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Norochcholai, the State and the Church

There had been several letters on siting of the Coal Plant at Norochcholai both for and against. The main objection comes from few Catholics leaders. Their main concern is the proximity to the St. Anne's Church, 11 km away. Perhaps they consider that 11 km. is too close to the Shrine. As we all know now, the Bishop of Chilaw who objected at the beginning has now mellowed down and put the onus on the government to go ahead with the project on the clear understanding that security of the area and the threat to the Holy Shrine should be the sole responsibility of the government.

Mr. R. H. Ranasinghe of Seeduwa, in his letter of 9.3.2001 accuses the CEB of lack of planning. He is unaware there are well-planned long-term and short-term projects prepared by the CEB; but unfortunately, they cannot be implemented due to forces beyond their control. This particular case of Norochcholai is one such. Mr. RHR accuses the CEB saying "what has the CEB done over the last three years after President endorsed the rejection. Here again, RHR seems to be unaware the rejection by the President was at the height of Wayamba Provincial Council elections which was held in mid 1999. Therefore, let us put the records right and not mislead the public, in fairness to the CEB.

It is seen that the battle is between the government and the Catholic Church-Bishop of Chilaw. Let us be more broad minded. What do these two organisations, government and

the Catholic Church stand for? They are organisations to serve the people. Unfortunately, their sole aim is to grab power and be in power. One may argue that the church is for spiritual service and the government, material benefits. For example, why do people pray and make vows at Churches, Kovils, Temples?

It is for material benefits — To heal the sick, get a suitable partner for the daughter, son to excel in studies and get a lucrative job etc. Whether the prayer or the vow has answered is another matter, but what I want to point out is that the two organisations have a revered duty by the people. Who would like to be in darkness due to power cuts? Who would wish to pay increased electricity bills, if diesel plants are installed; when Coal generated power could bring down the cost by more than half.

Let us not separate spiritual emancipation and material existence, as both should go hand in hand. If one fails, the other too is bound to fail, for an empty stomach cannot serve the creation.

Finally, if the Norochcholai coal plant is not constructed, both these organisations — government and the Church — have failed. The Church has to answer the Creator, and the government, the people who may find the answer at a future elections. That is the last sacrament.

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