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Trading was halted at about 1:34 p.m. local time on Monday after the CSI 300 Index dropped 7 percent, according to data compiled by Bloomberg. An earlier 15-minute suspension at the 5 percent level failed to stop the retreat, with shares extending losses as soon as the market re-opened. Traders said the halts took effect as anticipated without any major technical problems.

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Saudi Arabia Severs Ties With Iran in Biggest Crisis in Decades

Saudi Arabia severed ties with Iran in the biggest meltdown in relations between the two Middle Eastern power brokers in almost three decades, sending oil prices higher and stock markets into decline.

The Saudi government gave Iran's ambassador 48 hours to leave after protesters set its embassy in Tehran on fire following the execution of Saudi cleric Nimr al-Nimr, a critic of the kingdom's treatment of its Shiite minority. He was one of 47 men given capital punishment in the Sunni nation for offenses that included terrorism and political activism.

Schengen Tensions Grow as Sweden's Border Checks Anger Danes

Sweden's decision to start imposing official border checks is leading to a rapid deterioration in relations with its neighbor to the south as Denmark warns the measures may have a ripple effect that bleeds deeper into Europe.

Danish Prime Minister Lars Loekke Rasmussen used his New Year's speech to warn that his government may now be forced to impose controls at the German border as Swedish efforts to stem the flow of Middle Eastern refugees exacerbate an already tense immigration situation. As of Monday, Sweden is checking the IDs of people crossing their border by bus, train or ferry.

"For the first time since the 1950s, one will now need an ID-card to cross" over to Sweden, Rasmussen said in the Jan. 1 speech. "This shows what's at stake. And this can create a situation in which we will need to introduce border controls toward Germany, if we decide that's what's best for Denmark." In a Facebook post on Monday, Rasmussen said the decision will create "difficulty and problems for the many people who every day commute" between the two countries, describing it as a "major step backwards."

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Ghana minister resigns over handling of power crisis

Ghana's power minister has resigned after failing to resolve a three-year-old electricity crisis that President John Mahama, who seeks re-election this year, had promised to fix, government sources said on Friday. By Kwasi Kpodo for Reuters.

ACCRA, Jan 1 (Reuters) - Power Minister Kwabena Donkor told voters in February he would resign if the crisis was not resolved by Dec. 31.

"The president was unhappy with his performance, particularly in handling the crisis. He has accepted the resignation and thanked him for his service," one of the sources said.

President Mahama will contest what is expected to be a close-run vote in November against opposition leader Nana Akufo-Addo.

The power crisis began in the 2012 election year and the opposition New Patriotic Party says it is a sign of government mismanagement. Ghana was one of Africa's top economies but growth based on exports of gold, cocoa and oil has slowed sharply due to lower global commodities prices.

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Sydney Home Prices Have Biggest Quarterly Drop in Four Years

Sydney home prices fell for the second-consecutive month and recorded the worst quarter in four years as a regulatory crackdown pushed up mortgage rates and dented affordability amid record prices.

Home values in Australia's largest city dropped 1.2 percent in December from a month earlier following a 1.4 percent decline in the previous month, data from property researcher CoreLogic Inc. showed Monday. This is the first time since May 2013 that Sydney dwelling values have dropped for two straight months.

Tanzania Plans to List 49 Percent of Power Utility This Year

Tanzania's government plans to sell shares in the state-owned power utility to the public this year and split it into separate generation, transmission and distribution units, Energy and Mining Minister Sospeter Muhongo said.

The state will offer as much as 49 percent of Tanzania Electric Supply Co., or Tanesco, while the government will retain a controlling stake, Muhongo said in an interview published in the Nairobi-based East African newspaper. The government will also invest \$1.2 billion in the company over 10 years, boosting efforts to increase electricity production to 10,000 megawatts by 2025 from 1,400 megawatts, Muhongo said.

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U.K. Mortgage Lending Rises Most Since Before Lehman Collapsed

U.K. mortgage lending grew the most since April 2008, months before the collapse of Lehman Brothers Holdings Inc. sparked the global financial crisis.

Lending increased 3.9 billion pounds in November from the previous month, the Bank of England said on Monday. Gross lending of 20.3 billion pounds was the highest since June 2008.

Malaysia's Biggest Electricity Firm Plans \$3 Billion Global Sukuk for Expansion Abroad

Malaysia's biggest electricity company plans to tap the dollar debt market for the first time in two decades with its debut offering of global Islamic bonds.

Tenaga Nasional Bhd. is asking bankers to submit pitches for a \$3 billion sukuk program, according to people familiar with the matter, and proceeds will be used to fund overseas investments including the purchase of a 30 percent stake in Turkish power firm Gama Enerji A.S. for \$243 million. The company last issued dollar-denominated debt in 1996, when it sold 100-year conventional notes.

The planned sale would help stem a slump in issuance of global Islamic bonds and be Malaysia's first since the Federal Reserve raised interest rates in December. The ringgit slid 19 percent versus the dollar in 2015, Asia's biggest loss, as investor confidence was dented by tumbling crude oil prices, an investigation into political donations taken by Prime Minister Najib Razak and concern about debt levels at state investment company 1Malaysia Development Bhd.

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FOSSIL FUEL SECTOR SEEN RISKING \$2.2 TRILLION ON STRANDED ASSETS

Fossil fuel companies risk wasting up to \$2.2 trillion in the next decade by pursuing projects that could be uneconomic in the face of international action to limit climate change, UK-based financial think-tank Carbon Tracker Initiative said Tuesday. Two-thirds of the total financial risks are currently earmarked for new and existing oil projects, the biggest fossil fuel sector at risk behind natural gas, according to the report. It said that around 20-25% of oil and gas majors' potential investment is on projects that would not be needed in a scenario where the world agrees to limit climate change to 2 degrees. Due to the higher cost of developing oil shale and oil sands and Arctic oil, the total relates to only 11% of potential production, according to the report.

Rising pressure on governments to tighten their climate change policies and growing public awareness over the climate impact of fossil fuels has fueled investor pressure on oil majors to mitigate or avoid carbon-intensive projects. As a result, concerns are increasingly being voiced that oil companies may not be able to develop parts of their proven reserves due to growing global controls on carbon emissions. Bank of England Governor Mark Carney in September raised energy industry hackles after saying investors should be cautious over the potential for huge losses on the value of fossil fuel assets as a result of the impact of potential new regulations to limit CO2 emissions.

Hwange power station experiences coal shortfall of 3 000 tpd

In Southern Africa, the Hwange Power Station general manager Arnold Chivurayise last week stated that Zimbabwe's coal-fired facility is experiencing a deficit of 3 000 tpd of coal. This is due to mines failing to supply adequate feedstock, citing concerns over capitalising their operations. Hwange requires 8 000 tpd of coal. Hwange Power Station consumes 8 000 tpd of coal but miners have only managed to supply an average of 3 500 t leaving power generation under threat. Chivurayise confirmed the situation, during a tour made by Parliamentarians assessing the operations of the country's power plants, The Herald reports. He said: "We consume an average of 8 000 tonnes of coal a day, but we...[have] challenges with our miners, who are mainly complaining about capitalising their operations." "We currently get an average of 3 500 t. Every day, we are accumulating a deficit of 3 000 t and this is a threat to electricity generation."

Plans to establish logistics hub underway

The Botswana Investment and Trade Centre is planning to establish a Logistics and Civil Aviation Authority hub. Speaking at a seminar to host business delegation from Russia, BITC Chief Operations Officer, Meshack Tshakedi said they have reserved two plots near the international airport to build the hub. "We want other cargo planes to come to Botswana to maintain and repair their aircrafts here as it will economically benefit the country," he said. Tshakedi also noted that they are still in talks with a number of cargo aviations to benchmark on the issue at hand. According to the COO, Botswana is a preferred destination when it comes to investing in transport and logistics noting there is an opportunity in the Trans Kalahari Railway (TKR) line, which is still in the pipeline. "Botswana is a preferred route into the African market regarding that South Africa is always congested. There are opportunities to either use the TKR or the other route which goes through Zambia and Zimbabwe," he added. In addition, the Coordinator of Coal Development Unit, Obakeng Moumakwa assured the delegation that the TKR will soon commence operation noting that in two weeks time ministers and officials of both the Namibian and Botswana countries will meet to map the way forward.

Imported LNG set to kick-start gas-to-power vision – Sasol

Imported liquefied natural gas (LNG) is expected to initiate the greater use of gas in South Africa's currently coal-dominated electricity generation. Anticipated is the establishment of infrastructure at South African ports, such as Saldanha Bay, Coega or Richards Bay, to facilitate the importation of LNG, and the generation of power at port areas using the country's existing electricity grid for its distribution. Print Send to Friend 2 0 Gas-to-power is seen as a potential key to unlock an early start to the process, which is being driven by South Africa's Department of Energy (DoE) as custodian of the procurement process for independent power producers (IPPs). "We're looking at how we will participate in that," Sasol VP business development power and gas Kribs Govender told a media roundtable attended by Creamer Media's Engineering News Online. Johannesburg- and New York-listed Sasol, which is already using its own gas to generate 440 MW of low-carbon power into the South African electricity grid, is awaiting a DoE tender for the generation of 3 126 MW of gas-fired power, which is expected to be invited in the first half of 2016. While imported LNG is set to be the key initial enabler, over time it is envisaged that indigenous gas discovery and development will make inroads and gas pipeline reticulation will provide the logistics for gas to feature in South Africa's currently coal-dominated energy mix.

