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BURUNDI :

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South Africa Celebrates 50 Years of Nuclear Power

PELINDABA NUCLEAR RESEARCH CENTER, SOUTH AFRICA—

South Africa is celebrating the 50th anniversary of its first nuclear reactor under the Atoms for Peace program.

The only country to have produced weapons-grade uranium and then voluntarily dismantle its weapons program to turn its resources toward medical research, the country abandoned its development of weapons of mass destruction in 1993.

Nuclear medicine produced at South Africa's Pelindaba research site — generated by the SAFARI-1, water-cooled research reactor — is used in about 10 million medical procedures in more than 60 countries every year, saving millions of lives.

President Jacob Zuma addressed guests gathered to celebrate the anniversary of the SAFARI-1 project, which has produced a range of medical isotopes used for diagnosing illnesses such as cancer and heart disease.

"This child was born when there was no peace — 1965, I was doing my second year in Robben Island," he said. "So this baby that we are celebrating was born when this country was in a very serious situation. We are celebrating today when the country is at peace with itself."

South Africa's apartheid government pursued a clandestine nuclear weapons program from 1974 to 1990 when the country faced violence at home, war on its borders and increasing international isolation.

It was when Pretoria abandoned its development of weapons of mass destruction in 1993 that South Africa emerged as a champion of nuclear science for peaceful means.

South Africa's government has since pledged to build a fleet of nuclear power plants to meet a growing demand for electricity. The country is heavily dependent on coal-produced power, and the state power utility, Eskom, is in crisis due to poor maintenance and planning.

To alleviate stress on the power grid, rolling blackouts will continue in the future, curbing mining production, forcing businesses to shut doors at peak times and stifling growth in Africa's most-industrialized economy.

The CEO of Nuclear Africa, Kelvin Kemm, says the government needs to aggressively pursue nuclear energy.

"One has to distinguish between the very short-term problem of us having very little reserve capacity right now, because of the growth that has taken place, and the longer-term planning for how your future is going to unfold," he said. "I believe that it is imminent now in the next few months that some sound decisions have to be made and will be made. For South Africa, I believe nuclear power is absolutely inevitable and essential."

China's Guangdong Nuclear Power Holding Corporation, Russia's Rosatom and France's Areva, are among the companies jostling for contracts to build new atomic power plants as part of South Africa's \$85 billion nuclear energy program that aims to add 9,600 megawatts by 2030.

Environmentalists have expressed concerns about South Africa's ability to manage a nuclear

disaster, believing renewable energy is a safer alternative.

But International Atomic Energy Agency Director General Yukiya Amano says lessons have been learned from nuclear disasters.

“Access to electricity is essential for development,” he said. “The number of countries interested in nuclear power continues to grow, despite the Fukushima accident. ... Many countries see nuclear power as a stable and clean source of energy that can help mitigate the impact of climate change.”

Critics of the government nuclear energy plans say they will not solve the immediate power crisis and nuclear projects are prone to cost and time overruns.

South Africa has two nuclear reactors at the Koeberg Power Station, which produces about five percent of the country’s electricity.

Why rural South Africa matters

Jonny Steinberg/rdm.co.za/20 mars 2015

The countryside has already played a decisive role in our national politics over the past 21 years

It has often been said over the past two decades that SA’s future will be decided in the cities, not the countryside. The last census seems to confirm this, showing that parts of rural SA are emptying. It is in the cities that people will battle it out for land, work and a stake in the world. Rural SA, it is said, is increasingly a place of pensioners and unfortunate children. Its role in our collective future can only be marginal.

I’m not sure that this is right. The countryside has already played a decisive role in our national politics over the past 21 years. And rural SA may just be about to exert its greatest influence yet, offering President Jacob Zuma another term as ANC president.

Over the past two decades, the ANC has consistently swept the electoral board in rural SA. This has been immeasurably important, for it has given the party a bedrock that guarantees it a huge majority, even when urban support has wavered. Were the countryside not electorally secure for the ANC, it would be a very different organisation, for it would have to recalibrate its relation to the whole country in order to stay in power. As things stand, the countryside has given the ANC two decades of secure rule.

Whenever there is trouble in the ANC, the countryside looms large. When Zuma was fired as deputy president in 2005, he took his Umshini Wami roadshow up and down SA’s eastern seaboard, sweeping through one rural town after another. I was there when his entourage arrived in Lusikisiki in the former Transkei. Several thousand people came to hear him. The spadework he was doing in those towns would pave his path to the Union Buildings.

It is often said that at Polokwane, Zuma rallied a coalition of the wounded, the trade unions and the South African Communist Party chief among them. But he also brought great chunks of the countryside with him; in the two years before Polokwane, ANC membership in rural SA swelled on the back of Zuma’s roadshow, especially in KwaZulu-Natal, shaping the composition of the conference floor. His victory is incomprehensible but for this fact.

