

BREAKING OF THE CANDIDATES' OATH

In the Peoples Alliance government's 5th budget, interest payments and defence expenditure alone had amounted to Rs. 98,825 million, which amounts to almost 50% of the total recurrent expenditure, thereby leaving only a balance 50% for recurrent expenditure of all other national needs of this country and its people.

The average annual interest payments and defence expenditure budgeted amounts to a total of Rs. 5952/- per person ! Could this country, as a developing country, afford this ? Would it, no doubt, be in such circumstances, that the business community of this country has now come forward publicly, to lobby the politicians on all sides, in an endeavour to bring about a resolution of the North-East conflict ?

Furthermore, would it not be puerile and foolhardy to compare levels of defence expenditure in developed countries having much higher levels of per capital income, with a developing country having a much lower level of per capital income ? How could such arguments for the justification of defence expenditure be ever rationally entertained ?

The defence expenditure this year exceeded the budget of Rs. 46 billion, by as much as 25%, to register an expenditure of Rs. 57 billion. This would only indicate that the total expenditure on defence and interest payments would likely to be more than the budgeted 50% of the recurrent expenditure for the ensuing year 1999, should the defence expenditure for the ensuing year 1999 also exceed the budget, as it did so in the year 1998.



President Chandrika Kumaratunga



Constitutional Affairs Minister G.L. Peiris

STARK REALITY !

Deputy Finance Minister G.L. Peiris reiterated to parliament, that the budget balances military, development and welfare expenditures. That no doubt appears to be so ! Nonetheless, whether the ballooning of defence expenditure, has been at the cost of pruning of the necessary development and welfare expenditure, thereby stifling and stultifying national development efforts of the country and the socio-economic emancipation of the people, is an avoided pertinent and cogent issue.

At several fora, various persons have expounded and propounded adlib, that the economic fundamentals and economic parameters of this country are in very good shape and that everything is *hunky dory* and augurs well for the country ! Even IMF, World Bank and ADB opinions have invariably been quoted out of context, to assuage the mounting fears of the public and advance a sense of complacency and accomplishment to give the people anticipation and hope.

It was not very long ago, that similar optimistic opinions, with even much greater fervour and euphoria had been expounded and propounded on the economic performance, growth and development of several countries in South-East Asia, such as Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, Indonesia, etc. The economic fundamentals and parameters of these South-East Asian countries had not been in question and on the contrary, they had been hailed as the newly developing economic centres of the world !

These economies had been advocated to be emulated by example, by those who showered praise and sang hosannas of such economic miracles, as they had been referred to then. They had been branded as the fast developing tiger economies ! In fact, the economic thinkers and planners of the People's Alliance government, led high profile investment promotion missions, with much grandeur and fanfare, to these very South-East Asian countries to attract investments into this country !

How is it that, the economic debacles that were very soon to overtake these countries in South-East Asia had not been foreseen by IMF, World Bank and ADB and other economists, particularly those in the local horizon ? Had not the IMF, World Bank and ADB been also associated and/or involved with the economies of these South-East Asian countries ?

Would it not be the pragmatic truth and reality, that corruption led mega projects, funded with a high quotient of lending, a good part of which had neither intrinsically benefited, nor been incurred on such projects, had been one of the prime causes for the economic debacles in these South-East Asian countries ? Furthermore, would it not be that the intertwining, of the elitist business community and those in political power in the promotion of such mega projects, – mainly for the parochial benefit of such promoters alone and not for the socio-economic benefit of the public at large, – had been a classic phenomenon of such economic debacles in these South-East Asian countries ?

Would it not be a truism, that such economic debacles had been precipitated in social environments that lacked adequate and requisite regulatory controls and supervision, to have adequately dealt with malpractice and corruption in free and open economies, that had been devoid of requisite transparency and characterised with political cronyism ? On the contrary, would not Singapore standing out as an exception, amongst these South-East Asian countries, underscore the above ?

PLEDGE & PERFORMANCE !

Minister G.L. Peiris, however, has expounded and propounded that –" The budget lays the foundation for a very stable economy to be developed and fostered ". As to how in real pragmatic terms, the budget lays the foundation for a very stable economy to be developed and fostered in this country, when over 50% of the recurrent expenditure is to be on account of interest payments and defence expenditure alone, is incredibly nebulous, to say the least ! In addition, there is the crucial absence of focus on a process of continuous integrated national planning !

Would it not be in such circumstances, that the business community has now intervened to endeavour to bring about a resolution of the North-East conflict, that is bleeding the economy of this nation and stifling and stultifying its growth? If, as Minister G.L. Peiris has expounded and propounded, a foundation had been laid for a very stable economy to be developed and fostered in this country, then why would the business community have initiated action, in the manner they have ?

It would be recalled, that 4 years ago the Peoples Alliance captured a 62% mandate from the people of this country at the presidential elections of November 1994 on the pivotal issues of – *Dhooshanaya, Bheeshanaya and Samaya*. The People's Alliance vowed to ensure, that the country would be rid of corruption i.e *Dhooshanaya* and terrorism i.e. *Bheeshanaya*. The people of this country were led to believe that a new era of peace will dawn with the prompt resolution of the North-East conflict. A clean and corruption free efficient regime was promised with peace !

