



NEED TO CONSERVE PRECIOUS RESOURCES

Now & Then
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Last week all mainstream media and social media were full of a few common things. They are visuals, photos, videos etc. on the prevailing power cuts and the fuel shortage. It is true that Sri Lanka is facing certain hardships at the moment due to the impact of COVID-19 and the long term effects of various shortcomings and weaknesses of the all past Governments which ruled the country during the past 73 years from 1948.

Since enough things have already been said and done about it, it is important to discuss certain well planned and unintentional things that take place here in Sri Lanka at the moment which make people's lives harder and antagonize them further. Those things set them against the current Government. It is very interesting to analyse those things which can be seen everywhere in the country all the time during these days.

The WHO Director General Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus had praised Sri Lanka's vaccination drive against COVID-19 and he had stated that it is well organised and very successful. He had said it sets a good example for the entire world. But very little publicity was given by the mainstream media for this, even including the State media and no publicity was given for it by social media users. The Sri Lankan mainstream media and social media rarely give publicity to positive things and achievements made by the Government. But they give full wide publicity to all the negative stuff. It is very pathetic to see that no efforts are being made to give publicity to show the public the reality even by the Government and not things staged by certain interested parties.

Let us analyse who makes people's lives harder and who tarnishes the image of the Government. For a long time various Cabinet Ministers, other authorities and several high officials have been predicting possible shortages of various items such as fuel, water, drugs etc., creating fear and uncertainty among the people. This created artificial shortages of the same things as people started to stock up on those same items. This type of artificial shortages cannot be prevented after making people panic purposely.

Power and energy sector

This is not the very first time Sri Lanka experienced power cuts. There were power cuts in the past during previous regimes and definitely there will be power cuts in the future due to the cunning and selfish conduct of officials in the power and energy sector who do not want to promote renewable energy such as wind and solar power. This is why they are not granting approval for solar power. The sun, wind and water will never give them commissions or kickbacks and therefore they will never give approval for anything else other than power plants that use fuel and coal which offer them high commissions.

The majority of the people is sensible and can manage things if they have the required information in time. But they become helpless when things happen abruptly.



Informing people at what time the power cuts take place is very simple. It is one of the simplest things that can be done to reduce the burden on the people. But this does not happen and people face various difficulties. Why cannot the relevant authorities tell people the previous night exactly at what time power cuts are implemented in the relevant areas the next day? Why? Maybe those relevant officials and authorities want to make the Government unpopular. Who knows?

The other issue is that power cuts are not implemented in certain defined areas all over the country. When inquired properly, it is found that power cuts are not implemented in those small areas because they are not included in the list by mistake. But people think that power cuts are not implemented in those areas all over the country because certain politicians and VIPs reside in those areas. If it is indeed so, it should not happen. Rarely do ordinary people inquire about such things by themselves. Therefore it is the responsibility of the media to do it. Otherwise ordinary people will just believe whatever appears in the social media or is told by someone. If accurate information does not flow to the public, they can be misled and fooled very easily.

The other burning issue is that we can observe the same type of shortcomings and weaknesses in the distribution of fuel. Maybe those shortcomings were well-planned by some relevant officials in order to tarnish the good image of the Government and set the people against the Government at this difficult time. When carefully examining this issue, we can very clearly see that there was a fuel shortage but fuel was available at almost all fuel stations in the country from time to time. But no management of fuel was done. If

proper management was done, people's burden could be cut down by at least 50 per cent.

Fuel is issued to every Tom, Dick and Harry. Some of them have sold fuel for higher prices just after obtaining fuel from the stations. They did not have any vehicles or other machinery which required fuel. They bought fuel in order to sell it at a higher price. No one or no system was there to detect them and prevent them from obtaining fuel. Maybe those crooks had connections to fuel stations.

When fuel arrived at stations, the fuel was issued without any limit. Some rich people bought very large quantities of fuel. According to some media reports aired and published last week, one female Parliamentarian said she bought fuel for one year. But ordinary people cannot buy or store fuel safely like her. When fuel was issued without any control, the people who waited in queues for days to buy fuel could not buy fuel. By the time they reached the fuel station, all fuel stocks had finished. Why could not relevant authorities introduce a very simple control or limitation? Why? Maybe because they want to use the situation to make the Government unpopular.

Some fuel stations did not issue the fuel they had, expecting a price hike. It created artificial fuel shortages in the middle of the crisis. Still there are no rules, regulations or monitoring systems to prevent such happenings.

Another crucial issue is not preserving energy and fuel in Sri Lanka. No effort is made by the relevant authorities to do this. No action has been taken so far. No one is willing to implement some instructions given in circulars. A separate inquiry should be conducted on the relevant authorities and officials who do not follow the Government's instruc-

tions. Maybe they have a hidden agenda to make things more difficult for the Government.

The Government has already issued several circulars in connection with saving electricity, fuel, water etc. But it seems the Heads of State institutions and Departments have turned a blind eye to this circular and they are deaf and blind when it comes to saving electricity, fuel etc. consumed by State institutions. They still go all around the country using luxury vehicles which consume a lot of fuel and they never turn off even a single air conditioner. The wastage of electricity and fuel taking place at almost all State institutions is very high due to the ignorance of Public Servants. All can see this situation if they visit any State institution such as a Ministry or a Department. Action should be taken against such individuals who waste the country's resources.

Saving fuel, electricity

All Sri Lankans need to contribute when it comes to preserving electricity, fuel, water etc. because wastage takes place everywhere. Only the breadwinner of the family switches off unnecessary lights and saves water. It is because he/she is paying for them. Other members of the family waste everything because they never pay for the resources. This is the situation in almost all Sri Lankan homes.

Some luxury vehicles consume a large amount of fuel but run a very few kilometres on one litre of fuel. The import of such vehicles should be restricted and limitations should be introduced when offering fuel for such vehicles from filling stations. But this is not possible because the owners of such vehicles are very rich and powerful. They will definitely use their power or connections if some limitations are imposed on such vehicles. Unfortunately rich businessmen started to govern the country by proxy after 1977 and now the Government needs to find innovative ways to bring them under common rules and regulations.

The other pathetic situation is some people think that the Government should supply fuel, electricity, water no matter what the hardships are and they have the right to waste them. No politician or social media creator talks about saving fuel, electricity etc. They only talk about the non-availability of these items. This shows that only a handful of Sri Lankans are interested in saving the resources of the Motherland. All previous Governments consisted of representatives of such a selfish society. Those previous Governments did not fall from the sky. So how could Sri Lanka become a developed nation under these conditions?