And so, as the South African population has gravitated to the cities, the ANC has tilted the other way, and I think we should expect this trend to continue. Those who think Zuma is going to stand

down quietly and allow the ANC to elect another president in 2017 have it wrong. He is preparing now for another term in office and he is making more forays into the countryside to gather an armoury to fight Gauteng.

This time around, he is, among other things, mobilising over land. He gave his personal support to legislation reopening restitution claims and has invited chiefs to rally their people, get lawyers and go to court. As historian William Beinart has recently argued, Zuma is priming the countryside for large ethnic claims over land. In so doing, he is attempting to renew what it means to live in the countryside and support the ANC. He is mobilising to keep power.

We shall know in less than three years whether Zuma succeeds, but whatever the outcome, we can be sure that rural South Africans are going to be at the heart of the drama. The countryside will have no small part in shaping our fate.

Yet there is a twist in this story's tale. Rural SA may be the ANC's electoral bedrock. And it may be the place to which Zuma turned both to challenge for power and to keep it. But this is not to say that the countryside is just a pliant resource, bendable to a leader's will. One of the greatest threats to the ANC in its two decades of rule has also come from the countryside.

Those who died at Marikana were rural men, after all. They were miners, but they were rural patriarchs with deep countryside ties, and their violence and anger were birthed in rural SA. Their long strike splintered the union movement and marked the end of the social consensus through which the ANC had governed for 18 years.

Rural South Africans, then, were, ironically enough, at the heart of the rupturing of the ANC's hegemony over urban SA. And so the countryside is all around us, shaping our common future in innumerable ways. We are all connected, for better or worse.

Steinberg teaches African Studies and Criminology at Oxford University

South Africa: Minister Welcomes Vice Chancellor's Stance on Rhodes Statue
SAnews.gov.za (Tshwane)/19 March 2015

Pretoria - Higher Education and Training Minister Blade Nzimande has welcomed the statement by the University of Cape Town Vice Chancellor, Dr Max Price, on the statue of Cecil John Rhodes.

Price said the statue should be removed from its prominent position but not destroyed.

"It should be indoors, possibly in a museum. Cecil Rhodes played a significant - if brutal - role in our history and this must be remembered. History cannot be swept under the carpet but this does not mean that we should celebrate its most dubious and anti-democratic characters who used their ill-gotten power to promote bigotry and the subjugation of Africa's indigenous people," Minister Nzimande said on Thursday.

He also commended the position taken by the students of UCT in demanding the removal of the statue of Cecil John Rhodes from the university campus.

Minister Nzimande said this initiative involving students of all racial groups at the university has triggered a renewed debate on transformation at that university and other universities.

"Perhaps the most notable example beyond UCT has been the recently ignited discussion on

Rhodes's legacy at the university in Grahamstown that is named after him," Minister Nzimande said on Thursday.

He emphasised that symbols such as statues are important as they help to signify values and power relations. However, it is important for higher education institutions to note that transformation goes far beyond this.

"It should include changing the demographic composition of staff and student bodies as well as ensuring that curriculum reflects South Africa's development and cultural needs.

"It should reflect the history of its people, including all their languages, art, philosophical and religious beliefs, and their material and scientific development.

"It is also important to ensure that much of the scientific and technological education and research in universities is geared to overcoming the challenges faced by those that Rhodes, his cohorts and successors rode over roughshod and left to suffer in deprivation."

The challenges of transformation can only be overcome by providing quality education to all our students in schools, colleges and universities, the Minister said.

"Producing quality education and research is just as important as having appropriate symbols and changing demographics. Without this we cannot move forward as a country and cannot hope to overcome our many challenges.

"We also need to learn further lessons from the current developments at UCT. It is important that progressive forces should mobilise and become agents for change in our universities and not only wait for government to do things for them," he said.

Eskom Seeks 25% South Africa Power-Price Increase to Meet Demand bloomberg.com/2015-03-20

(Bloomberg) -- Eskom Holdings Ltd. will ask if it can raise South African power tariffs by 25 percent from next month as the utility faces a 225 billion-rand (\$18 billion) cashflow shortfall, struggles to meet demand and was cut to junk.

The utility needs more funds to continue its power-purchase programs that all end on March 31, and for the cost of using open-cycle gas turbines it runs as a last resort to plug a supply deficit, it said in a submission to the South African Local Government Association and National Treasury published on Johannesburg-based news website Moneyweb. It requires the comment from these two bodies before it can ask the national energy regulator for approval.

