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Govt nod for Norochcholai project

The Government will go-ahead with the Kalpitiya-Norochcholai Coal Power Plant Project, said Christian and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Milroy S. Fernando.

Electricity is a most sought after commodity and the Ceylon Electricity Board cannot meet the rising demand for hydropower and the best and the cheapest alternate is coal power, he said.

Minister Fernando told the *Daily News* yesterday that the Japanese government has provided a colossal sum of money to Sri Lanka for this project. He said that every cent should be utilised to provide electricity to all at a cheaper rate.

"This can be done if only we set up the Norochcholai Coal Power Plant," said the Minister.

He said that the government could go for a diesel power plant but the consumers will have to pay high price. "This is not viable because we cannot pay a high price," said Fernando.

Referring to the alleged threat to the Thalawila St. Anne's Shrine, Minister Fernando said they intend to make changes in respect of the construction of the jetty. He said they would also extend the seashore by 13 kilometres and fill the area with sand, so that the setting up of the Coal power plant will not be a threat to the Shrine.

Fernando said the Government plans to store coal in Trincomalee and bring it to Norochcholai by train. A new train track from Maho junction will be built up to Kalpitiya to transport coal from Trincomalee to Norochcholai.

The Minister said steps would be taken to pay compensation to those due to be moved out of the area. They would ensure employment and schools to children of those families. The project itself will generate new employment opportunities.

The Coal power plant will ensure that there will be an uninterrupted electricity supply to every household at a cheaper rate.

"We have to take firm decisions for the betterment of the country. We may lose one or two seats from the Chilaw district for taking a bold decision. It does not matter if we lose a seat or two after we have done what is good and beneficial to the country," Minister Fernando said.