



The editorial of the Sunday Leader of the 28th April cried: "the Lights are going out in Sri Lanka." Isn't this to be read as a metaphorical foretelling of events to come? We know that The Sunday Leader recently changed hands to an owner that was known to be sympathetic to the government of Mahinda Rajapakse government. Yet, he thinks the lights are off not only for the country but for the government!

The Opposition in Parliament-long dormant-awoke and protested with candle lights on two successive sittings. It has been noted that even

felt when householders, already hard put to it by galloping costs of living, receive their next bill. Ordinary Lankans looked with dismay at the previous repeated hikes on bread, on flour, on vegetables, on petrol and on other essential items. After this enormous power hike students in rural areas and in battling urban areas will have to cut down on study time and go to bed. Or they may have to get back to the old days of the bottle lamp. In rural areas people will go picking old leaves and sticks to light a fire. The ramifications won't end with this. With consequent increases in costs of

when the issue is discussed. She is unable to explain other than to shift the blame on her predecessor, Champika Ranawake. Ranawake did not keep quiet as he held a media conference denying that charge and in fact issuing a warning that when the Sampur plant becomes operational it would increase costs of electricity still further.

Former Central Bank Governor, Nimal Sanderatne, writing in the Sunday Times Economics Column disagrees that a rise in the price is the path to go. He puts the blame on the entrenched inefficiency and corruption in the running of enterprises such as the CEB. The CEB, Ceylon Petroleum Corporation, Sri Lankan Air are public enterprises that have been White Elephants all along. Now they are dead elephants and a cremation is urgently needed.

Government has put its henchmen in charge of these organizations instead of appointing competent managers that know what they are doing. Political interference in the day to day disciplining of these enterprises has impeded efficiency further. These institutions have also become repositories for the country's unemployable; there are vast numbers of surplus employees who add to cost.

The losses in public enterprises last year amounted to an astounding Rs. 185 billion. The Ceylon Electricity Board (CEB) recorded a loss of Rs. 61.2 billion last year,

an increase from the Rs. 19.3 billion loss in 2011. The strategy of raising prices to meet

these and other management inefficiencies is counterproductive. Says Sanderatne, "the fundamental issue is that when a public enterprise incurs losses year in, year out, these losses have to be financed by the government. The government has to either increase taxes that the public have to bear or resort to borrowing that is inflationary. Either of these means that the public

pay through taxes or by general price increases."

Hence by raising prices to consumers the government is merely passing the burden of misrule to the public instead of trying to rectify its own act. The sooner President Rajapakse realizes this the better it would be. On the other hand, Minister Keheliya Rambukwella went on record saying that people have to learn to share increasing costs and that government cannot subsidize consumers. He made this reference to cover even farmers' input costs. The Governor of the Central Bank who is another political appointee possessing no qualifications for his post sings the same tune of Keheliya. His Annual Report makes it clear that the pricing of public enterprises "should reflect their costs of production." They deliberately hide the fact that such "costs of production" are largely caused by bad government that can be corrected.

A government that attempts to thrive on politicization cannot make such correction. The current government model is one founded on a strategy of distribution to cronies opportunities for gain by corruption. In this way the government is kept secure by hordes of cronies that run it from Parliament level down to the more specific entity management level. To double-secure the whole operation the government has brought in the police and law and order machinery under the politicians' heel.

LIGHTS OFF FOR LANKA?



the senior SLFP MPs who were present in Parliament had not come to the defense of the government. At the time of this writing people are seen protesting everywhere and the Opposition is gaining significant ground. All signs are that the people are now saying, "Enough is enough." They are fed up so much. The euphoria that President Rajapakse and his siblings exploited to retain and consolidate the political and constitutional bases of their rule is now wearing away. Trade Unions are organizing strikes. The independent media, long under pressure to walk with government, are now picking up self-courage. This explains why The Sunday Leader is emboldened. Sunday Divine of the 28th April carries a bold headline that charges that the "Big Shots in the CEB have played out millions doing deals with private thermal suppliers."

The raise in the electricity charges to customers is indeed huge; going up sixty eight per cent of previous charges! This is going to be very badly

production all other locally produced items will have to go up once again. Items produced for export will also become more costly and therefore less competitive in markets. Hotels are bound to have their prices jacked up, which means a blow to the tourist industry. The chain effects are going to be considerable.

Truly "the mother of all crises," as stated by the Sunday Leader editorial, is now well under way.

Nor will the hike result in the CEB's ability to balance itself as it is reported that even after the hike the CEB will be left with a loss of 45 billion at the end of this year.

What's more serious is that remove to jack up prices signals a tip of a huge iceberg, namely of incompetence and corruption in the overall government machinery. It is clear that governance has failed in Sri Lanka after the war. Witness the Minister of Power and Energy, Pavithra Wanninayake, absenting herself in Parliament



Shyamon Jayasinghe

This template of governing a country can last at least for some time as long as the people at large are kept stupid by brainwashing as in North Korea. In that country people are on starvation edge but they are made to believe in their "Eternal Leader," who is prepared to bomb America without feeding his people! Sri Lanka, on the other hand, is simply not North Korea.



Please Help!!

Dear Friends

My name is Saman Karunasiri, I am 48 years old and blind since 10 years old. My wife is also blind, we have 2 children with normal sight of 13 and 5 years old. I am a graduate of law and have been employed at the Dept of Social and Welfare for last 11 years as a telephone operator. I travel to work by bus & train from my home in Hikkaduwa to Colombo everyday for 3 hours one way.

A recent diagnosis revealed that both my kidneys are diseased and need replacing. I was fortunate to find a donor for one kidney at the cost of Rs 5 lakhs, operation to be performed at Karapitiya hospital, ongoing treatment post operation is Rs 3-5 lakhs. Currently I am undergoing dialysis twice weekly at the cost of Rs 30,000 with the help of work colleagues, friends and family

I am relying on your compassion and generosity to help save my life.....

May you be blessed with good health

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