Now after 4 years in office, how has the People's Alliance government delivered on these pivotal political issues, on which the People's Alliance categorically and in no uncertain terms pledged to deliver ? Obviously, having failed to do so, repeating like a *mantram* time and again, the People's Alliance political leaders patently are seen to seek refuge in merely castigating the 17 year regime of the United National Party government ! But how could this flogging be any credible defence ?

Ought not the performance of the People's Alliance government be rightfully reckoned and measured in terms of what the People's Alliance had pledged to the electorate to deliver ? After all, was not the People's Alliance voted into office and a 62% mandate given to President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga, purely and only because of the policies that had been enunciated and pledged to have been carried out on these pivotal political issues ?

Obviously, would it not be an admitted acknowledgement of failure to have fulfilled such committed pledges, when the People's Alliance political leaders persistently seek refuge in continuing to castigate the 17 year UNP regime, clearly having been unable to show credible performance and achievement on the very policies pledged to have been implemented by the People's Alliance government, itself ?

OATH BROKEN !

In fact, at the time of the general election of 1994, the political candidates of the People's Alliance took an unique written public oath before the Bandaranaike Samadhi at Horagolla ! Accordingly, would not the People's Alliance politicians be accountable to the public, to have adhered to the affirmations of such public oath ? The public oath that had been administered and taken by the People's Alliance politicians.

GENERAL ELECTION — 1994

The Candidates' Oath - People's Alliance

WE the candidates of the People's Alliance, having assembled before the Bandaranaike Samadhi at Horagolla on this Seventeenth Day of July in the year Nineteen Hundred and Ninety Four, severally and collectively declare and affirm that:

1. We will act, free from individualism and sectarianism, to defeat the present corrupt and indisciplined government which oppresses the people of Sri Lanka and acts in the manner of a fetter that prevents the progress of the country and to form a new People's Government which will function in accordance with the wishes of the people;
2. That we shall make use of the Membership of Parliament with humility and as a means of service to serve the people and not as a means of arrogantly oppressing and exploiting the people;
3. That we will not abuse power;
4. That we will be free from bribery, corruption and extravagance;
5. We will not act in a manner that will rouse racism, religious hatred or casteism;
6. We will be not subject members of opposing parties to harassment and discrimination on a partisan basis;
7. We will be principled and disciplined;
8. We will abolish Executive Presidency and set up a Parliamentary system of government and create a democratic social environment where people can live without fear;
9. We will do away with the chaotic state in the social, economic and political spheres and bring order to the country;
10. We will take action to investigate the mysterious killings of people and instances of massive corruption and to bring the culprits before the law;
11. We will take action to protect the impoverished and oppressed sections of the people and to uplift them and will take action to protect and uplift the youth who have been discriminated against;
12. We will end the war unite the races who are separated and will create a united country where all races and communities can live in dignity;

I affirm and declare both personally and together with all others.

Name :

Signature:.....

Address :

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Would not the public of this country be intelligent enough to measure the actual performance and credible achievement by the People's Alliance politicians, compared with the public oath that they had severally and collectively declared and affirmed to, before the very tomb of the founding father of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party ? In hindsight, judging by the apparent scant regard to the affirmations in such public oath, would not such public oath taking appear to have been mere cinematic pre-election drama at that time, to have made belief and misled the people into voting for the People's Alliance to come into power ?

By the means of such public oath taking, had not the People's Alliance politicians bound themselves to the public for the due performance and observance of all the affirmations contained in such public oath and thereby stand accountable to the public on such affirmations ?

Obviously, the consequential voting by the large majority of the public brought the People's Alliance into power and the public oath taking as a consequence, carried the duty and responsibility to the public, for the due performance and observance of all the affirmations contained in the public oath, by the People's Alliance government. Has the People's Alliance government really discharged the responsibility of due performance and observance of all the affirmations contained in the public oath or on the other hand, has the People's Alliance government reneged on such affirmations breaking such public oath ?

On the contrary, would it be the reality, that the responsibility to the vast majority of electors has been compromised by the obligations to henchmen, cronies and the few financiers, who finance and fund election activities and without whose funds, elections cannot be fought to be won ? Then again, would there not be the obligation to financiers of the ongoing electioneering process for conducting political activities and carrying out political propaganda; with the business world readily flirting with political parties in power to achieve their private goals !

The agenda of interests of these henchmen, cronies and financiers funding the electioneering process would not necessarily coincide with the interests of the vast majority of electors, whose votes ultimately count to bring political parties into power to govern the country, to protect, safeguard and promote the interests of such vast majority of electors, whose interests, had been clearly identified by the People's Alliance in the affirmations contained in the oath administered, as a prelude to the 1994 elections. However, have not these affirmations been renegeed upon and the oath with the public broken ?

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