

Delay in planned power projects

Don't give into vested interests—IESL

The Institution of Engineers, Sri Lanka (IESL) yesterday called on the government to initiate immediate action to implement the planned power plant projects as further delays will only benefit certain interested parties who are the promoters of diesel power projects. The CEB grid is now fed with an extra 300 MW of rented power utilising diesel fuel.

An IESL spokesman said that increase in electrical tariffs and the increase in power cuts up to 5 hours were due to delays in implementing the coal power project by successive governments since 1990.

"Minister of Power and Energy Karu Jayasuriya in a recent media interview emphasised the necessity to have 5 coal power plants connected to the national grid. The recent increase in electrical tariffs has resulted in a negative effect to the country's econ-

omy with the closure of some factories and lack of investment opportunities. We are of the view that electrical tariffs will increase further due to future global increases in the oil prices, unless cheap forms of generating electrical energy are implemented immediately."

The present government, he said approved the first phase of the 300 MW coal power plant to be installed at Trincomalee. But the implementation process has got increasingly delayed. "We need an extra 300 MW to the national grid by the year 2005."

The Upper Kotmale Hydro Project was approved by the Cabinet of Ministers recently after it reviewed the protests made by environmentalists.

"We are of the view that the planners have reviewed the technical and other vital aspects of the project on

which various aspersions were cast by interested parties. The funds for the project has also been provided by the Japanese government."

The spokesmen observed that in this context it is regrettable to note that development projects of this nature on which extensive feasibility studies have been carried out and on which the environmental impacts have been cleared are delayed or abandoned when it had been approved by the decision makers, due to protests.

"The government should take full cognizance of the serious consequences to which the public at large and the national economy will be faced due to such action and initiate suitable measures to arrest situations of this nature which are detrimental to the development processes of the country and the economy.

09/10/02 Island.