cheque to get on with the job. Unfortunately they continued with the same unrealistic projects, which the UNP had promoted and failed miserably to achieve.

After four years, when President

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Chandrika Kumaratunga checked on the progress that had been achieved she was shocked to find that the SDA had done absolutely nothing to implement these mega projects. What existed was a luxury office with ultra modern equipment in Colombo and a large staff with high sounding titles, fat salaries and all manner of perks. The President was so upset with the entire set-up that she sacked half the staff, and Rs. 60,000 salaries were halved to Rs. 30,000. She also ordered at the SDA office in Colombo be closed down and instead set up in Matara.

What is most strange here is that the authorities under both the UNP and the PA, having dealt with these projects for over 20 years and having woefully failed are still at it taking up stalled, non-viable projects for development. No one cared to find out what went wrong here. Building castles without the basic foundation. For development the vital requirements are water and power. But these two important components are not available in the south and no meaningful attempts are being made to cite these resources there.

Distortions

M. S. M. de Silva says in his article that TAMS recommended the Kukule single purpose hydro power development. The TAMS study report 1984-87, I have with me, states clearly the benefits of river diversion over hydro power. It is obvious the CEB got TAMS to write a second report recommending the single purpose hydro power plant. I am not aware of this report. The CEB diesel lobby seems to be responsible for this distorted report. That is why M. S. M. has made the above statement about the apparent unsatisfactory convictions of the CEB — hydro power in preference to the water needs of the SEDZ, which is vital to the people of the south. See TAMS diversion plan.

Regarding power similar situations took place. The study by the consultants to the Trinco Coal Power Project indicated that coal power should be introduced by the early 1990s. Then the CEB got another consultant Lahmeyer to write a report stating that coal power be introduced by about 2007. (Report — 31 Mar, 1989). Till then the plan is to continue setting up diesel sets, small hydro plants, etc. This report was hailed and given wide publicity as the Master Plan. It is this plan, now being carried out, which has caused great economic stagnation and is thus

increasingly inducing Sri Lankan workers to roam round the world in search of employment.

We experienced severe power cuts in 1996. Now prophetic announcements are being made of six hour power cuts in 2001 and eight to ten hour power cuts in 2004. (The Island 1.7.99)

J.C.I. Study

In contrast to the above distorted plan of

is being constructed in the Kudawella Bay where the jetty for the Mawella coal power plant is to be constructed. The planners should realise that the natural deep water facility to receive 60,000 dwt. coal ships at Mawella is next best to Trincomalee.

At Dungalpitiya/Negombo other sorts of development are taking place. In contrast when the Mahaweli Development Scheme were taken up, Polgolla, Bowatenna, Victoria,

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to the distant year 2007. Herewith are the economics of this Kukule hydro power project. It was said to cost Rs. 10 billion. Now I am told it is to cost a huge Rs. 25 billion. With this large sum of money a 300 MW coal power plant could have been set up at Mawella to produce 1,800 million units as against 317 M units claimed by the CEB from the Kukule hydro power project. However my estimate is that as a run-of-river power plant,

It need not be constructed.

In my article which appeared in the Institution of Engineers Journal mentioned earlier, the following procedure was advocated towards the industrial development of the SEDZ:

* Proceed with the planning for the entire diversion of the Kukule water to SEDZ.

* Proceed with the planning for the establishment of the coal power project at

Mawella, accompanied with a comprehensive development plan for the Mawella area and harbour.

* A coal power plant at Mawella will justify a 2 ft. diameter water supply main from a distant reservoir. The availability of water, power and a harbour will enable proper industrial development — a free trade zone to be set up.

* When the harbour is developed for coal ships, the development process will start — ice plants, deep sea fishing and fishing related industries.

* All development will ultimately lead to the setting up of an airport, railway and commercial centre, and

