

WS

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# Kotmale hydropower project will boost tea prices

The implementation of the Upper Kotmale hydropower project has been stopped for the second time, much to the disappointment of the average citizens of this country.

Except for a few environmentalists, who will oppose anything, the whole country is looking forward to the implementation of this project with the hope that the tariff on electricity will be brought down with more hydropower generation.

Minister Arumugam Thondaman's concern about es-

tate people who he believes will be evicted without proper compensation is understandable.

However, I cannot understand the concern expressed by the so-called environmentalists.

The environmentalists appear to be giving little consideration for the positive side of the proposal and concentrating more on the negative aspects.

With the augmentation of this project, there would be a great benefit to the estates in

and around Talawakele, Lindula and Agrapatane, where factories are expected to produce high quality teas with cool winds blowing across the plantations.

The cool winds will no doubt help the withers for quality manufacture. This very important aspect has not been considered by the environmentalists, probably because of their lack of knowledge!

I was a young assistant superintendent in Maskeliya in the late sixties when the

Maskeliya Oya reservoir was being built. Prior to 1969, Maskeliya/Upcot teas never fetched more than the High Grown Average, the only exception being Gartmore which is situated on top of a hill.

The prices obtained by the Maskeliya teas were far below those fetched by Nuwara Eliya and Bogawantalawa products.

However, there was an immediate impact on tea prices soon after the reservoir was filled, with prices going up

throughout the area from Maskeliya to Upcot. It is interesting to note that estate marks such as Laxapana, Moray, Brunswick, Strathspey, Alton, Gouravila and Stockholm became famous only after 1969. The Sri Lanka Tea Board records (if available) will prove these facts.

The late S. Thondaman, a highly respected leader and astute politician, would never have agreed with the environmentalists on this issue.

As a practical man he

would have made his own assessment before coming to a conclusion. During his lifetime as a senior Cabinet Minister of both the UNP and the PA governments, he never objected to this project although he knew well that some of his people would get displaced. He always looked at the positive side of the proposal and the benefits that his people would derive eventually.

**Lasantha P. Fernando**  
Past President, Association of Ex-Planters

## Karu says Kotmale on, but CWC says not yet

**By Shelani Perera**

Power and Energy Minister Karu Jayasuriya has said that work on the controversial Upper Kotmale project will begin shortly following the green light from a committee appointed by Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesighe, but the CWC said it still opposed the project.

Mr. Jayasuriya said an official announcement would be made after the Prime Minister discussed

the matter with the Cabinet. Last week, the committee handed over its report to the Prime Minister.

Though the report gave the green light for the project, it made reservations on the environmental factor.

CWC parliamentarian R. Yogaraja said the party would oppose the project until the government took into consideration the concerns it had expressed.

"Along with the report handed over by this committee another report

was also handed over to the Premier. The second report was prepared by a committee appointed by Minister Arumugam Thondaman. So, we believe a decision will have to be taken after studying both these reports. We will wait for the decision," he said.

The CWC is opposing the project on the grounds that it would have adverse effects on the plantations and the people.

The CWC claims that about 500 families will be affected by the project.