



Environment Digest 45

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Developments in Energy

South Africa's achievement in contributing the term 'load shedding' to current English is not necessarily anything to be proud of, but the fact that we have gone without these rotational electricity cuts since late March probably is. It is significant enough, anyway, to have been the subject of a recent BBC report. There are various reasons why we have escaped load shedding recently, and for optimism looking ahead, and the article details some of them.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c4ng1ygxzddo>

One of the key factors in this regard is growing momentum in the roll-out of sustainable electricity generation, especially from solar and wind. After a slow and cautious start, government seems to have grasped the urgency.

https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2024-07-08-ramokgopa-pledges-to-be-ultra-aggressive-with-roll-out-of-renewable-energy/?utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=first_thing

On the other hand, reliance on coal for the bulk of our electricity generation will continue, with the lives of some coal power stations being extended, and government has also renewed its commitment to nuclear power.

<https://www.power-technology.com/news/eskom-extends-coal-plant-operations-2030/?cf-view>
<https://businesstech.co.za/news/energy/781267/south-africa-doubles-down-on-nuclear-power/>

The latter point may become a source of friction in the GNU, with the DA arguing that the decision to procure 2500MW of new nuclear power is procedurally irregular and irrational.

<https://www.da.org.za/2024/07/energy-minister-jumping-the-gun-on-new-nuclear-power-plan>

By way of comparison, South Africa is not the only African country contemplating nuclear power; Ghana also has plans.

<https://tinyurl.com/54txme4k>

But, as always, the issue of the enormous cost of nuclear electricity generation is side-stepped by the politicians.

<https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2024-07-16-after-the-bell-not-so-fast-on-the-nuke-plan-minister-ramokgopa/>

Another controversial source of electricity generation is the 'floating power stations' known as Karpowerships. For some time it seemed that this programme, formerly championed by the ANC government, would be quietly scrapped by the GNU on both cost and environmental grounds. To everyone's surprise, however, the new environment minister, a DA member, seems keen to revive it.

https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2024-08-01-new-environment-minister-dion-george-throws-potential-lifeline-to-sinking-karpowership-deal/?utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=first_thing

Finally, a small example of the potential that sustainable energy has for job creation. There is much justifiable concern about the unemployment consequences of moving away from coal as our major source of energy generation, but if we can combine our wind and solar endowments with an entrepreneurial spirit and a favourable regulatory regime, along with fiscal and other incentives, sustainable energy could become a major area of employment growth.

<https://www.engineeringnews.co.za/article/construction-of-nordex-jeffreys-bay-wind-turbine-concrete-tower-factory-stimulating-region-2024-07-31>

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