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ZETDC close to 106MW power supply contracts

THE Zimbabwe Electricity Transmission and Distribution Company has made progress towards concluding power supply agreements with regional utilities anticipated to feed at least 106 megawatts into the national grid between December and early next year. Power utility, Zesa Holdings transmission and distribution unit, ZETDC has engaged South Africa's ESKOM, Mozambique's Hydro Cahorra Bassa and independent producer, Lusengwa of Zambia. ZETDC managing director Engineer Julian Chinembiri confirmed in an interview yesterday that the negotiations are ongoing with a number of regional utilities for supply contracts. "HCB officials are coming to Zimbabwe in the first week of December. We are seeking an additional 50 megawatts from them. With ESKOM, we are looking at next week (to hear what they say), they have their own problems so they have to consult the board and their local energy regulator," Eng Chinembiri said. He said they would accept any reasonable amount of power supply ESKOM can spare considering South Africa is also battling shortages.

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Global Trends in coal to 2020

Over the next five years, the global coal industry is expected to witness a fundamental structural change to the seaborne market: a move away from Chinese led demand growth. The last 10 yr have seen significant growth in the global seaborne market. But with global production seeming to have peaked in 2014, serious issues remain as to its sustainability. The majority of global coal reserves are located in the US, followed by Russia, China, Australia, India and Germany, which collectively account for 76.9% of the global total. The major producers are China, the US, India, Australia, Indonesia and Russia, collectively accounting for 81.1% of global production in 2014. Logically, this means that a country, such as Indonesia, is rather rapidly depleting its reserves. Over the forecast period, these rankings will remain the same, with little movement in position, as had happened with the rapid rise of Indonesia over the previous decade when production increased from 154 million t in 2005 to 458 million t in 2014. Other developed countries, such as Australia and the US, may never find an economic need to exploit their reserves. For the two largest consumers of coal, China and US, serious efforts are now being made to curtail coal use, which contributed to global consumption decreasing in 2014.

Policy uncertainty, DMR leadership 'challenges', weak prices bode ill for mining sector in 2016

PreviousNext Over the last few years, South Africa's mining industry has staggered into the new year increasingly the worse for wear, having been ravaged by a myriad of challenges over the course of the previous year, including mineral policy uncertainty, labour-management disputes, waning investor confidence, ever-rising operating costs and falling commodity prices. The effect of these challenges over the course of the last four years is firmly illustrated by the fact that mineral exports, as a percentage of total merchandise exports, declined from 35% in 2011 to 26% last year, while mining's contribution to the JSE declined from 38% to just 15% and its contribution to foreign direct investment inflows fell from some 33% to 15% over the same period. While it is certainly clear that South Africa's mining industry has had a rough few years, it is anticipated that 2016 will be one of the most challenging years yet. Undoubtedly, what will prove most debilitating to the functioning of the South African mining sector this year is not only continued uncertainty over mineral policy but also the leadership challenges within the Department of Mineral Resources (DMR).

NUM to fight 700 chrome mine layoffs

ASA Metals, a Chinese company that operates the Dilokong Chrome Mine near Steelpoort, Limpopo, plans to retrench 700 workers and put the operation into care and maintenance after a protracted strike last year amid falling chrome prices. The NUM said the company had not followed legal processes in issuing a section 189 notice in terms of the Labour Relations Act and provisions in Mineral and Petroleum Resources Development Act."The NUM requests Minister of Mineral Resources Mosebenzi Zwane to intervene immediately to stop this drastic action by the company that will leave hundreds of mine workers in a dire situation," it said. The mine's closure promises to raise tensions in a volatile region in which frustrations are rising because of unrealised expectations and demands as municipalities fail to deliver on promises and their mandates. Mining officials spoke late last year of communities fracturing into self-serving groups that were hijacked by individuals seeking to benefit themselves at the expense of broader community, resulting in unrealistic demands that companies

Zambia asks SA for 300 MW of emergency power

Electricity crunch has hit mining companies. Zambia asked South Africa on Thursday for up to 300 megawatts (MW) of emergency power to ease an electricity crunch that has hit mining companies already grappling with a slide in global copper prices, its embassy said. Energy minister Dora Siliya made the request in a meeting with South African President Jacob Zuma and his energy minister, according to a post on the Facebook page of Zambian High Commissioner to Pretoria Emmanuel Mwamba. South African energy ministry officials did not respond to requests for comment. Zambia's power grid can generate up to 2,200 MW, most of it from hydro power, but supply is often erratic and output has been hit by low water levels in dams stemming from a severe drought across the region. The landlocked country, Africa's biggest copper producer after Democratic Republic of Congo, was plunged into almost nationwide blackouts twice last month. -- Reuters

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November mining production down 0.8% year on year

MINING production continued to contract year on year in November, although at a slower pace, supporting views of weak economic growth in the fourth quarter of last year. Mining production fell 0.8% in November 2015 compared with a year ago, after contracting sharply by 4.7% in October, Statistics SA data showed.

The outlook for the mining sector remained poor with falling commodity prices and weak global demand the biggest concerns, Nedbank economists said. Locally, possible labour challenges and infrastructure constraints would ensure that mining production remained depressed this year, the economists said. The production of iron ore, other metallic minerals and manganese ore fell in Nov 2015 compared with November 2014, and were the main reasons behind the 0.8% decline in mining production. Platinum group metals were a significant positive contributor, Statistics SA said. Despite the year-on-year decline, seasonally adjusted mining production increased 2.4% in November compared with October. This followed month-on-month changes of 1.7% in October 2015 and -4% in September 2015. Seasonally adjusted mining production dropped 3.1% in the three months ended November compared with the previous three months. The main reason for the quarterly decline in production was lower output of coal, manganese ore, other metallic minerals, platinum group metals and iron ore. Mineral sales were down 2.8% year on year in October. Commodity prices are down and are forecast to continue being depressed over the next few months.

Russia's Gazprom in partnership deal for SA coal gasification project

Gazprom has also agreed to partner with Anglo African Capital to develop the underground coal gasification of its coal assets in the Springbok Flats, in Limpopo. Diversified investment and mining company Anglo African Capital (AAC) has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Russian gas company Gazprom to secure the sole distribution rights for Gazprom's underground coal gasification (UCG) technology in sub-Saharan Africa. Gazprom has also agreed to partner with AAC to develop the underground coal gasification of its coal assets in the Springbok Flats, in Limpopo. Thus, Gazprom will also participate in a prefeasibility study of the project. AAC explains that it decided in 2014 to pursue more environment-friendly options for the development of its coal assets in the Springbok Flats and started research into the viability of UCG. "Our desire to drive the greener application of coal in our assets has culminated in this landmark deal with Gazprom," says AAC CEO Heine van Niekerk.

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In Climate Move, Obama to Halt New Coal Mining Leases on Public Lands

The Obama administration will announce on Friday a halt to new coal mining leases on public lands as it considers an overhaul of the program that could lead to increased costs for energy companies and deter future extraction, according to people familiar with the plan. The move would be the latest step in Mr. Obama's ambitious efforts to use his executive authority to tackle climate change. He telegraphed the step in his State of the Union address on Tuesday night, saying, "I'm going to push to change the way we manage our oil and coal resources so that they better reflect the costs they impose on taxpayers and our planet." It is also certain to further inflame a political debate over the federal government's control of public lands, most recently illustrated by an armed takeover of a wildlife refuge in Oregon. About 40 percent of the nation's coal is mined on public land, and most of that land is in the Powder River Basin of Wyoming. "It appears that they're going after the federal coal leasing program with the intention of keeping coal in the ground," said Luke Popovich, a spokesman for the National Mining Association. Last August, Mr. Obama used his executive authority under the Clean Air Act to complete regulations that would limit carbon dioxide emissions from coal-fired power plants, the nation's largest source of planet-warming pollution.

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NRG's Green Visionary Departure Leaves Clean-Energy Questions

The future of NRG Energy Inc. following the departure of Chief Executive Officer David Crane could be decidedly less green. Since he was fired last month, two executives hand-picked by the former CEO to manage NRG's clean-energy business have left. The power producer is pursuing the sale announced last fall of a majority stake in a money-losing home solar business that put a drag on the stock and a nail in Crane's coffin. Crane, 56, lost his job after a high-profile effort to transform NRG from a fossil-fuel powerhouse into a leading clean energy provider. While the home solar unit alone wasn't responsible for the company losing more than half its value last year -- the slump in natural gas played a role -- the push to go green struck a nerve. "The replacement of former CEO David Crane may accelerate NRG's full separation from its unprofitable home solar business," Bloomberg Intelligence analyst Stacy Nemeroff said. "Appointing a new CEO may have been the only way to signal to investors that NRG's management has a laser-like focus on optimizing the merchant power business." Crane was among the industry's strongest advocates for power companies to adapt to a changing world by investing in solar and renewable energy.

