

Green energy saves SA

→ Load shedding would have been worse than stage 6 if wasn't it for the renewable energy that was available, prompting experts to call for SA to transition to alternative sources of power as the most immediate solution to the country's electricity crisis.

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Picture: iStock

Green power to the rescue

WORSE OFF: WITHOUT IT ON WEDNESDAY, SA WOULD HAVE BEEN LOAD SHEDDING AT STAGE 8

→ **Govt bureaucracy remains a barrier to net-zero technologies.**

Marizka Coetzer

Experts say the country is risking further deterioration of the power system unless it transitions to solar energy because if it wasn't for the renewable energy available, South Africa would probably have moved to stage 8 load shedding on Wednesday.

Eskom spokesperson Sikonathi Mantshantsha said 1 684 megawatts (wind 1 293MW; concentrated solar power 391MW) of renewable capacity had contributed to the available 23 394MW generation capacity on Wednesday, when 6 477MW was shed.

He said the planned outage of Koeberg Unit 1 had been delayed to tomorrow to allow the power system to stabilise and recover.

Minister of Public Enterprises Pravin Gordhan yesterday told the Eskom board and management to get the country out of stage 6 load shedding "immediately".

"Power cuts have devastating effects on households, livelihoods, investments and the economic climate. This is unacceptable," he said.

Greenpeace Africa climate and energy campaigner Thandile Chinyavanhu said renewable energy was the most immediate solution to the energy crisis.

"The government needs to expedite bringing more renewable energy projects online to accommodate this shortfall," she said.

"These renewable energy projects can take 12 to 18 months to come online and could insulate South Africans against the onslaught of load shedding.

"There is a widespread consensus that a transition to renewable energy is the solution, however, government bureaucracy remains a barrier. Without a just transition we risk a further collapse of the system and are derailing our climate commitments."

Bertha Dlamini, advocate for African women and youth in Africa's power and energy sector,

said the integration of renewable energy was taking place.

"The pace of integration is increasing and the regulatory framework has improved," she said. "However, this is not fast enough to cushion the country

from the impact of load shedding."

Dlamini said Eskom faced many engineering and economic challenges that could not be solved in the short term.

"The utility is in crisis. This is proof we have a base-load challenge and therefore we must focus our energies on finding a solution for base load – this will be in coal, nuclear and gas.

"There is no longer a debate. As long as our generation fleets are compliant with a net-zero ambition, the government should implement a Just Energy Transition

investment plan that prioritises net-zero-compliant technologies that will secure the nation's base-load requirement," she said.

Dlamini said it was not a political, but an engineering challenge. She said any political ideology which prevented the utility from responding with agility to the crisis should be avoided.

"Load shedding will be with us for several years; it may improve but it is less likely to go away completely for the next three years.

"This is our reality, as the government, Eskom and the municipal utilities transform their electricity system for sustainability.

"This transition is going to be painful and inconvenient, and it is the price we will all pay," she said.

Democratic Alliance shadow minister of mineral resources and energy Kevin Mileham said if South Africa did not have renewable energy online, we would potentially be one to two stages deeper into load shedding.

"There have been indications that, if we had not stalled the Renewable Energy Independent Power Producers Procurement Programme in 2015, we would not be having load shedding now."

Former chief executive Brian Molefe and former acting CEO Matshela Koko in 2015 blocked power purchase agreements with independent power producers.

"The reality is that Eskom needs time and space [in terms of additional generation] to do maintenance on its ageing and failing fleet," he added.

Mileham said Eskom was trying to fix its plants, while operating at maximum capacity.

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The amount in megawatts of renewable capacity brought online on Wednesday.