

25/06/00 Sunday Times

Cheap power for you only

Dr. Leonard Pinto of Australia (The Sunday Times, May 7) argues that the Pope has nothing to do with coal power.

My initial letter was only a statement of facts, in response to Mr. Sirimal, who inquired whether the proposed coal power plant at Noraichcholai, 11 kilometres south of the Talawila shrine, is unique in its proximity to a place of religious worship. I never ventured any conclusions on how or whether the Pope can or should guide the energy policy of any country. Such conclusions are not mine but Dr. Pinto's.

All the facts I presented, together with the names of the five largest coal-fired power plants in Italy, were



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subsequently confirmed in the press by Garzie Per Lospitalita who identified

himself as an Italian engineer engaged in the electricity business.

Dr. Pinto is lucky to be living in Australia. Exactly 79% of his electricity comes from dozens of coal power plants. Sadly, he advocates that we should use smaller power plants or abandon the coal power programme. Cheap, reliable electricity for you, but not for Lankans.

An Australian enjoys 9600 units of electricity per year and there are no threats of power cuts or price increases. A Sri Lankan uses only 400 units per year, 4% of what Dr. Pinto uses.

Unlike Dr. Pinto, we always live under the threat of power cuts and price increases.

Dr. Pinto, tells us how much you pay for a unit of electricity in Australia. We in Sri Lanka pay at an average rate of Rs 5 per unit. We see the prospect of this price doubling over the next five years, unless we proceed with the coal power plant immediately. Do you know the loss to our economy if the coal power plant at Noraichcholai is delayed by just one day?

Our economy loses a minimum of Rs. 20 m a day. And the project is over one year behind schedule. Dr. Pinto in his letter of May 7 clearly identified those responsible for the delay.

**Dr. Tilak
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