Low coal prices claim another BC mine

Another B.C. coal mine is shutting down, thanks to continued low coal prices. Hillsborough Resources Ltd., a private mining company based in B.C., has announced it is suspending operations indefinitely at its Quinsam coal mine in Campbell River. "Due to a prolonged and steep decline in thermal coal prices, changes in market demand and policy disincentives, Quinsam Coal cannot operate economically and will suspend coal production indefinitely," the company said in a press release. That's five coal mines that have shut down in B.C. in the last two years, thanks to a prolonged global glut and low prices for both thermal and metallurgical coal. The Quinsam coal mine has operated since 1987. The thermal coal it produced served a niche market -- the cement industry, which uses it not just as a fuel, but also as a feedstock, as the ash, silica and alumina from burned coal are some of the key ingredients of cement. As a result of putting the mine into care and maintenance, the company's 66-person workforce will be "reduced significantly," the company said. The Quinsam coal mine is Hillsborough's only operating mine. It had one other project it was trying to develop -- the Echo Hill project near Tumbler Ridge -- but that was put on the back burner. Hillsborough Resources CEO David Turnbull said the company will continue to ship coal from its inventory to meet its contractual commitments in 2016. Turnbull said the mine is being put up for sale. "There may be certain parties that are more interested in a mine that's in suspension than ongoing operations in an environment like this, so they have the option of bringing it up when the market improves," Turnbull said. "And there is cyclicity, clearly."

Peru central bank hikes key rate for second straight month

Jan 14 Peru's central bank raised its benchmark interest rate to 4 percent on Thursday as expected, its second hike in a row as it battles to keep inflation expectations from rising further. Eight of 14 economists surveyed by Reuters had predicted the 25 basis-point increase after inflation surprised on the upside for a third straight month in December and private forecasts for 2016 inflation crept higher, above its 1-3 percent target range. The hike was the bank's third in the past five months as the sol currency's depreciation drove up prices in the global mining powerhouse. The central bank said that the sol's slide against the dollar and temporary supply factors such as food and transport costs had pushed up inflation to a four-year high of 4.4 percent at the end of 2015. "This should not translate in a generalized way to the rest of prices in the economy," the central bank said in a statement. It emphasized that core inflation increased only slightly in December to 3.49 percent.

NWR in Talks to Sell Idle Mine to Czech Government for 1 Koruna

The Czech government may buy idle Frenstat mine from New World Resources Plc for 1 koruna (4 cents) as part of the unprofitable coal producer's reorganization, Industry and Trade Minister Jan Mladek said.

NWR, which said two months ago that it risks running out of cash, will hold more talks with the government on the potential transaction and other changes at the Czech mining unit, OKD AS, Mladek told reporters on Thursday. Mladek, Finance Minister Andrej Babis and Labor Minister Michaela Marksova met with NWR managers and bondholders in Prague. "We talked today with OKD managers and creditors, who play an important role," Mladek said after the talks. "The agreement is that we'll negotiate separately about two issues: a reorganization of OKD, on which we're able to reach some agreement, and the sale of the Frenstat mine for 1 koruna." Most of NWR's operations have become unprofitable because a global glut has pushed coal prices to the lowest level in at least eight years. The company is working with investment bank Moelis & Co. on a second debt restructuring in less than two years, according to two people familiar with the situation who asked not to be identified because the matter is private. While job losses at OKD, one of the largest employers in eastern Czech Republic, are "inevitable," the government wants dismissals to be spread over the longest possible period of time, Labor Minister Marksova said after the meeting.

Vattenfall aims to build subsidy-free offshore wind by 2025

Sweden's Vattenfall expects to be able to build offshore wind power projects, one of the most expensive sources of renewable energy, without subsidies by the middle of the next decade, a senior company official said on Thursday. The state-owned utility plans to boost its wind power portfolio in Europe to 4 gigawatts (GW), equivalent to four nuclear reactors, by 2020 from the current installed 1.8 GW, and further to 7 GW by 2025. "We should be able to build onshore wind power projects by 2020 without subsidy, and we also expect that we could build offshore wind power without subsidy by 2025, but that would depend on the projects," Michael Simmelsgaard, head of Vattenfall's strategic projects in wind, told a conference. While focusing more on renewable energy, Vattenfall is trying to sell its polluting lignite or brown coal mines and power plants in eastern Germany. Wind power is expected to generate 9 billion Swedish crowns (\$1.1 billion) in Vattenfall's core profit by 2020, and 16 billion crowns by 2025, from 5 billion crowns in 2015, slides presented by Simmelsgaard showed. Last year, Vattenfall won a tender to build the 400-megawatt Horns Rev 3 wind park off Denmark, which is expected to produce the world's cheapest offshore wind energy at an agreed price of 0.77 Danish crown (\$0.11) per kilowatt-hour.

RWE's renewables profits likely more than doubled in 2015

German utility RWE's (RWE.G.DE) profits from renewables likely more than doubled last year, its chief executive said on Wednesday, citing expansion of its wind power business that it hopes will help a shift away from coal, gas and nuclear. Innogy, RWE's renewables unit, more than doubled its operating profit to about 400 million euros (300.34 million pound) in 2015, Peter Terium told journalists. In 2014, Innogy's operating profit was 186 million euros. Germany's second-largest utility is in the process of pooling its healthy assets – renewables, networks and retail – into a new unit while loss-making power plants and energy trading will remain with parent RWE AG. RWE's group operating profit was 4.02 billion euros in 2014, down by a quarter year on year. It expects 2015 operating profit of 3.6-3.9 billion euros. It is scheduled to release 2015 results on March 8. "Renewables will be the growth engine of the new entity," Terium said.

China could halt imports of N. Korean coal as punishment for nuclear test

China could stop buying coal from North Korea to punish the ally for its recent nuclear test, a South Korean expert suggested Thursday amid calls for Beijing to take a firmer stance against Pyongyang. China has come under growing pressure from South Korea and the United States to help draw a strong sanctions resolution from the U.N. Security Council to punish the North for its fourth nuclear test last week. Choi Kyung-soo, president of the North Korea Resources Institute in Seoul, noted the North's high reliance on trade with China. "Coal exports account for nearly half of all North Korean exports to China," he said in a phone interview with Yonhap News Agency. North Korea earned \$2.84 billion from exports to China in 2014, nearly 90 percent of the \$3.16 billion earned in total, according to data from the institute and the Korea Trade-Investment Promotion Agency. Coal made up some 40 percent of exports to China at \$1.14 billion.

NUM, Msobo Coal in talks to end strike over lay-offs

The National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), the Department of Mineral Resources and Msobo Coal are set to meet on Wednesday morning to resolve a dispute at Msobo that has seen NUM members embark on a strike on Monday. The company issued letters of termination on November 23 2015, according to NUM. NUM Highveld Regional Organiser Bongani Tshabalala on Tuesday said the union is pushing for the company to reverse its decision to retrench workers at the mine. NUM has accused Msobo of failing to consult it “meaningfully” on the retrenchments. “They did not consider avoidance measures as per the stakeholder agreement signed by Chamber of Mines, labour and government. Our view as the NUM is that the purpose of this retrenchment is to dismiss permanent employees and replace them with contractors. It is clear that Msobo Coal is behaving exactly like (the) Optimum Glencore Mine,” the union said. Tshabalala also disputed the company’s assertion that it has resorted to retrenchments because of financial problems. “The mine is profitable. Our own auditors have confirmed that the company is liquid,” he said. The strike will not affect Eskom’s coal supply as Msobo does not supply the utility with coal, according to Eskom.

Mozambique: Shipping Company Opens New Route to Nacala

The international shipping company CMA CGM has announced that it is adding the northern Mozambican port of Nacala to its regular container service known as the “Swahili Express”. The service will begin on 20 January when the container ship Kumasi arrives at Nacala. The Swahili Express starts from the Indian port of Nhava Sheva and then sails to Khor Fakkan and Jebel Ali in the United Arab Emirates. It then passes through Longoni in Mayotte, and Dar es Salaam and Zanzibar in Tanzania, before arriving in Nacala. The ships then return to India via the Seychelles. The introduction of this regular service reinforces Nacala’s growing role as a transport hub. The port currently serves commercial operators and farmers both locally and in neighbouring Malawi. The port has recently undergone a major modernisation project funded through a loan from the Japanese government. The first phase has been completed at a cost of 84 million US dollars. This included repairing the north pier and paving the container terminal. The second phase is due to begin later this year and will cost 270 million US dollars. The Swahili Express service will open the gates to two of the world’s most important container terminals. The port of Nhava Sheva is the largest container terminal in India, whilst Jebel Ali is the world’s largest man-made harbour and is an international hub for the transshipment of containers. Nacala has become a focus of huge infrastructure investments. Across the bay from the port is the new port of Nacala-a-Velha which this month will begin receiving coal transported along the brand new 900 kilometre long railway line linking it with the coal fields of Tete. Together, the railway and port cost around 4.5 billion US dollars. In addition, in December Nacala International Airport was awarded certification for international operations. It will thus open to international traffic later this year.

