

02/07/00 Sunday Observer

# Watch out ! you may suffer a powercut

## CEB warnings to conserve power, fall on deaf ears

by ANTON NONIS

Several warnings by the Ceylon Electricity Board (CEB) to conserve power have fallen on deaf ears. The public have failed to give their cooperation as anticipated. The power supply has reached its nadir.

Only a fair number of consumers have responded to the warning signal on conserving power. This has brought about a slight drop in the daily power utilisation. The engineers have been able to conserve about three million units a day at times or even more.

However, that did not last long. Consumption soon reverted to the heavy usage. As the power generators worked, water levels in the hydro-electric reservoirs keep on dropping every hour.

It is believed that a powercut is imminent if there is no rainfall in the reservoir areas. The authorities are also considering taking further measures in conserving power.

The delay in the South-West monsoon has been the main cause that has given rise to a power crisis. The water levels in the hydro catchments which were several metres below spill level fell still further due to lack of rain.

Rainfall records showed that the Central Province has not received substantial rains for more than one year.

Recently a powercut was seriously thought about. The engineers were trying all measures to avoid it.

All available resources for creating power too were tapped to the maximum including the thermal generators. The warning to consumers was used as the last resort.

The CEB has found that daily consumption which revolved at 18 million units, dropped to about 15 million units following the warning. The authorities were slightly relieved.

This enabled to suspend the impending power-

cut and wish that the rains would come soon and the situation improves.

Fortunately for a while the monsoon set in. The South West quarter and the Central Province received heavy showers.

The levels in most of the hydro catchments rose and then fell again. The rainy spell did not last for more than two weeks. The CEB warning to consumers to use power with care continues to remain in force.

The authorities have deduced that dissemination of information on the water levels in the catchment areas might cause the consumers to relax on their power consumption.

It has been found that power consumption figures have at times risen to 20 million units on a single day.

The Meteorology Department at the very inception predicted fickle behavioral pattern of the South-West monsoon.

They said there would be rainy days to be followed by dry days.

The hydro-electric reservoirs were continuously made use of for generating power.

The water levels in the catchment areas which were rising steadily, once again fell.

The latest storage available for generating power are (as a percentage): Victoria 13, Samanalawewa 14, Castlereigh 28, Moussakelle 30, Kotmale 32, and Randenigala 38.

The fears of a powercut that was alleviated with the onset of the monsoon, re-emerged when the rains stopped. Meteorologists admit that prediction of changes in the atmosphere, at times, is 'difficult'. The 'panicky' situation looming in the central province where most of the hydro reservoirs are situated, was dissolved by a sudden spell of torrential showers last Tuesday.

A CEB source said, some rainfall figures recorded (in Millimetres) viz: Norton 115.6,

Castlereigh 106, Canyon 95, Moussakelle 74, Laxapana 55.4 and Kotmale 41.5.

Met. Department said that the rain was due to a low pressure area in the Bay of Bengal.

It has activated the Monsoon in Sri Lanka which has been the cause for heavy rains last Tuesday.

The weather forecast says that few showers could be expected in the Central Hills, Western, Southern and the Sabaragamuwa Provinces.

Even this prediction may not hold. There may be another spell of rain but this cannot be qualified.

Even the authorities do not know how long they could depend on some freak showers to the hydro-catchments.

But they are sure of one thing—that, the contribution consumers could donate to the national grid by adhering to CEB warnings of conserving power could avoid a powercut, they emphasised.