

CEB gets greenlight to start work at Norochcholai

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The Ceylon Electricity Board (CEB) is ready to start work on the controversial Norochcholai thermal power plant any time as they have received the go-ahead of the environment authorities, but objections from the local community is preventing them from doing so, the CEB said yesterday. "We are ready to start it now", Chairman Arjun Deraniyagala said at a press conference on Thursday. Answering queries from the media the CEB authorities described the coal power plant project as vital for future power generation industry as the power plant has the capacity to generate

300 megawatts of power and double the electricity generating capabilities.

The CEB authorities dismissed fears of security threats, environment concerns and socio-economic effects on the fishing and agricultural communities, saying that the site is ideal for generating power for the increasing demand. The CEB authorities said that the coal power plant will be high-tech with capabilities to monitor any harmful emissions. The CEB cited the Coast Conservation Department, the CEA and the Wayamba Environment Ministry which had approved the project. Forty three families will have to be resettled elsewhere to construct the power plant, they said.

CEB, which on Thursday signed a contract with a Malaysian company to build a grid substation in Hambantota at a cost of Rs. 600 million said that hydro reservoirs are losing their power generating capacities while the demand for electricity doubles every eight years. CEB is looking for alternative sources of energy and will move towards wind and coal powered plants in a bid to meet the demand for million units, the CEB authorities said. They cited the much debated Norochcholai power project as vital for future power generation in the country.

Norochcholai power plant has come under criticism from many including politicians. Norochcholai power plant is opposed mainly by the local community who fear

increased terrorist threats with the setting up of the power plant. The 4 kilometer coal unloading barge is most likely to be targeted, they said. Increased coal imports and the lack of facilities for bringing large scale coal imports to Kalpitiya are some of the other concerns voiced by the protestors. The protestors also demand to move the plant to a more suitable alternative site such as Mawella to construct the power plant.