

09/07/01 Island

A reply to Dr. Tilak Siyambalapitiya

Norochcholai delay and electricity bills in 2004

The article which appeared under the above title in your publication of 14/6/2001 is one in a series of informative articles written by Dr. Tilak Siyambalapitiya. He along with engineers of the CEB had worked relentlessly to educate the people, with facts and figures on the necessity of introducing coal power to the generation system, giving special emphasis to the Norochcholai site. Of electricity consumers, 99.999 per cent accept their views; so much so that I have heard my "Kussi Amma" discussing the matter with the neighbours. I leave the .001 per cent to those who are against. Here I have to point out a slight error in Dr. Tilak Siyambalapitiya's letter where he says "..... the government suspended the project in the year 2000 owing to protests by one individual".

It could be accepted that the objections of this individual is the main reason; but there were one or two retired engineers and one

claiming be civil engineer and an expert in energy planning who also objected. The objections on engineering grounds have been comprehensively debunked by more knowledgeable local and foreign persons with the latest technologies, computations etc. I believe that the objections of these engineers (retired) were not the main reasons for suspension, but those of the adamant individual who had the imaginary fear of a threat to a shrine, 11km away from Norochcholai.

The urgency in commencing the work on this project has been voiced by the Sri Lanka Institute of Engineers and also more alarmingly by the Chamber of Small Industries. This does not mean that ordinary consumers are not concerned. They are helplessly waiting to see the outcome. The question now to be answered by the government is whether the project is to be suspended for the sake of the 0.001 per cent of consumers who have frivolous objections

and make consumers pay double or treble the present rate?

The Bishop of Chilaw has categorically stated that it is the government's responsibility, although he objects. Here the President who had given an undertaking to the Bishop of Chilaw during the Wayamba Provincial Council elections to suspend the project, could now take advantage of the recent statement by the Bishop where he states "The government has the authority to proceed with the project. However, it would be acting on its own responsibility" while maintaining his objection. Neither party will lose face if the plant is constructed and allay the fears or threats which are imaginary. Time will prove, when the plant is commissioned that all this fuss is '0'.

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