Eskom, which supplies 95 percent of power to Africa's second-biggest economy, is struggling to maintain plants and has to ration supply to prevent its aging grid from collapse. Standard & Poor's cut the utility's rating to junk yesterday after the producer suspended its chief executive officer and three officials and started a probe into the state of the business. Moody's Investors Service cut the rating to non-investment grade on Nov. 7.

"The country has descended into protracted periods of confidence-sapping rotational power cuts, which are designed to prevent the electricity network from experiencing a total blackout," Eskom said in the application dated March 16. Efforts to improve supply "will come at a cost which would need to be funded," it said.

Further Increase

Eskom in October got permission from the regulator to increase charges by an average 13 percent starting April 1, more than the 8 percent first granted, to help it recover unbudgeted costs for the three years through 2013. South Africa's inflation rate was 3.9 percent in February.

In its new increase application, Eskom is asking for an additional 10 percentage points for gas turbines and power purchases from companies such as Sasol Ltd. and Sappi Ltd., and 2.5 percentage points for a 57 percent increase in the environmental levy, announced by Finance Minister Nhlanhla Nene in his budget speech last month.

President Jacob Zuma pledged in February to inject 23 billion rand in cash and offer other support to Eskom.

The utility spent 10.6 billion rand on running open-cycle gas turbines in the year through March 31, 2014, more than the 10 billion-rand allowance for the five years through March 2018. The producer has been firing the turbines, which used about 140 million liters (37 million gallons) of diesel in November, for as many as 12 hours a day, four times longer than they were designed for, to plug the power deficit.

Eskom expects to have spent 9.7 billion rand on the turbines in the 12 months through March, it said in the application. It needs to recover an additional 11 billion rand annually for three years starting April 1 to pay for them and the power purchases.

The increase, if granted, would come into effect on April 1 for direct Eskom customers and July 1 for municipal users, it said.

South Africa: SA Condemns Tunisian Museum Attack

SAnews.gov.za (Tshwane)/19 March 2015

Pretoria - The South African government has condemned the attack at a museum in Tunisia.

"The South African Government strongly condemns the attack on innocent civilians. We reiterate our stance that terrorism in any form and from whichever quarter cannot be condoned," said the Deputy Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, Luwellyn Landers on Thursday.

Presently, officials from the South African embassy in Tunis, are working with authorities to verify reports that South African citizens were among those affected by the attack that killed 19 people on Wednesday.

"At this point, we are still waiting for official confirmation from the Tunisian authorities through our embassy in Tunis," he said.

South Africa will continue to support regional and international efforts to address the scourge of terrorism in all its forms, including working through relevant forums such as the AU Peace and Security Council, of which South Africa is a member state.

TANZANIA :

KENYA :

ANGOLA :

AU/AFRICA :

Ebola: confinement en Sierra Leone

Par lefigaro.fr avec AFP/le 19/03/2015

La Sierra Leone a annoncé aujourd'hui un confinement de trois jours de quelque 2,5 millions d'habitants de la région de la capitale, Freetown, et du nord du pays pour endiguer l'épidémie d'Ebola. Cette opération, dans la région Ouest comprenant Freetown, et les provinces de Bombali et Port-Loko, dans le nord, vise à y maîtriser une recrudescence des cas qui risque de compromettre le reflux de l'épidémie dans l'ensemble du pays, selon les autorités.

"Le confinement durera du 27 au 29 mars et sera similaire à celui de septembre", qui avait été imposé dans tout le pays, a déclaré à la presse le chef du Centre national de lutte contre Ebola (NERC), Palo Conteh. "Le gouvernement et ses partenaires espèrent que les cas qui n'ont pas encore été signalés ou enregistrés seront découverts", a-t-il expliqué.

Comme lors du confinement des six millions d'habitants du 17 au 19 septembre et d'opérations similaires plus localisées depuis, les autorités entendent effectuer une gigantesque campagne de porte-à-porte. Des équipes interrogeront les habitants sur la présence de malades et leur rappelleront les dangers des pratiques funéraires rituelles impliquant un contact avec les corps, particulièrement contagieux dans le cas de morts d'Ebola. "Les gens sont devenus négligents et touchent encore les cadavres et les lavent et emmènent les malades chez les guérisseurs traditionnels" au lieu des centres spécialisés contre Ebola, a déploré Conteh.

La Sierra Leone, qui compte le plus grand nombre de cas identifiés - environ 12.000, soit pratiquement la moitié des quelque 25.000 recensés -, est déterminée à atteindre l'objectif fixé avec les deux autres pays principalement touchés, la Guinée et le Liberia, d'être débarrassée du virus à la mi-avril, a-t-il indiqué. La Sierra Leone a enregistré près de 3.700 morts sur un total de 10.200 en Afrique de l'Ouest, un bilan sous-évalué de l'aveu même de l'Organisation mondiale de la Santé (OMS).