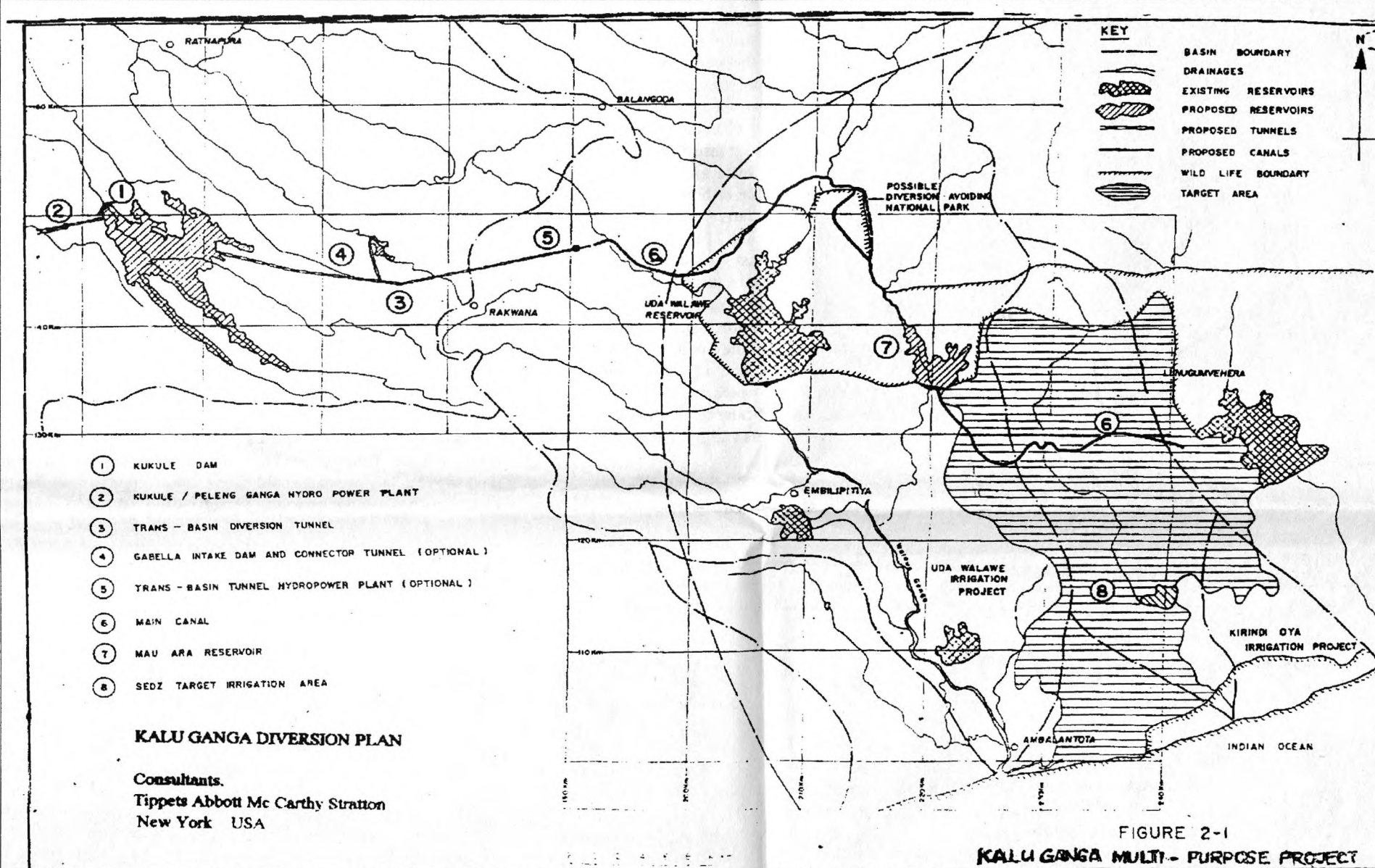
* As a second stage to the Kukule diversion, the possible tapping of other tributaries of the Kalu Ganga could be considered. To divert that water in some cases pumping is required. That can be done by off-peak pumping with Mawella coal power.

In this development process, a very important point I wish to draw the attention of the authorities

to, is the development of water resources, hydro power development, coal power (early stages) as tasks to be handled by experienced civil engineers. The Mahaweli Scheme became a success story because proper expertise handled complex jobs.

At that time there were no foreign funded environmentalists, no environmental laws, no Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) Reports to obstruct work. Today unfortunately, all manner of people, with little or no knowledge about these subjects are sitting in judgement on these large and complex projects.

If the greater good of our nation is considered, even at this late stage it is my sincere opinion, that the construction of the Kukule hydro power plant and the fisheries harbour in the Kudawella Bay be stopped, and the Kalu Ganga Diversion and the Mawella Coal Power Plant be taken up for construction.



the C.E.B., the recommended coal power additions in the coal power study of the west coast made in 1993 by the Japan Consulting Institute (J.C.I.) are as follows —

Trinco Coal	300 MW	1997
Dungalpitiya/Negombo No. 1	165 MW	1999
	No. 2 165 MW	2001
Extension No. 3	300 MW	2003
New Coal A No. 1	300 MW	2006
	No. 2 300 MW	2008
New Coal B No. 1	500 MW	2009
	No. 2 500 MW	2002

When the task is so immense, what do we have here — promotion of windmills, bio gas, wood fuel, mini hydro, diesel sets, etc. Our authorities show absolutely no regard for the excellent sites identified for coal power a display of ignorance or arrogance. The Eppawala Rock Phosphate project is to be given Snug Covo Bay in Trincomalee, the site for the Trinco Coal Power Plant. A fisheries harbour

Randenigala, Kotmale, Rantambe were planned and executed simultaneously by civil engineers. But nowadays everyone talks big and thinks he can do these civil engineering projects, except the civil engineer, who is ignored.

Economics

I read in a newspaper that the construction of the Colombo-Matara Expressway will be taken up shortly at a cost greater than the cost of the huge Mahaweli Scheme. If such a large amount of money is available, why is the Kalu Ganga diversion matter not being taken up? This will cost only a fraction of that amount. For the people in the south, there is no pleasure in watching politicians and the rich plying on expressways in intercoolers. What the people of Ruhunu want is water for their survival.

The importance given to the Kukule hydro power plant over the Kalu Ganga diversion is the result of relegating coal power generation

its firm energy production will be in the region of only 200 million units. Moreover this power plant has greatly upset if not stalled the Kalu Ganga Diversion proposal to the SEDZ. This means with no water available, the meaningful economic development of the SEDZ is now extremely remote.

If one cares to read carefully all that I have stated here, one can see the great damage done by pursuing non-viable plans, in spite of the fact that the CEB has been strongly advised against them.

Conclusion

In conclusion, let me stress if the SEDZ is to be developed, the coal power plant at Mawella and the diversion of the Kalu Ganga, starting from Kukule should be taken up before any other project. These two projects are essential. Other projects should be considered later. Even the Upper Kotmale hydro power project, now a mere run-of-river power plant without a reservoir, is of little or no use.