Mozambique: Ncondezi Signs Deal With Shanghai Electric Power

The London based company Ncondezi Energy announced on Monday that it has signed a binding Joint Development Agreement with Shanghai Electric Power Company to develop the Ncondezi power project in the western Mozambican province of Tete. Under the agreement Shanghai Electric Power Company will become the controlling shareholder in a new 300 megawatt coal-fired power station. It will invest up to 25.5 million US dollars and receive a sixty per cent share in the power project. Ncondezi Energy will retain full ownership of the coal mine, which will be financed and developed separately to the power project. Unlike neighbouring coal projects, Ncondezi is focussed on meeting Mozambican demand for electricity, using its own thermal coal. It is thus, unlike other mining companies in Tete, not dependent on rail and port infrastructure to move coal to ports for exports. Ncondezi’s coal mine will be an open cast operation with a target output of 1.3 million tonnes per annum. In the first stage of the power project, 300 megawatts of electricity will be produced. However, Ncondezi plans to expand this in stages to 1,800 megawatts.

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Obama Wants To Change The Way America Sells Its Coal And Oil

President Obama might have started off his State of the Union address Tuesday night by saying he wasn't going to list a bunch of policy priorities, but he did offer up some climate change policy changes that we will likely see this year. Obama has made climate action is key tenet of his administration, but how we use our public lands — and waters — has continued to run counter to the broader strategy, giving fossil fuel companies a major discount. Those practices might be coming to an end. "I'm going to push to change the way we manage our oil and coal resources, so that they better reflect the costs they impose on taxpayers and our planet," Obama said. "That way, we put money back into those communities and put tens of thousands of Americans to work building a 21st century transportation system." "I'm going to push to change the way we manage our oil and coal resources, so that they better reflect the costs they impose on taxpayers and our planet. Obama is talking about the fossil fuels that come out of publicly owned land — land owned by the federal government and set aside for recreation, wildlife, ranching, and, yes, energy development.

NY gov aims to phase out coal by 2020

New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo (D) said Wednesday he aims to phase out coal-fired power plants in the state by 2020. Cuomo announced the goal in his state of the state address, pushing to bring more green energy to New York and reduce its carbon pollution. "We will help the few remaining coal plants transition but we must clean our air and protect our health and that must be our first priority," he said. New York only gets about 1.3 percent of its electricity from coal, according to the federal Energy Information Administration. Greens and Democrats welcomed his Wednesday pledge to zero that figure out. "Today, Gov. Cuomo has shifted New York's focus from the energy of the past to the energy of the future," Lisa Dix, the New York senior director for the Sierra Club's Beyond Coal campaign, said in a statement. "We look forward to working with the administration toward a just and fair transition policy framework for coal affected communities and to support the governor's legacy climate and energy programs.

Nearly 60% of Ontario's electricity is nuclear a year after dumping coal

Nuclear power provided 60% of Ontario's electricity in 2015, while renewables such as wind and solar power added only a tiny amount to the supply mix. The Independent Electricity System Operator says Ontario got 24% of its electricity from hydro-generated power from dams and run-of-river generators, and another 10% from gas-and-oil fired generation. Wind power supplied six per cent of the province's electricity last year, while solar power and biofuel generation each added less than one per cent to the grid. The province stopped burning coal to generate electricity in 2014, but it had been providing about 25% of Ontario's power a decade ago. The average electricity price for Ontario residential consumers was 10.14 cents a kilowatt hour in 2015, more than double the rates from 2008. Premier Kathleen Wynne wants to keep generating about half of Ontario's electricity from nuclear power, and her government has announced plans to refurbish the Darlington and Bruce nuclear generating stations at a total cost of nearly \$26 billion. -- National Post

Colombia's Stake In Isagen Sold To Brookfield Renewable Energy For \$2 Billion USD

Brookfield Renewable Energy Partners L.P. has committed to acquire 57.6% of the outstanding common shares of Medellín based Isagen S.A. from the Colombian govt. In an auction held at 8am today that had only Brookfield as a bidder, the Colombian government announced and approved Brookfield's offer as acceptable. Isagen owns and operates a renewable energy portfolio consisting of 3,032 megawatts (MW) of principally hydroelectric generating capacity and a 3,800 MW development portfolio in Colombia. Brookfield Renewable is the flagship listed renewable energy company of Brookfield Asset Management, a global alternative asset manager based in Toronto, Canada with roughly \$225 billion USD of assets under management. The Colombian government sold its stake in Isagen to fund its ambitious 4G highway modernization project. "Isagen is a great business for the Colombian community, for the wellbeing of the community and the Colombian economy. Its sale is the most reasonable and logical," said Colombia's President Juan Manuel Santos in a statement.

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Chile mulls scrapping copper funding for military

Codelco, Chile's state-owned copper miner and the world's largest producer of the metal, should soon review its investment plans in light of historic low prices, chairman Oscar Landerretche has said. In an interview with local news site El Dinamo (in Spanish) last week, the economist said the first step should be scrapping the country's Copper Law, legislation dating back to 1958 that was revisited by former president, dictator Augusto Pinochet. Under that set of rules, Chile's Armed Forces receive 10% of Codelco's annual export revenue.

"Having the country's military needs tied to copper prices makes no sense (...) We must abolish such law and instead give the Armed Forces funding mechanisms fit for the way they work," said Landerretche, who holds a Ph.D. in economics from The Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). According to official data, in the past 15 years Codelco has injected US\$13.4 billion into the country's Armed Forces coffers. The army, however, has hardly touched its treasure chest, claims Chile's Defense & Military blog. "Weapons acquisitions have been modest, while some key programs (such as helicopters for the Air Force and armour for the Marines) continue to be pushed back." Two previous governments have tried and failed to eliminate the controversial law, but Michelle Bachelet's administration is once again working on a reform. This time, rather than eliminating the ruling, the government is trying to make Codelco's contribution flexible and based on a number of variables, such as the period's copper prices and the final destination of such funds.

South32 may bid for Anglo's \$US1b phosphate and niobium Brazil business

South32, the aluminium, coal and manganese producer spun out of BHP Billiton last year, is considering bidding for Anglo American's \$US1 billion niobium and phosphate business in Brazil, according to three people familiar with the situation. South32 sent out requests to investment banks as it seeks to hire an adviser to assist in the bidding process, the people said, asking not to be identified because the information is confidential. Goldman Sachs Group and Morgan Stanley are managing the sale for Anglo, the people said. First-round bids are due by the middle of next month, and Anglo is seeking to complete the sale in one transaction, rather than split the niobium and phosphate assets, they said. Large North American fertiliser companies are also likely to participate in the auction, two of the people said. Anglo confirmed last month that it would work to sell the business this year. South32 was created last year in the mining sector's biggest spinoff in about a decade as BHP narrowed its focus to copper, coal, iron ore and oil. Shares of Perth, Australia-based South32 plunged 56 per cent in Sydney trading since listing in May.

Prospects for coal look bleak: WoodMac

COAL producers are going to suffer through another painful year, perhaps even worse than the last one, according to Wood Mackenzie analyst Andy Roberts. In fact, producers are facing several years, if not decades, of low prices, anaemic demand, chronic overcapacity and "margins" that would scare most non-coal businesses into closing their doors. But not coal producers, he said. "This is a resilient and optimistic bunch, accustomed to long periods of low real prices and profitless years," he said. "They have been here before although they will find that this extended poor market is just the beginning. "With concentrated global action underway to address climate change and with the cost of renewable energy on a swift and impressive decline, many coal producers may finally meet their Waterloo. A long, slow harvest is inescapable." There will be survivors, of course, who will be focused on strategies that lower cost and allow them to compete, Roberts said. "Others will turn to long-term strategies that could include energy diversification. But these steps will not alleviate the pain that all coal producers must face in the next few years."

Rio Tinto CEO cancels pay rises in 2016

Rio Tinto is primed to tighten its belt even further this year with a global salary freeze on all employees, reduced travel expenditure across the board, and further scrutiny of contactor and consultancy spending.

An internal email written by chief executive Sam Walsh, and recently obtained by Australian Mining, revealed Rio Tinto's increased focus on cost saving measures, spelling out there would be no annual pay increases for anyone from the CEO down. "Late last year we saw market prices continue to rapidly fall. What we see ahead is very sobering," Walsh declared. The CEO said he anticipated 2016 would be an even tougher year than the last, with prices for commodities "now around 2005 levels or lower", and some "down as much as 80 per cent from their highs and nearing long-term historic averages". "This situation is not temporary and our industry is moving into the new normal which means we must continue to be one step ahead," Walsh said. "The pressure this is placing on our industry is significant and it is a tough time across the sector. It is important we recognise that the pressure isn't going to let up."

