

# Engineers warn against delays in power projects

The Institution of Engineers, Sri Lanka (IESL) yesterday expressed its concern over the delays in the implementation process of power plant projects and called upon the government to initiate immediate action.

"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," IESL said in a statement.

It recalled that at a media conference held on March 31 2002 IESL pointed out that the increase in electrical tariffs and the

increase in power cuts to up to 5 hours were due to delays in implementing the coal power project by successive governments since 1990.

It said that Power and Energy Minister Karu Jayasuriya at 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 economy with the closure of some factories and lack of investment opportunities. We are of the view that electrical tariffs

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will increase further due to future global increases in the oil prices, unless cheap forms of generating electrical energy are implemented immediately," IESL said.

It said that the present government approved the first phase of the 300 MW coal power plant to be installed at Trincomalee. But the implementation process has got indefinitely delayed. We need an extra 900 MW to the national grid by the year 2015.

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 have also been provided by the Japanese government," the IESL said.

In this context, the IESL pointed out that it was regrettable to note that development projects of this nature on which extensive feasibility studies had been carried out and on which

the environmental impacts have been cleared are delayed or abandoned after it had been approved by the decision makers, due to protests. "The government should take full cognizance of the serious consequences which the public at large and the national economy will be faced with due to such actions. The Institution of Engineers, Sri Lanka calls on the Government to initiate suitable measures to arrest situations of this nature which are detrimental to the development processes of the Country and the economy," the IESL added.