

19/03/01 Daily News

Norochcholai power plant

Dr. Tilak Siyambalapitiya in a recent letter to your columns has directly blamed the Bishop of Chilaw, and indirectly the Catholic Church for obstructing the implementation of the Norochcholai Power Plant construction.

Before we make our conclusions as to who is to be blamed may I kindly ask the learned Doctor to answer the following questions to enlighten the readers.

1. Originally was not this project to be based elsewhere in the country? If so why was it shifted from these places (as far as I know in Trincomalee and

Hambantota)?

2. If these places were not the best why were they of first preference? Have authorities like the learned Dr. Siyambalapitiya erred in the earlier choices?

3. Dr. Siyambalapitiya emphatically says that he has no stakes in the whole project except his abiding love for the country.

Could he with equal emphasis assure us that he will not have any stakes in the future as the construction commences.

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I have read the letters with regards to the Norochcholai Coal Power Station and the attempts made by the CEB to blame His Lordship the Bishop of Chilaw for the CEB's failure to build this power station at another site when Her Excellency the President has stated that She and her Government will not allow the coal power station to be built at Norochcholai.

Why is the CEB insisting on building this power station at this site? Is there no other sites in the country except for this?

The CEB keeps on harping about the "money given by Japan and it will be lost if the power station is not built". Can the CEB tell us who in Japan gave the money despite Her Excellency stating that the Power Station will not be built at Norochcholai? Is this the same source that gave money for the Samanalawewa Hydro Power Plant, under which the only thing that has been accomplished by the CEB is to build a circuit bungalow for a sum of 45 million. Is the CEB planning to build a bungalow at Norochcholai too and if so what is the cost of the bungalow? Will it too have a concrete roof?

While the CEB is insisting that the Coal Power Station must be built at Norochcholai, we are paying twenty five percent more for our electricity.

We have seen the CEB advertising in this newspaper to buy even a piece of fuse wire. Can the Engineer in charge of the Coal power station at the CEB tell us in which newspaper did the CEB advertise requesting bids for consultants to do the site study at Norochcholai? Was it in the Swiss newspapers, as you have chosen a consultant from Switzerland a country that has no Coal power stations at all.

No wonder it has cost 500 million rupees. This is worst than building the circuit bungalow at Samanalawewa. Who proposed a coal-unloading pier which extend half way to India? We have seen a drawing shown on TV by the CEB engineers, which shows that our fishermen have first to migrate to India before they can go pass this power station. Where else on earth do you find such a coal-unloading pier which extends so far into the ocean?

The CEB says that fishermen will be allowed to go under the pier by boat to fish and when asked how then can the pier be safe from being destroyed by the LTTE we are told that this pier will be guarded by the Security Forces. The CEB fails to understand that it will take more than placing a security guard like

what they have done at the CEB head office, to prevent an attack from the Sea Tigers and other LTTE terrorists. Our armed forces have an important duty to save the nation from terrorism. They are not here to act as security guards for the CEB.

Construction of a long pier across the water beyond the horizon is to place a fence in the middle of the ocean. This will prevent the movement of fishing boats and other coastal vessels which sail along the Puttalam Coast.

During the festivals and at other times pilgrims flock to Thalawila shrine and most of them come by sea. This is why His Lordship has vehemently protested with regards to setting up of the Coal Power Station at Norochcholai.

This has been accepted by the President who agreed with His Lordship and cancelled the building of the power station at Norochcholai stating that "the people do not want the Power Station at Norochcholai, I have stopped it."

It is time that the CEB gave up their vain efforts to blame His Lordship the Bishop of Chilaw and then to threaten others by saying that if Norochcholai is not built by year 2004 the country will be in the dark. To cry wolf in this manner when the CEB has taken 5 years to do "site studies" and then to press Her Excellency and the Government into grant their wishes under the pretext of building a power station within a short period of four years is a joke.

CEB must go and find another site to build the coal power station in the safety of the south of Sri Lanka. There is no requirement for the CEB to do site studies. Like what was done with diesel power stations ask the private sector to bring the money and build the Power Station. This will ensure that we will have a power station within the required period of time to avoid power cuts. Unfortunately the building of power stations by the private sector will result only in the building of the Power Station without the provision of another circuit bungalow for the CEB engineers to spend their holidays at public expense.

The CEB must now abandon Norochcholai and get the private sector to build this power station on a BOT basis otherwise we all will be in the dark soon.

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