CHINA - Premier called for caps on coal & steel output based on demand and promised subsidies to companies who reduce overcapacity. Banks urged not to renew loans with non-compliant companies.

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WORLD - BP to cut oil workforce by about 17% yr-end and plan to sell \$3-\$5bn assets to cover costs.

AFRICA OIL cleared to sell stakes in 3 Kenyan (each 25%) and 2 Ethiopian oil blocks (one 25%; other 15%) to MAERSK for funds to ride out current low price environment and continue further exploration work

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TANZANIA - KILIWANI NORTH consortium to start testing plant and pipeline in Jan after securing gas sale deal with state petroleum company. Commercial operations expected to start soon; production expected to reach 850kcmpd.

EDF launches sale of Polish assets worth up to \$500 mln -report

French utility EDF has launched a sale of its Polish coal-fired heating and power plants worth up to 2 billion zlotys (\$498 million) and hired law firm Dentons and investment bank Rothschild to help, the Puls Biznesu daily reported on Wednesday, citing unnamed sources. The planned sale is part of EDF's strategy to focus on low-carbon nuclear and renewable energy and would help to raise funds to invest billions of euros in a nuclear project in Britain. In Poland, EDF's plants hold a 15 percent share of the heating market. Its 1.7 gigawatt (GW) coal-fired power station in Rybnik, in the south of the country, generates about 7 percent of the electricity consumed in Poland. EDF aims to sell its Polish assets together and a deal is possible by mid-2016, Puls Biznesu said. However, the Rybnik plant could be a hard sell because power generation in Poland is mostly loss-making due to high CO2 emission costs and ageing infrastructure that requires constant investment. Local electricity producers also complain that they receive insufficient state support and have called for new regulations that would entitle them to be paid not only for the electricity they produce but also for capacity kept in reserve.

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Poland and Hungary: Tactical alliance or strategic partnership?

The meeting between the Polish prime minister, Donald Tusk, and the Hungarian party in Poland and Viktor Orbán, Hungarian prime minister, is perhaps a prelude to better co-operation in Brussels. Anything beyond that is out of the question because of the politicians' different views on Russia. The meeting between Kaczyński and Orbán in the Polish resort town of Niedzica proves that in both countries' politicians' names matter rather than institutions. Despite the fact that Andrzej Duda is the Polish president and Beata Szydło prime minister, the Hungarian leader was invited by the chairman of Law and Justice (PiS). The topics of the unexpectedly long conversation have not been revealed to the public. The conclusions of the meeting can be speculated about. Since this was a talk between two leaders of conservative parties – PiS and FIDESZ, that are represented in the European Parliament, it might lead to increased co-operation, despite the fact that within the EP, Poles belong to the European Conservatives and Reformists and Hungarians to the European People's Party. Perhaps Warsaw and Budapest will collaborate better when it comes to battling the criticism of first Hungary and now Poland by EU institutions and their representatives. However, it is certain this will not help Poland gather EU officials' support when it comes to, for instance, its fight against the Nord Stream 2 pipeline.

The facts show that Poland can conditionally count on Hungary regarding a few issues:

1. Gas policy – the Slovenia-Hungary gas pipeline was completed in 2015 and is a key part of the North-South Gas Corridor, which is a network of gas pipelines that are supposed to connect the LNG terminal in the Polish town of Świnoujście with its counterpart on the Croatian island of Krk. This constitutes a meridian axis of gas connections that will determine the development of the regional gas market, which has so far been dominated by east-west gas transit from Russia.
2. Hungary and Poland are against the Nord Stream 2 pipeline. On the one hand, the project is criticised by both states. But on the other hand, the opening of Hungarian companies to co-operation with Gazprom is a fact. The Russian giant was invited to build a gas hub in Hungary. The hub will be used in the winter if the company has troubles with delivering gas via Ukraine.

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Indonesia Aims to Ease Foreign-Investment Rules

Talks are focused sectors in which the government limits or prevents foreign investment. Faced with sluggish economic growth, Indonesia is working on a major revamp of foreign-investment rules that could open the door for overseas companies to take bigger stakes in domestic firms and gain a foothold in new industries.

Government officials aim to finish discussions on a first round of investment easing by the end of the month. Talks are focused on a list of sectors, including e-commerce and pharmaceuticals, in which the government limits or prevents foreign investment. "To me, the [list] is like a list of added imports. If we prohibit foreigners, it means they're forced to build their factories outside" the country," said Trade Minister Tom Lembong. Allowing more investment would amount to a "fundamental paradigm shift," he added. Foreign businesses, which pour billions of dollars into Southeast Asia's largest economy each year, making up for local capital shortfalls, have long pushed for changes to a list they say has grown more restrictive over the years. President Joko Widodo has promised to ease investment restrictions for foreigners and locals alike in an effort to bolster the beleaguered economy. But industry observers say the latest efforts will likely face strong opposition from some lawmakers and officials, and could ultimately fall far short of hopes.

Japan to support clean coal power in India

Japan and India this week agreed to co-operate on a number of energy-related initiatives in the latter country.

In a statement Tuesday during the two nations' eighth Strategic Energy Dialogue Indian power minister Piyush Goyal and Japanese economy minister Motoo Hayashi said Japan will support India's efforts to introduce high-efficiency coal-fired power generation technologies. Along with this initiative, the two countries will undertake a study on reducing emissions from coal-fired power plants. The nations will co-operate on a study designed to determine the optimal energy mix for India, and will investigate the possibility of joint procurement of natural gas. Sumant Sinha, co-chairman of India's CII National Committee Renewable Energy, led the delegation to Japan this year and was quoted as saying that Japanese support could include "debt financing from various Japanese companies and... equity financing from various Japanese corporates. We could also be looking at technology transfer" in relation to, among others, clean coal and energy storage technologies. Japan is the world's largest public financier of overseas coal-fired power projects and aims to export its clean coal technology on the theory that, if developed nations provide financial support for new coal plants, developing countries won't build cheaper, less efficient and more polluting plants. -- Power Engineering

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Naira hits fresh low

The Nigerian naira yesterday broke fresh ground again, falling to a new record low of 189.05/US dollar. Meanwhile, the Central Bank of Nigeria maintained its key lending rate at 13%, resisting a rate hike ahead of presidential elections next month. The naira has plunged from around 165/\$ at the start of Nov. as the country struggles with the sharp drop in crude oil prices.

German investor confidence is on the rise

German investor confidence is on the rise. A measure of investors' confidence in the eurozone's largest economy rose more than expected this month, according to the ZEW Centre for European Economic Research. A measure of confidence in current conditions rose to 22.4 from 10 in Dec., while a separate survey on the outlook for the next six months showed an increase to 48.4 from 34.9. Economists had forecast that an index of current expectations would rise to 13 from 10, and that the gauge of future expectations would climb to 40.

KZN sugar crop threatened by drought

KwaZulu-Natal has six weeks to get sufficient rain for this year's sugar crop, the provincial agricultural union said yesterday. "Unless it rains significantly more than usual over the next two weeks, we're talking about cane farmers in the north coast belt and Zululand heading into survival mode", KZN Agricultural Union president MIKE BLACK said yesterday. The SA Sugar Association trimmed its forecast for output this season to 2.11mt from the Dec. prediction of 2.12mt. The sugarcane output estimate was cut to 17.7mt from 18.1mt last month.

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Zim gold mines face collapse

Zimbabwe's gold mining companies are making losses due to weak commodity prices and could collapse unless the government reduces royalties for producers, the Chamber of Mines said. Spot gold rose 1% yesterday to \$1 292.00/oz yesterday. Finance Minister PATRICK CHINAMASA reduced royalty fees on gold to 5% from 7% in the 2015 budget but the chamber, which represents all major mines, said it wanted a further reduction to 3%. In a report issued in Dec., the chamber said mines were making losses of up to \$100/oz due to weak bullion prices and high electricity charges.

Vodacom told to halt DRC services due to protests	<p>VODACOM GROUP said it has been ordered to switch off all internet and text messaging services in the DRC amid protests against proposed changes to the country's electoral code. Mobile operators and ISPs yesterday received orders from government officials instructing them to suspend the services. Protesters, who surrounded parliament on Monday and continued to demonstrate on Tuesday, are seeking to prevent the Senate from voting on the law, which includes requiring the country to conduct its first census in about 30 years before the next national elections. Opposition parties say that may delay the vote and extend President JOSEPH KABILA's 14-year rule. Demonstrators have now suspended their protests until Jan. 26.</p>
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Brazil orders rolling blackouts	<p>Rolling electricity blackouts swept across parts of Brazil yesterday as the grid operator ordered power cuts to avoid a larger crisis. Grid operator ONS said it ordered 2 200MW of controlled outages in eight states as the hottest day of the year led to surging demand from air conditioners and other power-hungry appliances. The operator said the national grid was back to normal by 3:45p.m. after controlled outages affecting less than 5% of the system's total demand</p>
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Malawi December inflation up at 24.2 percent y/y	<p>Malawi's consumer inflation quickened to 24.2 percent year-on-year in December from 23.7 percent in November, the national statistics agency said</p>
	<p>General Muhammad Ali Jafari, the commander of Iran's Revolutionary Guards Corps, says Israel should anticipate "lethal lightning strikes" following the death of a senior IRGC general and other Iranian soldiers.</p>
	<p>The assassinations, Jafari says, are "the opening point of the collapse of the Zionist regime."</p>
Zionists' warned of 'lethal lightning'	<p>Read more: IDF moves more tanks to north, closes some roads near border The Times of Israel http://www.timesofisrael.com/times-of-israel-live-updates-january-20-2015/#ixzz3PR8kcszs</p>
	<p>Follow us: @timesofisrael on Twitter timesofisrael on Facebook</p>

THE amount of jobless EU migrants claiming benefits in the UK is more than DOUBLE the number of out-of-work Britons living abroad, new research has revealed. Figures show around 65,000 EU nationals claim Jobseeker's Allowance in the UK, compared to just under 30,000 British nationals claiming out-of-work benefits in other EU countries.

