

# Thirty years of dedicated service by the Ceylon Electricity Board

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The Colombo Gas Company was established during the second half of the nineteenth century during the period of Governor Sir Hercules George Robert Robinson (1865-1872) to assist in Sri Lanka's initial development and to provide essential services to the people. Subsequent to an agreement signed between the Municipal Council of Colombo, which came into existence on 22.11.1865 and the Gas Company, the Colombo city was first lighted with gas lamps on 08.05.1872. That memorable night the city resembled a silvery sea embedded with sparkling gems. A new chapter in the history of lighting in the island opened.

During the governorship of Sir Arthur Elibank Havelock (1890-1896) a private company called Boustead Brothers introduced lighting by the use of diesel generators by lighting a small area in the Fort in 1895. The Municipal Council of Colombo became its first consumer. On 12th September 1899 the inaugural journey of the tram cars from Grand Oriental Hotel to Grand Pass was celebrated under the patronage of the Mayor of Colombo, F. H. Price. Electricity for the tram car service too was provided by the same company. Diesel generated electricity lighted Kandy in 1901 and Nuwara Eliya in 1912.

Thereafter, the supply of electricity was provided by a sub department of the Public Works Department upto 1927. On 1st October 1927 the Department of Electrical undertaking was constituted. This department became responsible for the supply of electric

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current. From 1927 to 1931 it came under the direct control of the Governor and the authority of the Chief Government Agent and the direction of a Chief Engineer and General Manager.

1931 saw the elections to the first State Council under the Donoughmore constitution and from 09.07.1931 to 07.12.1935 the Electrical Department came under the Ministry of Transport and Works. Marcan Markar could be mentioned as the first Minister for Electricity.

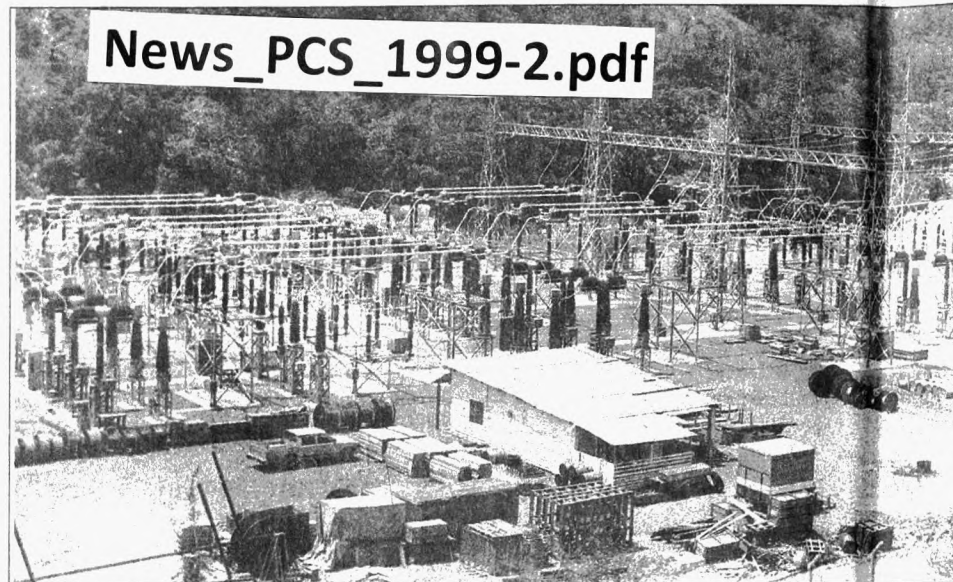
The British administration was more bent on the prospect of finding gold and other minerals in the area around Nuwara Eliya. Later, a young engineer, Wimalasurendra was selected for this enticing project. However, it was his endeavour to find power that could foster development rather than prospecting for gold. He realized the possibility of tapping the running water rumbling through lush hills to turn turbines.

It was found that hydro-power could be produced this way. It was regrettable that the British administrators pooh-pooed Mr. Wimalasurendra's proposal as a foolish recommendation. A mighty effort was made by statesmen such as Sir James Peiris, Sir Marcus Fernando, Sir Ponnambalam Arunashalam, D. R. Wijewardena to revive interest in this project and enthuse its fruition. As a result, the State Council approved the proposal in 1924.

In April 1927 a sum of rupees three and a half million was spent towards this project. Mr. Wimalasurendra, the architect of the scheme was not commissioned for the project. The engineers of the Public Works Department who undertook the project reported that the proposal was not workable due to a leakage of water. So, no progress was possible. In the meantime D. J. Wimalasurendra was appointed Chief Engineer of the Public Works Department and later as its Deputy Director in 1928. He was assigned the task of structuring the distribution scheme of the Kolonnawa Power Station. This was completed on 9th March 1929 and named, "Stanley Power Station" after the then Governor, by whom it was also opened.

