

10/07/02 Island

Cabinet nod for Trinco coal power plant

The cabinet has decided to establish the controversial coal power plant in Trincomalee, an official of the Ministry of Power and Energy said yesterday.

The decision follows the submission of a cabinet paper by Minister of Power and Energy, Karu Jayasuriya a few months ago and recommendations submitted by the cabinet sub committee on economic policy matters. The Ministry of Power and Energy said the coal fired power plant which is to be established at Clapenberg, Trincomalee will have an installed capacity of 300 MW.

The Ministry said that private sector participation is anticipated for the project but did not say when the project would commence. However the CEB has already commenced a coal project unit to co-ordinate and expedite all work.

Previous efforts by the UNP government in the late eighties and early nineties to set up a coal power plant in Trinco and Mawella failed mainly due to protests ignited by environmental concerns.

In Trincomalee the proposal failed partly due to security concerns.

The proposed plant in Mawella in the South failed when strong anti coal power propaganda resulted in president Premadasa ordering the CEB to suspend further studies there.

In 1994 a strong campaign led by the Bishop of Chilaw and backed by environmentalists and even members of the UNP resulted in halting the proposed coal fired project in Norochcholai.

In recent months minister Jayasuriya has focused on Hambantota and Trincomalee as possible alternatives to Norochcholai.

Energy experts have reiterated that coal power generation is the cheapest option available to Sri Lanka, as over-dependency on diesel would increase the price of electricity beyond the reach of the Sri Lankan consumer. (HJ)