Of the thousands claiming welfare handouts in Britain, almost 23 per cent are Polish nationals.

More than 14,800 Polish nationals live and claim Jobseeker's Allowance in the UK today – outnumbering their British counterparts by 7,440 to one.

Number of EU migrants claiming UK benefits is DOUBLE that of Brits claiming welfare abroad

By comparison, the research - conducted by The Guardian based on responses from 23 of the 28 EU member states - reveals only two Britons currently claim jobless benefits in Poland

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THE foreign-born population of some British towns has tripled in just 10 years, a report shows. In Boston, Lincolnshire, immigrant numbers are up 389 per cent and foreigners now account for 15 per cent of the residents – up from just three per cent a decade ago.

In Merthyr Tydfil, the proportion of migrants rose from 1.4 per cent to 4.5 per cent.

Hull, Wrexham and Aberdeen all saw the proportion of migrants in their populations more than double.

Number of migrants in UK towns trebled in last 10 years

The figures were compiled using census figures by Oxford University's Migration Observatory.

A huge ash column exploded into the sky from one of Central America's most dangerous volcanoes on Wednesday, reaching airplane-level heights of the atmosphere.

Mexico's Colima volcano played host to a "strong vulcanian-type explosion" at 9:15 a.m. local time on Wednesday. The mountain belched an ash column more than 4 km above the summit, with volcanic matter rising to 29,000 ft (9 km). The resulting ash flow eventually drifted to the northeast, Volcano Discovery reported.

Mexican volcano spews ash 29,000 ft in the air

A webcam focused on the active stratovolcano captured the powerful blast.

Thousands of supporters of the 'anti-Islamization' PEGIDA movement have gathered in the east German city of Leipzig, just days after a similar protest in Dresden was canceled. Counter-protesters have been vowing to block the way.

Thousands of PEGIDA supporters march in Leipzig

The organizers of the rally had predicted that as many as 60,000 people would take to the streets, but the live footage showed fewer attendees than anticipated. Witnesses at the rally also said there could not have been more than 10,000 there, TASS reported.

The ratings agency Standard & Poor's will have to pay over \$77 million and is to be barred for one year from grading certain bond deals for loosening its rating criteria in order to win business. Investors had not been informed of these changes.

This comes after a settlement with US federal and state regulators over "fraudulent misconduct" and is the first time that the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) has ever fined one of the big three credit-raters, since it won authority from Congress in 2006 to look after the sector, Reuters reported.

The SEC says that S&P will have to pay \$58 million to settle three matters with the agency, while they will have to fork out another \$19 million to settle cases with the attorneys general of New York and Massachusetts.

"Investors rely on credit rating agencies like Standard & Poor's to play it straight when rating complex securities," said Andrew Ceresney, the SEC's enforcement director.

"But Standard & Poor's elevated its own financial interests above investors by loosening its rating criteria to obtain business and then obscuring these changes from investors," he added, according to Reuters.

S&P slapped with \$77m fine for misleading investors

A volcanic eruption taking place in the Pacific archipelago of Tonga has created a new island, though scientists say it could soon sink back into the ocean.

New island created in Tonga volcanic eruption

The volcano has been erupting for approximately a month in the ocean, 65 kilometers northwest of Tonga's capital, Nukualofa, located on the main island of Tongatapu.

A leading Islamic organization has called on the United Nations to make "contempt of religions" illegal. The group also urges followers to continue peaceful protests against images of Prophet Mohammed and says the West should do more to protect Muslims.

Top Islamic group urges UN ban on 'contempt' of religions

The International Union of Muslim Scholars, which is based in Qatar, has urged Muslim's "not to resort to violence," after a cartoon of the prophet appeared in the French magazine Charlie Hebdo. Its publication following the January 7-9 terror attacks in Paris, led to widespread protests across the Muslim world, some of which turned violent.

Gold above \$1,300 for first time in 5 months

Gold prices have risen above \$1,300 an ounce for the first time since August 2014. It's because the global economic slowdown, expectation of ECB 'easy money', and currency volatility make investors turn to a safe haven

AMERICAN EXPRESS will axe 4 000 employees as it seeks to cut expenses and lift earnings. The company, which employed some 63 000 people at end-2013, said the cuts would take place "over the course of the year", and that the group would still "continue to hire selectively in parts of the organisation". The decision to reduce its headcount followed Q4 results that beat Wall Street forecasts. Revenues rose 7% in the quarter to end-Dec. to \$9.1bn, while profits advanced 11% to \$1.4bn, or 139cps. Analysts had expected AMEX to post earnings of 138cps on sales of \$8.5bn. Card membership spending increased 6% in Q4, taking total transactions processed by AMEX for the year above \$1tn for the first time.

Amex to cut 4 000 jobs

EBAY has bowed to building pressure, including from activist investor CARL ICAHN. The e-commerce site yesterday said it would cut 2 400 employees - 7% of its workforce - and explore a sale or IPO for its enterprise unit as the company focuses on its faster growth businesses. The decision follows a bitter public battle with ICAHN last year as he sought to unlock value in the company, with EBAY ultimately agreeing to spin-off its PayPal payments business. The enterprise division serves retailers and brands seeking to sell goods online and posted a 9% rise in sales over its platforms in Q4 y/y. EBAY said it had also entered a 'standstill agreement' with ICAHN, who holds a 3.7% stake in the company. "Enterprise is a strong business and a leading partner for large retailers... however, it has become clear that it has limited synergies with either business and a separation will allow both to focus exclusively on their core markets as we create two independent world class companies", EBAY said. The announcement came as the group posted a 9% rise in Q4 sales to \$4.9bn. Profits rose 10% to \$936m, or 75cps. Adjusted earnings of 90cps beat estimates for 89cps

Ebay to axe 2 400 jobs

Regulator could cancel permit for Barrick's Pascua-Lama

Chile's environmental regulator is re-evaluating penalties on BARRICK GOLD's Pascua-Lama project, a process that could include cancelling the mine's permit. "The new sanction can fall anywhere on the spectrum allowed by the law, which goes from a warning to revoking the environmental permit, including fines", CHRISTIAN FRANZ, head of the SMA, told Chilean media yesterday. Chile's environmental regulator, known as the SMA, fined BARRICK \$16m in May 2013 for not complying with some of the country's environmental regulations for the mammoth gold and silver project. But the country's Environment Court then found the fines were not properly determined and subsequently the Supreme Court said it would not hear an appeal by the Canadian miner. That left the door open for the SMA to re-evaluate the fines it previously imposed. Pascua-Lama had been plagued by political opposition, permitting issues, labour unrest, cost overruns and a falling gold price. BARRICK halted development of the project in Oct. 2013 after spending more than \$5bn.

W Cape farmers suffer huge losses

Producers in the Olifants River Valley are currently suffering financial losses of up to R30 000/ha after a water canal on the western banks of the river that broke earlier this month left them without water. Damages of nearly R1.1m to vineyards and R300 000 to lucerne crops that have wilted, have been reported. More than 200t of tomatoes in the area have also been lost due to inadequate soil moisture and water loss. Meanwhile, damages are escalating because the water quota hasn't been restored yet, despite the local water users association working around the clock to have the canal prepared. Agri Western Cape CEO CARL OPPERMAN said an urgent meeting between the Department of Water Affairs, the provincial department of agriculture, the Lower Olifants River Water Users Association and Agri Western Cape must be convened to prevent similar future disasters.