Mr. Wimalasurendra retired after serving the government for 30 years on reaching the age of 55 years. He was elected to the State Council in 1931 as the Member for Ratnapura and he got the opportunity to foster and promote the implementation of his dream-scheme.

The clamour for the project was uproarious till 1935 and on 18th February 1940 his dream came true with the resumption of work in the Laxapana Aberdeen Hydro-electric Power Station and its 1st stage was completed in 1948. Incidentally, the first turbine started operating after a lapse of 24 years



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from its original approval. The determination to use every drop of water dashing naughtily down the chilly hills to turn turbines to generate the power required for the country's development before it flows down to the sea was fulfilled with the installation of the Laxapana Power Station in 1950. This power station (25 MW) was opened by Sir John Kotalawala, Minister of Transport and Works and history records that the first issue of hydro-electric

power was for lighting the Sri Pada Shrine. A new stage in producing electricity dawned. Diesel generators gave way to Hydro-Electricity. The Hydro-Electric scheme expanded down the years. Installations increased: Inginiyagala Power Station (11.25 MW) in 1954, Old Laxapana Power Station - 2nd Stage (25 MW) in 1958, Wimalasurendra Power Station (50 MW) in 1965. These came under the Ministry of Transport and Works. The power station opened in 1965 was named "Wimalasurendra Power Station" after the originator of this mighty scheme by the Minister for Transport and Works, Maithripala Senanayake on the birth centenary of Mr. Wimalasurendra which fell in 1975. In 1969 Udawalawe (6 MW) and Samanala (75 MW) power stations were commissioned. In 1962 and 1964 Kelanitissa - first stage (25 MW) and Kelanitissa (25 MW) 2nd stage thermal power stations were commissioned respectively.

By 1969 the Electrical Department had installed capacity of (192 MW) hydro power and (76 MW) thermal power. During this period the Electrical Department distributed electricity to customers through municipalities, urban councils and town councils. There were proposals in 1957, 1960 and 1962 to establish an Electricity Board but they did not materialize. However, in 1969 Ceylon Electricity Board was constituted by Act No. 17 and it was established in the country with effect from 01st November, 1969. It is administered by a chairman and a Board of Directors and comes under the Ministry of Irrigation, Power and Highways. A. M. M. Azees was appointed as its 1st chairman and T. D. Peiris as its General Manager.

During the last stage of the Electrical Department, ie: on 10.10.1969 there were 62,226 consumers as against 70,864 in 31.12.1970. The first year Electricity Board has shown an increase of 8638 consumers. It seems that there was a significant increase of consumers and speedy improvements in generation of electricity for the period from 1969 to 1998. Then it had 32 power stations which consists in 15 large scale and 12 small scale. Ukuwela Power Station (40 MW) was the first power station installed in the Mahaweli Complex by the Mahaweli Development Board in 1976. The Government which came to power in 1977 has installed the Mahaweli scheme power project: Bowatenna (1981), Victoria (1984), Kotmale (1985), Randenigala (1986), Ratembe (1990) and Polpitiya. A small scale power station - Nilambe (1988) and thermal power stations: Kelanitissa - 3 stages (1980, 1981, 1982) and Sapugaskanda (1984), Samanawewa 120 MW (1992) and the Kukule Ganga Project (70 MW) underground hydro power station - the second underground power sta-

tion is on progress. The supply from the Mahaweli power stations reached 47% in 1993, 57% in 1994 and by the middle of 1994 three out of every five lamps in the country were lighted with current from the Mahaweli Project.

It became incumbent on the government which came to power in 1994 to install more and more power stations to meet the demand of a 10% increase in industrial and development growth process. The supply of power which was implemented through very many local bodies now became the sole duty of the CEB.

The installed capacity 1409 MW in 1994 rose to 1657 MW in 1998 and we are in a position to meet the ever increasing power demand. The years 1969-1999 have recorded a hydro-power increase of 1137 MW and a thermal power increase of 520 MW. The number of electricity consumers in 1969 were 62226, and in 1999 it was increased up to 2427825. Out of these consumers 2125070 served by the Electricity Board and rest of the consumers were served by the LECO. The total consumers in 1994 numbered 1651936 compared to 2427825 in 1999. Proves, for the first five years the increase was by 775,789 as revealed by the statistics gathered. The employees rose from 5,970 to near 15,000 in 1999.

The Government was able to implement 1700 rural electrification projects giving power to 110,000 homes by financial aid obtained from the Asian Development Bank.

