

■ ELECTRICITY CRISIS

# Power ships could bring relief

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SHIPS supplying power could be docked offshore to ease the country's electricity crisis.

More than 7 000 delegates gathered at the 26th Investing in African Mining Indaba, in which power generation was also a hot topic.

Industry experts discussed Eskom's challenges, which have dire financial implications for the mining sector – a key economic driver in this country.

Turkey's Karpowership, which owns and operates floating power plants, proposed the use of their ships to supply power to the grid.

The government recently put out a Request for Information (RFI), inviting the market to offer innovative solutions to deliver power to the grid.

Eskom has been implementing stage two load shedding since January 30, citing constraints to the system.

The need to open the market and break Eskom's monopoly has been mooted in recent years, with many proposals on how to bring Independent Power Producers on board.

Next month energy experts across the continent will convene in Cape Town for the 12th African Energy Indaba to seek solutions to energy generation across Africa.

In the meantime, the president of the Minerals Council of SA, Mxolisi Mgojo, said there has been movement on the government's part after meetings at Nedlac, the government, labour and business negotiating chamber, last month.

"There is absolute commitment to creating a pathway to

## *SA in need of alternative sources of energy*

energy self-generation by the mining industry. In fact, an action team has been established to uncover and address the impediments to energy self-generation," said Mgojo.

"This is a critical example of how the private sector and gov-

ernment can work together to address a national crisis and help set the industry and the country on a path to growth.

"In our industry, we know of seven of our members ready to embark on generation plants that would bring over 600MW of power into the system. This trend would likely grow when unnecessary regulatory hurdles are removed.

Minister of Mineral Resources and Energy Gwede Mantashe caused a stir when he announced plans for a new company that would operate in competition with Eskom, to provide electricity. He laid out the government's plans to gazette a revised schedule two of the Electricity Regulation Act that would enable self-generation as well as facilitate municipal generation options.

"This will help close the energy gap caused by deterior-

ating Eskom plant performance. Depending on the circumstances, the generation plant may only require registration and not licensing," Mantashe said.

Energy expert Ted Blom said while many suggestions were on the table to alleviate pressure, Eskom would continue to struggle.

"The issue of power barges has been punted for a few years now and while they are useful, they might not be practical for South Africa as we do not have a lot of grid connection points at harbours, Eskom would need to build them," Blom said.

"For the mining companies looking to produce their own power, either as standby during load shedding or permanently, will impact negatively on Eskom because once they find a reliable alternative source to Eskom, they will never go back."