

12/06/00 Island

## Coal power plant – Go for the second best site

Everyone likes electricity. Therefore the electricity demand is growing very rapidly. However most of the electricity in Sri Lanka is consumed by the commercial and industrial sectors. Statistics show that most of the domestic sector still do not have access to electricity. Unfortunately both these sectors do not use efficient systems. Waste of electricity in Sri Lanka is one of the highest in Asia. Therefore, the present electricity demand is not real. To cater to the boosting energy demand CEB is putting up more and more power plants.

Most recent power plants i.e. KES Kelanitissa, Barge Mounted plant, OECF power plant and power plants in Sapugaskanda commenced without much protest. This may be due to the reason that most of the energy generated in Sri Lanka is consumed by Colombo and suburbs and the public who live around might get the benefits of the electricity generation projects. Also they may be ready to bear the consequences.

However Upper Kotmale Hydropower project got the political approval in an undemocratic way and the proposed Coal power station at Norochcholai is still under protest for vari-

ous reasons. The UKHP project destroy seven major waterfalls including Devon and St. Clair. It will create a disaster in Talawakele. People in Norochcholai are against the Coal power plant for possible damages to the environment and society. The attitude and the past record of the CEB has contributed to this situation. It is clear that the CEB is responsible for the damages in Kukule Ganga project site and the road network.

However all these factors and issues contribute to possible power cuts. This is the only factor which awaken most of the consumers. Most electricity consumers do not care the destruction of nature or the violation of individual rights and the living rights in this game. In other words, electricity consumers do not care the cleanness of the electricity. However, it is very undemocratic and unethical to introduce a surcharge on electrical consumption under the emergency laws.

I do agree that coal is an option available for cheap electricity. Since CEB is very limited in focusing on other options they believe that coal is the only saviour for them. CEB is putting much emphasis on the proposed coal power plant in Norochcholai. But according to

the Electrowatt Study prepared in 1988, Mundel was the best site for this coal plant. For some reason, it was moved to the present site and that created the protest against the same.

They suggested that Colombo was the second best site for a coal power plant station. Since much of the public in the Norochcholai is against the coal power station it is high time CEB put up a coal power station in Colombo.

Kerawalapitiya end of Muthurajawela marsh is already filled with sea sand and this land may be a very suitable site for a coal power plant. The site is very close to the harbour and coal transportation will not be a problem. The site is more secure than the site in Norochcholai.

**Also people in Colombo use external costs much of the electricity. The CEB says that their proposed plant is not damaging the environment and it might be easy to convince people in Colombo. Since CEB has already announced possible power cuts, this may be the best time to convince the people of the news for the project.**