In order to develop industries, 24040 industries were provided with electricity. Out of these 19875 were for village level industries. 1994 - 1999, 15 power stations were put up: 5 being large scale and 10 small scale. For power generation the private sector too contributed. Kelanitissa New Power Station

**The C.E.B. has arranged for loan facilities through the People's Bank to domestic consumers and bulk customers for obtaining electricity and repayment of such loans by instalments. Our consumer services include educating the consumer through the press and the electronic media regarding prevention of accidents, economizing in the use of electricity, proper use of electricity, and instruction regarding payment of bills.**

(115 MW), Sapugaskanda Diesel Power Station (40 MW), Sapugaskanda Asia Power (Pvt) Power Station (MW 51), Sapugaskanda Lak Danaw (Pvt) Power Station (22.5 MW), Hambantota Wind Mill Power Station (3 MW) constitute the large scale stations. The 10 small scale ones were installed in Dikoya, Sita Eliya, Rakwana, Rivigahaoya, Malabe, Ratnapura and Kankasanthurai areas. A seven year programme has been planned to meet the future electricity demand for development projects and plans have been laid for the construction of 8 large scale power stations and work in this regard has commenced. They are:

1. Baththal Boats Diesel Power Station to be installed in the sea (60 MW) in the year 2000, it is now being constructed in Japan and is due to be sent to Sri Lanka in April of that year. It will be anchored in a fixed spot in the sea and power generation will be added to the National Grid from August 2000.

2. Unified Central Power Station operated by gas and steam (100 MW) to be installed in 2001 within the Kelanitissa Power Complex.

3. 2nd Stage of the Unified Central Power Station - installation of a power station (50 MW) in 2002.

4. A new Thermal Power Station (100 MW) to be installed adopting 'BOO-BOOT' New System within the Kelanitissa Power Complex in 2002.

5. Kukule Ganga Hydro Power Station - power generation to be incorporated into the National Grid in 2003.

6. Muthurajawela-Kerawalapitiya Central Power Station (150 MW) to be completed in 2004.

7. 1st Stage of the Coal Power Station at Norochchola is due to be completed (300 MW) in 2004.

Before the end of the year 2008 2nd Stage (300 MW) to be completed and 3rd Stage (300 MW) to be completed in 2012. Although there is some dissatisfaction regarding this power station at present, economists and electricity specialists are of the view that if this power station is not put up the development projects of the country will be adversely affected.

8. A feasibility survey has been carried out regarding the Kotmale Hydro Power Station (150 MW) and the work will be completed by the year 2006.

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The main objective of the C.E.B. to provide reliable supply to the consumers at a reasonable price. The objectives of the CEB are: achieve the aims of the Board, satisfying the consumer; other objectives are development of human resources is one of the main aims. Organizing manpower, recruitment and training and help the developing process. Recruitment and training comprise: (1) Recruitment analysis (2) Selection methods (3) Training (4) Preparing courses (5) Appreciation of training.

In order to fulfil the above objectives a unit has been formed under a Deputy General Manager to give successful training to all the grades. Two training schools were established one in Piliyandala and one in Castlereagh with all the modern facilities. An education project too is carried out by this unit of the staff. Preference is given to job promotion. The unit is responsible for training, and organizing courses to develop skills of all grades with a view to giving them opportunities for promotions and arranges tests to check their progress. In the preparation of bills, the outdated systems have been done away with and in 1982 computerized bills were sent by the Head Office.

During 1988 - 1989 instant bill system was introduced. With modern technology it is always a change for the better. Problems in billing, which once required the attention of the Head Office are now handled in the revenue sections of the regional offices. In the near future, centres for paying bills will be arranged. A computer network linking the head office to the local and regional offices is in the process of being implemented. This system is already in force in the West-North, West-South and the Central province. The C.E.B. has arranged for

loan facilities through the People's Bank to domestic consumers and bulk customers for obtaining electricity and repayment of such loans by instalments. Our consumer services include educating the consumer through the press and the electronic media regarding prevention of accidents, economizing in the use of electricity, proper use of electricity, and instruction regarding payment of bills.

During the period of 30 years from 1968 to 1999, the officers of the C.E.B. and all its employees have helped in the development process of the country. This should no doubt be appreciated. At times some have incurred displeasure. In such instances, all have risen up to the occasion to safeguard the reputation and restore the prestige of the CEB, by working with dedication.

This is a praiseworthy retrospective observation. The eternal challenges of the Board are: meeting the increasing demand for power, increasing production, obtaining the requisite funds for further development and improve conditions of service. The C.E.B. today is indispensable.

It supplies energy for the country's prosperity. So it is the duty of all employees and citizens to safeguard it.

While we commemorate 30 years of dedicated service on 1st November, 1999, let us wish that our institution would successfully face the challenges of the 21st century and energize the country towards prosperity and peace.