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S&P cuts iron ore, copper price forecasts

STANDARD & POOR's downgraded its price forecasts for iron ore and copper due to slower global growth and said it expects changes to the ratings of related companies in the coming weeks. The agency cut its iron ore price forecast to \$65/t for 2015 and 2016, from \$85/t previously. It cut its copper price forecast to \$2.70/lb (\$5 952.50/t) in 2015/16, from \$3.10/lb previously. "Given our new assumed prices... we expect changes to our credit ratings and outlooks on some entities in the coming weeks", S&P credit analyst ELAD JELASKO said

China considers building Namibia naval base

China has proposed building a base for its Navy in the Namibian port of Walvis bay and a delegation will visit the country to discuss the project, the Namibian newspaper reported today, citing a letter from Namibia's ambassador to China to the country's foreign affairs ministry. The Dec. 22 letter from Ambassador RINGO ABED to foreign affairs permanent secretary SELMA ASHIPALA-MUSAVYI said the former had met GENG YANSHENG, China's defense ministry spokesperson, the newspaper reported. YANSHENG in Nov. denied media reports that China was planning a number of naval bases in Asia and Africa. "Namibia has had problems with illegal fishing trawlers in its waters... A Chinese naval presence will deter any would-be illegal trawlers and smugglers", ABED cited YANSHENG as saying in the meeting. MONICA SHEYA, a spokesperson for Namibia's defence ministry, said she had no knowledge of the plan. Namibia's foreign ministry said it wasn't immediately able to comment.

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China's slowing economy: The worst has yet to come	<p>Meaningful solutions to China's economic woes will be very painful and may even bring about a recession in the short-term. China's leadership will likely delay addressing the problems for some time.</p> <p>If official Chinese data should be believed at all, the only thing one can say about China's GDP growth of 7.4% in 2014, the slowest since 1990, is that it could have been worse</p>
Hawaii's biggest utility wants to ditch solar net metering	<p>Hawaii's biggest utility wants to end to its solar net metering program by April, and replace it with a new tariff regime that will be less lucrative for solar-owning customers — a move that's sure to raise opposition from the state's solar industry. But Hawaiian Electric Companies (HECO) says the change is needed to prevent distributed solar from overwhelming grid stability, burdening non-solar customers with extra costs, and crowding out other, less expensive forms of renewable energy.</p>
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Saudi's to build world's first large scale solar powered desalination plant	<p>A Saudi Arabia company is to build the world's first large-scale solar-powered water desalination plant, using solar PV to provide much of its power needs during daylight hours.</p> <p>Advanced Water Technology, the commercial arm of the King Abdulaziz City of Science and Technology has commission Spanish renewable energy group Abengoa to incorporate the plant into the \$130 million facility.</p> <p>Abengoa will build the 15MW solar PV facility, with tracking, and expects it to provide all the desalination plant's energy needs during peak output —which in Saudi Arabia will be for much of the daylight hours.</p> <p>saudiThe plant, to supply Al Khafji City in the north-east of the country, will produce 60,000 cubic metres of water a day. It is due to be commissioned in 2017.</p>
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A US-based civil rights group has raised the alarm over a surge in hateful anti-Muslim messages, triggered by the release of 'American Sniper', a new box office hit that shattered records and made over \$180 million in four weeks.

American Sniper' sparks anti-Muslim hatred online

The American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC), sent a letter to the director of the movie, Clint Eastwood, and its star, Bradley Cooper, asking them to promote tolerance by condemning hateful language used against Muslims online. "It is our opinion that you could play a significant role in assisting us in alleviating the danger we are facing," Reuters quoted the letter, dated January 21.

Clashes with police as sex education protesters attacked in Germany

some 150 Hamburg residents protesting against 'early sexualization' in German schools were pelted with bottles, firecrackers and snowballs by counter-demonstrators who outnumbered them 4-to-1.

At least 15 people were killed and some 40 left wounded in Egypt on Sunday as the country marked the fourth anniversary of the "25 January Revolution" which ousted former president Hosni Mubarak after a 30 year rule.

15 killed on Egypt uprising anniversary

The most intense clashes happened in the northern Cairo suburb of Matariya, a Muslim Brotherhood stronghold, where at least eight people were killed, including one policeman, Reuters reported citing Egypt's health ministry. There have also been reports that one child of a Coptic family have been among those killed.

Over 140 million Pakistanis were left without power after militants attacked the national grid with blasts specifically targeting power pylons. Some are still waiting for power to return Up to 80 percent of the population reported losing electricity after attacks on a transmission tower caused nationwide blackouts.

Pakistan plunges into darkness as attack leaves 140mn without power

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Clashes broke out at an anti-fascist rally in Cremona, Italy when around 2,000 protesters took to the streets to object to an attack by far-right group supporters. The fracas left a political activist in hospital.

Hundreds of anti-fascist protesters clash with police in Italy

A couple of thousand anti-fascist protesters attended the rally on Saturday, which started off peacefully. The protesters marched through the city center chanting slogans and waving banners to draw awareness to the plight of anti-fascist activist Emilio Visigalli, who is currently in hospital in a serious condition, following last week's attack by the far-right group CasaPound. He was injured when the event organized by the CSA Dordoni cultural center was attacked on January 18 by dozens of neo-Nazi supporters.

Being employed in Germany is no longer enough to make ends meet, as around 3.1 million workers receive salaries below the country's poverty threshold. People have been forced to cut back on food and heating in order to survive, German media reported.

READ MORE: Richest 1% to own more than half world's wealth by 2016 - Oxfam

The number of workers living in poverty surged 25 percent between 2008 and 2013 - Saarbrücker Zeitung newspaper citing Germany's Federal Statistical Office data. In 2008, there were just 2.5 million workers living below the minimum income deemed adequate.

In 2013, the German poverty line was a salary of €979 (about \$1,097) per person.

Surveyed workers said they have cut back on things like food and heating in order to make ends meet, including rent payments, data from 2013 household surveys showed.

During that year, over 530,000 low-income workers could only afford to eat one full meal every other day, and over 417,000 others were living without enough heat. Another 380,000 workers said they were behind on their rent payments.

Over 3mn German workers live below poverty line

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Over 3mn German workers live below poverty line

The bailout program, which the outgoing Greek government signed with the EU, is dead and will be renegotiated, Yiannis Miliotis, chief economy policy maker at the leftist anti-austerity party Syriza said after it won the country's parliamentary election.

EU's bailout program for Greece 'dead'

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Greece: leftist anti-austerity party Syriza won parliamentary election

With cyber-attacks on the financial sector and state sponsored attacks on the internet on the up, a new international organization to police cyber space is needed Eugene Kaspersky, Chairman and CEO of Kaspersky Lab, told RT.

Cyber threats increase, new international net cops needed

Kaspersky Lab is one of the fastest growing and largest private IT security providers in the world.

The UN has dedicated a separate meeting to anti-Semitism, citing a global rise in violence against Jews. About half of UN member states attended, with surprise speakers such as the Saudi ambassador, who equated anti-Semitic crimes with Islamophobia.

READ MORE: Anti-Semitic attacks soar across Europe amid Israel's operation in Gaza

"Faulting the Jews is once again becoming the rallying cry of a new order of assassins," French philosopher Bernard-Henri Levy said in a keynote address to UN states on Friday. He denounced what he called a "radical inhumanity" in a rising hatred towards Jews.

UN's first ever meeting on anti-Semitism sees France, US, Saudi Arabia speak out

US Ambassador Samantha Power also spoke at the meeting, calling for nations to take a stand against "this monstrous global problem."

to the \$24-billion nuclear power plant Hinkley Point C, which is set to become the UK's first new nuclear reactor in two decades.

Last October, the EU approved a UK state subsidy request for the project, a deal between French-owned nuclear developer EDF and the UK government.

Though the project was met with skepticism by some commissioners, four of whom voted against the decision, the commission decided that the UK's plans to subsidize the construction and operation of the plant are in accordance with EU state aid regulations.

Construction has already begun on the plant, which is expected to replace a fifth of Britain's aging nuclear power and coal plants, and provide 7 percent of the UK's electricity by 2023.

Austria, a fully non-nuclear nation, considers nuclear energy to be both economically and environmentally unsustainable. The country will launch its appeal within two months after the publication of the official Hinkley decision in the EU journal, Austria's environment ministry director Andreas Molin told the Guardian. The journal is to be released in two weeks.

The appeal will argue that the UK's loan guarantees for the project constitute illegal state aid.

"Austria strictly rejects any kind of direct or indirect subsidies to nuclear power, arguing for the complete internalization of all external costs based on the polluter pays principle," Austrian environment ministry Julia Puchegger told Interfax Energy.

Austria to sue EU over UK nuclear plant subsidy approval

On this at least there is consensus: South Africa faces a thirsty future – even if there is still disagreement on the important details, such as just how bad the situation is right now and when it will be appropriate to call it a crisis.

From the vantage point of early 2015 the consensus seems laughably obvious, with every study and statistic and projection in agreement and anecdotes of daily struggles too numerous to ignore.

Yet it was a hard-won consensus; as recently as 2012 those predicting trouble could still have flipped a coin to calculate the odds of being listened to versus being branded alarmist and dismissed. Only in the past two years have scientists across different disciplines and technocrats across different levels of government come to agree – with notable political exceptions (see below) – that trouble is looming. What was recently deemed alarmist has become simple fact.

But agreement is not action and those same scientists and technocrats now find themselves watching, increasingly aghast, as water follows the same course as electricity did between 1998, when consensus about a looming crisis was reached, and 2008, when the lights actually went out for the first time.

Seven years later there is still no security of electricity supply. And, relative to water, electricity is not a particularly hard problem to solve.

