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"Don't oppose power plant"-industrialist

By Diana Mathews

A top industrialist, articulating his view on behalf of Sri Lanka's small businesses persons, has urged the country's Catholic community to rethink their opposition to a controversial coal power plant and let it go ahead with all environmental and other safeguards.

If the Norochcholai power plant at Kalpitiya near Puttalam, suspended due to protests and fears from local residents and the Catholic Church over environmental pollution and relocation, gets off the ground it would help to raise power generation and

boost industrial activity, noted Aloy Jayawardene the newly appointed president of the Sri Lanka Chamber of Small Industries, at the chamber's 38th anniversary celebrations held in Colombo last week.

Mr. Jayawardene, emphasising the importance of small industries, said everyone takes the small industry for granted whereas this is the engine that provides most of the jobs and contributes substantially to the economy of the country.

The introduction of the open economy in the late 1970s did a lot of damage to small industries. "In the years following these reforms (1997) this sec-

tor has been deprived of raw materials. The maximum one would get was a minimal 60 percent of what was needed," he said. "The damage was immense - over 5,000 small and medium industries had to wind up with thousands thrown out of employment," he added. Sri Lanka should protect and nurture the small industries of our country, instead of importing products at competitive prices, he said.

The chamber chief stressed the need for proper anti-dumping policies. Effective anti-dumping legislation should be enacted to prevent the damage caused to the lo-

cal manufacturing industry.

He also referred to the peace process and a worsening security situation, saying the establishment of peace in the country was of vital importance to the development of industry.

Political bungling curbed the development of industry. "Politicians should know that politics is not a game to be played with," he said. He also described Sri Lanka as suffering from 'Aid Dependent Syndrome', where the government blindly accepts aid from donors in order to be in the good books of the donors.