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CENTRAL ENVIRONMENTAL AUTHORITY

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Key Words

# Upper Kotmale: see-saw continues

By Shelani Perera

Despite an assurance from Power and Energy Minister Karu Jayasuriya that the Upper Kotmale project will go ahead it is unlikely to see the light of day due to continuous objections to it from Minister Arumugan Thondaman. Minister Jayasuriya said

on Wednesday that the project will go ahead as it is a Cabinet decision.

"If the Cabinet wants me to stop it I will do so. Personally I feel that it is a national issue", he said.

However Minister Thondaman who reacted to the statement the following day reiterated the CWC

stand. Minister Thondaman who was in Dhaka, immediately instructed his office to issue a strong statement against Minister Jayasuriya's confirmation.

"At a time when the up-country people have pledged their support to the peace process such statements should be con-

demned", he said.

However Minister Jayasuriya said they were mindful of the environmental factors.

"We are currently checking with the foreign consultants and this will take another four months. Once this is done work on the project will commence" he said. It is unlikely

that the CWC will give up its objections to the project. The party has been agitating for a long time and was responsible for the postponement of the foundation stone laying for the project.

The party claims that 500 families will be affected by the project and that the Government has not

given them alternative land. It alleges that there are 28 families who are yet to get compensation after being displaced when the Lower Kotmale project was started.

It has also voiced environmental concerns stating that the area is prone to earth slips.