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Editorial

The danger of ignoring Dr Kenny Anthony's warning

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There's no Caribbean Community (Caricom) head of government who can claim ignorance of the issues raised by Dr Kenny Anthony last month.

After all, it wasn't the first time that Dr Anthony, the prime minister of St Lucia, was alerting the region to the economic crisis it faces.

We, too, in this space, have raised the very issue that Dr Anthony is pressing as a voice crying the wilderness of regional aloofness.

In answer to a question after his lecture on education in the region at the University of the West Indies Cave Hill campus in Barbados on October 29, Dr Anthony again warned that the Caribbean is "in the throes of a major crisis like it has never ever experienced before".

But, instead of confronting this crisis, the region's governments, he added, are "engaged in one form or another of self-denial". Caricom leaders, he said, "are busy looking inward; each busy with their own agenda rather than pursuing a Caribbean solution to the economic crisis".

Sir Ronald Sanders, the highly respected former Caribbean diplomat, reminded us in his Sunday Observer column this week that Dr Anthony pointed to this problem just over a year ago in an address to the Barbados Chamber of Commerce.

For those who might have forgotten, Sir Ronald reproduced Dr Anthony's warning: "Make no mistake about it, our region is in the throes of the greatest crisis since independence. The spectre of evolving into failed societies is no longer a subject of imagination. How our societies crawl out of this vicious vortex of persistent low growth, crippling debt, huge fiscal deficits, and high unemployment is the single most important question facing us at this time."

That Dr Anthony saw it fit to remind his colleagues of this crisis and the fact that, as a region, we have not sought to tackle it, is most alarming.

One would have thought that our leaders would have seen it prudent to fashion a united response to the problem, given that as members of Caricom, who trade goods and services, we have a common interest in ensuring that each member state remains economically viable.

Instead, what we have is each member state, apparently so overwhelmed by its problems, including high debt-to-GDP ratios, that we are ignoring the possibilities that can come from a regional response.

It is not too late, we hold, to start this process. Sir Ronald, in his Sunday Observer column, has put forward a number of suggestions that he believes can assist.

We are particularly interested in his proposal for wider and deeper areas for production integration in the development of natural resources. This, he posits, could be achieved "through cross-border investment, and by joint backing of loans raised on the international market for economically sustainable projects in food production and geothermal energy".

It is an idea worth exploring. Also, it would not hurt our leaders to examine the other proposals he has made.

Read more: http://www.jamaicaobserver.com/editorial/The-danger-of-ignoring-Dr-Kenny-Anthony-s-warning_15423928#ixzz2kQvayJ4l