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Nuraicholai question not negotiable, says Bishop of Chilaw

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"As far as we are concerned the Nuraicholai question is not negotiable. We are totally against it. If the government proceeds with it, it will be in defiance of the wishes of Catholics in Sri Lanka, and a great number of other religionists as well living in the Kalpitiya peninsula", declared, His Lordship Bishop Frank Marcus Fernando addressing the Annual General Meeting of "Nihanda Seva" Movement in Chilaw last week.

The Bishop declared that the Church opposed the coal power plant at Nuraicholai for a variety of reasons including the safety and freedom of the Shrine of St. Anne, and the welfare of fishermen and farmers living

in that area. "No amount of assurances given by the government will convince us", he declared.

The Bishop blamed the CEB for creating a problem in the first place by choosing Nuraicholai, which had been the least favoured site according to a survey, carried out by a reputed Japanese agency, which had been commissioned to do a study. Even the decision made some time ago by the President and the Cabinet to scrap Nuraicholai had not been respected by the CEB.

The Bishop had a word of praise for the new Chairman of CEB who had openly stated that he would not pursue Nuraicholai and was keen on building the coal power plant in the

Hambantota area, which was an ideal site.

Responding to an observation made by the audience that a certain section of the media was trying to create the impression that the Bishop of Chilaw was softening his stand on Nuraicholai, the Bishop stated that all talk of softening our attitude was a complete lie, and a vicious attempt made by some people for reasons best known to themselves. They had tried, in the electronic and print media, to shake the resolve of Catholics. "Our position remains the same. We are totally against the coal power plant at Nuraicholai, and no amount of assurances given by the Government can satisfy us", the Bishop reiterated.