



Environment Digest 19

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The ongoing power crisis and questionable interventions: where do our priorities lie?

Following the easing of the COVID-19 lockdown restrictions for most businesses and operations during level 3, Eskom warned about the return of loadshedding. This was due to the unreliability and unpredictability of the grid, as alluded to by Eskom's group CEO, Mr Andre de Ruyter, during a parliamentary briefing. This, along with other problems faced by Eskom, could be addressed by re-structuring the entire electricity supply industry and value chain to enhance efficiency. The debate continues as to how best to do that in a sustainable and inclusive way.

<https://tinyurl.com/y7qmx2f8>

Eskom resolved to use its emergency resources and to implement the necessary removal of units interchangeably as a last resort. South Africans continue to endure the plight of loadshedding during winter, as they brace for the soci-economic implications associated with the power shortage.

<https://tinyurl.com/y9nynqge>

<https://tinyurl.com/y8a7p46k>

Meanwhile, the Minerals and Energy Ministry seems to have prioritised the return of nuclear build commitments. The cost to commission nuclear power is greater for South Africa presently than it was in 2010 when a feasibility study was conducted, especially taking into consideration the country's current economic challenges. The process of commissioning nuclear energy will take a very long time, and therefore has very little to do with addressing the current pressing challenges of electricity supply. Building a nuclear power station will also create fewer jobs than can be created by developing equivalent power from sustainable sources.

<https://tinyurl.com/yc9woq54>

<https://tinyurl.com/yc967ep7>

Eskom's operational challenges require urgent attention as they have a direct effect on the country's ability to re-build its economy and reverse some of the implications of COVID-19 on people's livelihoods. The utility's ability to generate revenue and reduce its debt is entirely reliant on efficient and reliable operational services. Cost-effective and intermediate energy alternatives outlined in policy guidelines, including the Integrated Resource Plan (IRP), need to be prioritised and implemented as a starting point.

<https://tinyurl.com/y7vbkym>

<https://tinyurl.com/vb5abwzp>

<https://tinyurl.com/y9rbdjwy>

<https://tinyurl.com/ycbta4th>

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