

19/07/00 Islanda

Bishop pays tribute to those who opposed coal power project

"According to media reports, the Government of Sri Lanka has called off the coal power plant project at Norochcholai. We bow our heads in thanksgiving to God for His graciousness", states Rev. Dr. F. Marcus Fernando, Bishop of Chilaw, in a press release.

"We thank and congratulate the President and the Government for this wise decision. We also thank the Leader of the Opposition, who has spoken out clearly against this project, and the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Sri Lanka which twice appealed to the President to reconsider it.

There are so many groups and individuals we wish to thank for having taken a clear stand against this project. To name just a few: the people of the area, Buddhists, Muslims, Hindus and Christians in the Kalpitiya region, technically qualified people including environmental scientists, engineers who proposed viable alternatives, and ordinary folks all over Sri Lanka who expressed themselves clearly on the subject. The media people have to be thanked in a special way for making possible an honest and intelligent debate on this subject which

touches the life of our people. All these, and many other besides, contributed their share.

We are particularly glad that the security problem concerning the plant, which would have been a permanent nightmare and costly exercise, has been laid to rest. Similarly, the transforming of a peaceful and beloved shrine into a conflict zone, with security concerns adversely affecting shrine activities and movement of pilgrims, has been done away with. Moreover, the democratic process, where the leaders of a country listen to the voice of the people - notwithstanding efforts to undermine it - has been affirmed.

There is no doubt that Sri Lanka needs more power. Intelligent, people and environment friendly, disinterested and cost-effective planning is called for here. We believe that Sri Lankans - who can draw from the inner springs that their religious traditions offer - and using their intelligence and resourcefulness, would adequately provide for our needs in this beautiful land of ours which has been blessed by the Creator" the press release states.