

Power tariff hike 'heartless, savage'!

By MZI GUMEDE and SAPA

ESKOM hasn't got the price increase they asked for – but the increase approved by the National Energy Regulator (Nersa) is described as much too high and has been heavily criticised by most organisations.

■ "The decision to allow Eskom to increase the tariff is heartless!" said Thami Bolani, chairman of the National Consumer Forum. "It's way above inflation. The electricity price is increasing but the salaries of the people remain the same."

■ The ANC welcomed the fact that Eskom's request for 35% per year for three years was reduced, but said it was still too high and a long-term solution is needed to help the country's poor.

■ Cosatu has vowed to fight the tariff increase. In a statement they said that with their alliance partners, they are going to approach Nedlac to fight the increase.

"This is a savage attack on our living standards and economic future," the statement said.

Patrick Craven, Cosatu spokesman, said: "Individual consumers, especially the

poor, who pay more per unit than the big wealthy users, will be hit hard at a time when they are struggling with other rising costs."

■ DA MP Manie Van Dyk said that the electricity increase will put "enormous pressure" on Mzansi citizens. "The working and middle classes will feel the impact the worst," Van Dyk said.

■ Energy Cybernetics, national leader in energy optimisation engineering and systems, said that the increase was necessary but... "business should do what it can to

shield the poor from the worst effects."

MD Gustav Radloff said: "The increase is unavoidable to ensure sustained economic growth in South Africa."

■ Energy Minister Dipuo Peters said that they respect the decision taken by Nersa.

She said: "It is necessary to finalise the price to get rid of the uncertainty around the funding of capital programmes."

Peters said Eskom is studying the details of the announcement. It will comment to clarify the specific implications for electricity users.