Mais la directrice de l'OMS, Margaret Chan, s'est félicitée mercredi, lors d'une conférence internationale à Abou Dhabi, de l'absence de nouveau cas recensé depuis février au Liberia et des "progrès phénoménaux" réalisés par la Sierra Leone, où les nouvelles contaminations ont atteint leur plus bas niveau depuis en huit mois.

La situation est plus préoccupante en Guinée, où les nouveaux cas sont repartis à la hausse, en grande majorité hors des contacts de malades déjà identifiés, ce qui révèle l'existence de chaînes de transmission jusqu'alors inconnues, s'inquiète l'OMS. Cette épidémie, la plus grave depuis

l'identification du virus en Afrique centrale en 1976, est partie en décembre 2013 du sud de la Guinée avant de se propager au Liberia et à la Sierra Leone voisins.

Islamic State group claims responsibility for attack on Bardo national museum

By: Reuters/March 20, 2015

Tunisia said it would deploy the army to major cities and arrested nine people on Thursday after 20 foreign tourists were shot dead in an attack on a museum which Islamic State called “the first drop of the rain”.

Officials did not confirm the militants’ claim of responsibility, but said they had identified the two gunmen shot dead by security forces after opening fire on tourist buses visiting the Bardo museum inside the capital’s heavily guarded parliament compound on Wednesday.

Japanese, Italian, Spanish and British visitors, as well as three Tunisians, were among the victims. Cruise liner MSC Cruises said 12 of its passengers, including Colombians, French and a Belgian, were among the dead, while a Spanish couple was found alive on Thursday after hiding all night in the museum.

The assault — the most deadly attack involving foreigners in Tunisia since a 2002 suicide bombing in Djerba — came at a fragile moment for a country just emerging to full democracy after its pioneering popular uprising four years ago.

It is heavily reliant on foreign tourists to its beach resorts and desert treks, and the government was about to tackle politically sensitive reforms aimed at boosting economic growth.

Islamic State, which has declared a caliphate in large parts of Iraq and Syria and is active in Tunisia’s chaotic neighbour Libya, praised the two attackers in an audio recording in Arabic, calling them “knights of the Islamic State” armed with machineguns and bombs.

Tunisians make up the one of the largest contingents of foreign fighters in Syria, Iraq and Libya, and their homeland’s young democracy, which has cracked down on militancy at home, was a clear potential target.

“We tell the apostates who sit on the chest of Muslim Tunisia: Wait for the glad tidings of what will harm you, o impure ones, for what you have seen today is the first drop of the rain,” the Islamic State audio said.

The two dead militants were identified as Tunisians, Hatem al-Khashnawi and Yassin al-Abidi. Two local newspapers reported Abidi had spent time in Iraq and Libya, but officials did not confirm that.

Tunisia’s Prime Minister Habib Essid said Abidi had been under surveillance but “not for anything very special”.

“We have identified them, it is indeed these two terrorists,” the premier told French RTL radio earlier on Thursday. “Their affiliation is not clear at the moment.”

Authorities said they had arrested four people directly linked to the attack and five others with indirect ties. A security source said two family members of one of the gunmen were among those held. “We arrested the father and the sister of the terrorist Hatem Al-Khashnawi in the their home in Sbiba City,” the source told Reuters.

UN/AFRICA :

US/AFRICA :

Attaque contre un musée à Tunis - Barack Obama assure le président tunisien de son "soutien"
le 20 mars 2015/dhnet.be

WASHINGTON (USA)

Barack Obama a assuré jeudi le président tunisien Béji Caïd Essebsi de son soutien après la sanglante attaque contre le musée du Bardo de Tunis, saluant "la force et l'unité" du peuple tunisien "face au terrorisme". Le président américain a réaffirmé, lors d'une conversation téléphonique avec son homologue, "la solide coopération anti-terroriste et sur les questions de sécurité au sens large" avec le gouvernement tunisien, a indiqué la Maison Blanche. Adressant ses condoléances, "au nom de tous les Américains", aux familles de victimes, M. Obama a offert l'aide des Etats-Unis pour l'enquête en cours. La démocratie tunisienne "est un exemple puissant dans la région et au-delà", a-t-il encore ajouté lors de cet échange téléphonique. L'attaque, revendiquée jeudi par le groupe Etat Islamique dans un message audio, a coûté la vie à 20 ressortissants étrangers, dont une Belge, et un Tunisien. (Belga)

CANADA/AFRICA :

AUSTRALIA/AFRICA :

EU/AFRICA :

CHINA/AFRICA :

INDIA/AFRICA :

BRAZIL/AFRICA :

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