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Brakes on Norochcholai

By Munza Mushtaq

Minister Anuruddha Ratwatte who recently claimed the Norochcholai coal power plant's construction could begin once loans were approved has once again ruled out the construction of the plant with no obvious reason. Bishop of Chilaw Frank Marcus Fernando too, has once again said to be ob-

jecting to the plant.

According to Ministry sources the reason for this decision is yet to be given and it is also learnt it had decided not to expedite work on the 300 MW Kerawalapitiya power plant.

The Power and Energy Ministry has also decided that the only way the power crisis could be solved is

with the private sector participation.

With this in mind the Treasury recently called for tenders from the private sector to supply generators which could produce 1050 MW of electricity which would be sufficient till year 2011.

The Treasury had assured that there would not be any power crisis till year

2011, if these generators were put into operation.

However, the CEB Engineers Union said if these generators were hired, the possibility of a price increase by the CEB would come into effect.

"Consumers will have to pay an annual Rs.14 billion if two of these three 350 MW power plants are set up", the union said. Setting

up of the Norochcholai and Kerawalapitiya power plant would not bring immediate relief to the power crisis, the union added.

"The step taken by the treasury to advertise calling for generators from the private companies is a gimmick just to show the public that they were trying to solve the present power crisis. The only reason why

private companies were called to supply generators is to gain heavy commissions for certain individuals", the CEBEU said.

"By undercutting the projects such as the Kerawalapitiya and Norochcholai power projects the country will be paralysed into an unnecessary crisis", the engineers added.