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Central Environmental Authority

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CWC wants alternative to Kotmale

By Apsara Kapukotuwa

The Ceylon Workers Congress wants the complete stoppage of the Upper Kotmale hydropower project (UKHP) and is championing an alternative project proposed by the Electricity Board.

CWC Vice-President R. Yogarajan told The Sunday Times, that the stoppage of the UKHP was one of the key conditions for supporting the government.

Earlier this week, Power and Energy Minister Susil Premajayantha said the CWC had agreed to the UKHP but with a small reduction in generation capacity. The compromise was that the Devon, Puna and Ramboda waterfalls were not to be tapped but instead to concentrate mainly on the Kotmale oya.

The CWC objections to

the proposed 150 MW power plant is due to the environmental impact that may be caused, including loss of water to neighbouring waterfalls.

"Representations regarding this was put before the parliamentary sub-committee this week. We would like to consider the "Yoxford option" which proposes the establishment of a power plant away from Talawakelle and would be between St. Clair's Falls and Devon Falls. The power generation would be 75% of the original capacity proposed for the UKHP but the cost would be 40 % less," Mr. Yogarajan said.

Site work on the UKHP has, however, already begun.

Meanwhile, the Institution of Engineers, Sri Lanka has once again appealed to the government

to expedite the UKHP.

In a letter sent to the President and the Power and Energy Minister, the IESL notes the acute financial burden carried by the Ceylon Electricity Board, (in the region of Rs. 26 million) and urges the government to proceed with both the Norochcholai and Upper Kotmale

projects.

"The government must now make a firm decision to go ahead with the Norochcholai, Upper Kotmale and Kerawalapitiya power plants in view of the high cost incurred using alternative methods of power generation," President-elect of the IESL, R.C.L de Silva said.