

Norochcholai Coal Power ^{11/05/00 Island.} Project and protests

Many opinions have been expressed about the suitability or unsuitability of the Noorocholai site for the coal gas power station. The Catholic church is vehemently opposing the project as it will oust a few fisher families and damage the Talawila Church and its environment.

When Castlereagh Reservoir was constructed, the old Maskeliya Town with its temple and kovils all went under water. But they were shifted to the new town without any fuss from the residents, or the kovil and temple dignitaries.

When the Kandalama Hotel project was proposed to be built on the bank of the Kandalama Tank in the North Central Province, there was a

host of protests from the residents of the area, that the tank would be polluted, and the villagers would be deprived of their means of livelihood. The priests of Dambulla Rangiri Vihare held a satyagraha protest but it was in vain.

But ultimately all these protests miserably failed and Kandalama Hotel was constructed as originally planned. Today it is a Five Star Hotel heavily patronised by foreign and local tourists and has won prestigious awards, as a Super Five Star Hotel. It has given employment for thousands. It will bring in millions of rupees as revenue to the government coffers due to its popularity with local and foreign

tourists. The cries of those protesters have now been silenced.

The proposed highway from Matara to Colombo and the Expressway from Katunayaka to Colombo are about to commence in spite of public protests because they are positive steps towards development.

If the Noorocholai site is the best for a Coal Power Project, the government should go ahead with this project irrespective of the clamour of a microscopic few, as it benefits the majority of the population, who will face a tragic power shortage in the near future.

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