

'in e to take up Mawella for coal power

10/9/99
The Island

Recent events taking place regarding coal power has made me write this letter. My observations are based on the following news items in the news media.

The Bishop of Chilaw recently met the President and presented his strong objection to the setting up of the coal power plant at Noracholai on supposedly environmental hazards from coal power. At this meeting it was said that the President assured the Bishop that the project will be cancelled. As proof—the loan agreement with the Japanese for the study will be cancelled. (Sunday Times 15.8.99)

At the Wayamba P.C. election the Leader of the Opposition Mr. Ranil Wickremasinghe said that when the UNP came into power the project would be cancelled (*The Island* 24.12.98).

The CEB planners have made a categorical statement, - if prompt action regarding coal power generation is not taken now "lights go out in 2004".

Former CEB consultant Mr. Carlo Fernando says 'Anti coal protests—leading the nation to economic disaster'. (*The Island* 29.6.99).

Former CEB Chairman, D. P. Chandrasinghe says that coal power at Mawella will cost 40% less than at Kalpitiya. (*The Island* 26.1.99).

Former CEB Board Director (Technical), J. Vanakulasinghe has stated — The 1996 power crisis was a sharp reminder to the nation of its over dependence on hydro power. Yet the CEB failed to impress upon the public that the shortfall was due to the seasonal nature of our rainfall. The dry season shortfall could only be met by building base load coal power plant as had been recommended by the designers of the Mahaweli Complex. (*The Island* 2.6.99).

Possibility of suicide bombing attacks on the Noracholai coal power plant complex in the Kalpitiya sea and disrupting the power supply causing immense damage to the economy of the nation have also surfaced in the press - a very serious issue for consideration.

The CEB states that in order to provide a long term satisfactory power supply for Sri Lanka coal power plants at Trincomalee, Mawella and Noracholai have to be set up (*The Island* 12.7.99).

Former CEB Consultant, Mr. Carlo Fernando has consistently stressed that in the present situation Mawella should be taken up first for coal power.

The Trinco coal power consultant after examining the coast from Puttalam to Kirinda in the deep south commented that Mawella is the best site for coal power after Trincomalee.

An Anglo Japanese Consortium having made a site confirmation study of Mawella endorsed that it is an excellent site for the coal power plant.

The CEB says that it tried to build the coal power plant at Mawella in the south. But after a while president Premadasa said 'Stop'. The JVP troubles made that area too risky.

All the above, in summary, is as follows:-

Both leaders in the PA and the UNP are now saying that the coal power plant at

Noracholai will be cancelled.

The planning engineers in the CEB have made categorical statements that there will be very severe power cuts in the future if focal power generation is not implemented. The warning should be taken seriously.

Leaving aside the Bishop's allegations about environmental hazards from coal power threat of a suicide bombing attack on the power plant complex in the Kalpitiya Sea is real and the consequences are far too grave. It is to be noted here that it is on security grounds that the President agreed to cancel the project at Noracholai and not on any environmental issue.

'*The Island*' of 21.8.99 reports that a brand new shipment of Multi Barrelled Rocket Launchers had been shipped to LTTE from the Serbian Government Stores in Belgrade about two weeks ago. Authorities have remained silent.

To provide a long term trouble free power supply the necessity of setting up coal power plants at Noracholai, Trincomalee and Mawella has been stressed by the CEB.

Trincomalee and Noracholai are now out of consideration. Then only Mawella is available. Work on Mawella was stopped due to the insurgent activities of the JVP. Now the JVP has joined the democratic process.

All the engineering expertise that considered setting up a coal power plant at Mawella have recommended this site very favourable for the purpose.

Therefore the logical conclusion is that it is time to take up Mawella for coal power. The politicians who have been elected by the people to look after the welfare of the country and the people should be in the forefront to get this plant through. Sadly no interest has been shown by a single politician in this vital project to provide a reliable power supply. The display of their vigour is self-centered. It is seen only at election times to get themselves elected.

The article 'Southern Development Fiasco' (*The Island* 18.8.99) shows the very important role a coal power plant at Mawella could play in the development process of the South East Dry Zone. The UNP talked about a massive southern development programme for 17 years. Then the PA government went on the same pattern for another five years. But now after 22 years, absolutely nothing has been achieved. The article under reference points out that for any development to take place water and power are essential. For water the diversion of Kalu Ganga is recommended, while for power a coal power plant at Mawella. This is what the authorities should grasp after 22 years of failure. Greatness lies in one's humility to learn from past mistakes.

Today in Sri Lanka, development and solving unemployment means finding menial servant class job avenues in foreign countries and sending the youth out of Sri Lanka. The politicians speak with pride of the foreign exchange earned in this shameful manner by our poor, which enables them to travel in intercoolers.

Observer
Call