Our next crisis, WATER

Yemeni President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi has submitted his resignation amid a standoff with Houthi rebels that has seen him surrounded in his own residence, Reuters reports citing a government source.

Hadi stepped down just after Prime Minister Khaled Baha had offered his government's resignation saying it did not want to be dragged into "an unconstructive political maze."

Baha was apparently referring to a stand-off between the president and the Houthis – a powerful Shia movement whose gunmen are in position outside his residence.

Yemeni president resigns after standoff with Shia rebels

Senior Houthi official has welcomed the president's resignation.

The Islamic State has created an English language group of fighters, whose aim is to bring the terrorist organization's fight to the West. The first step is to send foreign fighters back home after they have completed their training.

The brigade, which is known as the 'Anwar al-Awlaki Battalion,' is made up solely of English speaking jihadists. The Islamic State (IS, formerly ISIS/ISIL) now want to use this group of Islamists to plan and carryout terrorist attacks in English speaking countries. The anti-Islamic State group, Raqqa Is Being Slaughtered Silently, made the claims, reported by the International Business Times.

ISIS sets up English-speaking brigade to target Western countries

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More than 5,000 people have died since April as a result of the conflict in Ukraine, according to the UN. The news came hours after the leader of the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic said he reject a truce with Kiev and will continue to fight.

The United Nations human rights office made the announcement on Friday saying that 262 people had died in the last nine days alone. This, they noted, is the "most deadly period" since the Minsk agreement in September, which should have paved the way towards a ceasefire.

5,000+ killed in Ukraine: UN concerned, Donetsk rebel leader talks of 'offensive'

"The significant escalation in hostilities has taken the toll to 5,086 individuals and we fear the real figure may be considerably higher," UN human rights spokesman Rupert Colville told a news briefing in Geneva.

Social media users have come down heavily on the former CEO of Target after it turned out he reportedly received a walk-away package worth about the same as what was offered to all 17,600 employees of the chain, which is closing its stores in Canada. Gregg Steinhafel took a total of \$61 million from Target, including stock options, his pension, and a total severance of nearly \$16 million, when he left the company last May, according to Fortune's calculations. Target's "employee trust" package for its Canadian workers meanwhile amounts to \$56 million, as CBC reports, designed to provide each worker with 16 weeks of pay.

17,600 Canadian employees ready to eat former Target exec alive over severance pay

Steinhafel, who spent 35 years with the company, officially stepped down because of the massive credit data breach, in which hackers stole the personal information of up to 110 million customers, including names, mailing addresses, telephone numbers and email addresses in 2013. In the board's statement, the company noted that Steinhafel "held himself personally accountable" for the incident, which cost the mega US retailer a significant drop in profit. According to the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO), CEOs in America typically earn 354 times as much as the average worker at the company. On average, American CEOs earn just over \$12 million per year while the average worker gets \$34,645.

Polls concluded across Europe, following a series of deadly Islamist attacks in Paris earlier this month, revealed a record level of terror fear not only in France, but in other countries as well.

As many as 93 percent of French people thought the terror threat in the country was "high," which is a 20 percent increase compared to last June, a recent online survey by the French Institute of Public Opinion (IFOP) said.

The possibility of new attacks in France is considered "very high" by 49 percent among the thousands of people who participated in the poll.

Despite the police expressing confidence in their ability to deal with the threat, only 51 percent of French citizens believe that Francois Hollande's government has what it takes to "confront and fight terrorism."

Terror fears peak in Europe after Charlie Hebdo attacks

In the few days following the Charlie Hebdo attack, the sales of tranquilizers jumped by 20 percent in France, Celtipharm, a health data consultancy firm, said

Tokyo Electric Power Co (TEPCO) said it won't be able to process the radioactive water stored at the crippled Fukushima nuclear plant by March, as the operator had promised earlier. The company's president said the delay is due to technical problems.

"We took the promise with the prime minister very seriously, but we cannot fulfill our commitment. The problem of toxic water is the biggest source of concern for the local residents and we are extremely sorry to be unable to keep our word," said TEPCO's president, Naomi Hirose at a meeting with Takayuki Ueda, the Japanese Agency for Natural Resources and Energy commissioner, as quoted by Kyodo news agency on Friday.

"At our current pace we will complete it by mid-May," he added.

TEPCO has been battling the contaminated water problem since the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant was damaged following an earthquake and tsunami on March 11, 2011. The catastrophe was the world's worst nuclear disaster since Chernobyl in 1986.

Three of the plant's reactors suffered nuclear meltdown. The water used to keep the reactors cool is tainted with radioactive material and has been since leaking and mixing with groundwater seeping through the premises.

International concern is growing over the spread of Fusarium wilt, known as Panama disease, as there are fears it could destroy entire countries' plantations of the Cavendish banana – the most popular and exported variety of the fruit in the world.

READ MORE: Scientists blame climate change for world's biggest trees dying

The destructive fungus, *Fusarium oxysporum* f.sp. *cubense* Tropical Race 4, or TR4, had been restricted to five Asian Cavendish producing countries as well as Australia, but has now spread to the Middle East and Mozambique.

The fungus blocks water carrying vessels in the plant and produces deadly toxins so that the plant wilts and dies.

It also contaminates the soil around the banana plants for several decades meaning that no Cavendish bananas can be grown there until the land is fungus free. While other crops can be grown and some native banana types are immune to the strain, it remains a serious concern to commercial growers where the Cavendish is grown for Western and domestic markets.

The United Nations has condemned Israel for illegally demolishing houses of Palestinians in East Jerusalem, leaving 77 people, over half of whom are children, homeless in three days.

"Demolitions that result in forced evictions and displacement run counter to Israel's obligations under international law and create unnecessary suffering and tension," the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said in statement Friday.

The demolitions took place in East Jerusalem and the districts of Ramallah, Jericho and Hebron, according to the statement.

READ MORE: Creeping construction: Israel to build 600 new settlements in the West bank

"Some of the demolished structures were provided by the international community to support vulnerable families," said James Rawley, who is also UN Deputy Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, urging Israel that the demolitions "must stop immediately".

In the 2014, Israel carried out a record number of demolitions in the west bank and East Jerusalem and area known as Area C, which is under full Israeli control.

"In 2014, according to OCHA figures, the Israeli authorities destroyed 590 Palestinian-owned structures in Area C and east Jerusalem, displacing 1,177 people — the highest level of displacement in the West Bank since OCHA began systematically monitoring the issue in 2008," OCHA said.

Fukushima operator to miss toxic water clean-up deadline, suspends till May

World's most popular banana faces eradication by deadly fungus

UN: Dozens of children homeless after Israel illegally demolished Palestinian houses

Greece's far-right radical party Golden Dawn is expected to come third in the parliamentary election. The anti-immigrant party with Nazi roots is showing remarkable staying power, despite most of its members and lawmakers facing criminal charges.

Far-right Golden Dawn party takes third place in Greece elections

News of Golden Dawn's all-but-official success comes as the far-left Syriza and the Independent Greeks parties, which came in first and second, reached an agreement on the formation of a coalition government

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Far-right Golden Dawn party (anti immigration) takes third place in Greece elections

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The website of the troubled Malaysia Airlines has sustained an attack by the Lizard Squad – a group allegedly aligning itself with ISIS. "Hacked by Cyber Caliphate" appears on the homepage underneath a picture of a well-dressed lizard in a top hat.

The entire screen of the homepage is black, save for the photo of the lizard, which is also the symbol of a group that hacked the Sony PlayStation and X-Box networks last month.

"Hacked by LIZARD-SQUAD – OFFICIAL CYBER CALIPHATE" appears below the lizard, while the internet browser tab delivers a cruel joke: "404 – Plane Not Found", referring to both the internet error code and the still-missing flight MH370, which took 239 people with it.

Malaysia Airlines website 'Hacked by Cyber Caliphate'

Some 17,000 supporters of the controversial movement PEGIDA joined the weekly Sunday March at its stronghold Dresden, Germany. The image of the movement was hurt last week when its co-founder resigned over a Hitler lookalike photo.

The rally was the first since threats against the life of co-founder and former leader of the Patriotic Europeans against the Islamization of the West (PEGIDA) Lutz Bachmann prompted city police to ban last week's rally. Bachmann since resigned after a photo of him with a haircut and mustache resembling Adolf Hitler's surfaced on Facebook.

Thousands in Dresden 'anti-Islamization' march despite leader's Hitler-photo fallout

Dresden police said as many as 17,000 people walked the streets of the city. PEGIDA's largest march attracted 25,000 on January 21 in the wake of the Islamist attack in Paris.

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Following Syriza's Greek election triumph, left-wing campaigners from Britain's Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) are set to hold a celebration and solidarity demonstration at the Greek embassy in London.

They will assemble at the embassy on Monday night to both celebrate Syriza's victory and advocate anti-austerity measures in the UK.

"If they can vote against austerity there, we must provide an anti-austerity choice here," the group has said.

The demonstration, however, comes as international investment firms express concern at the economic repercussions of Syriza's ascent.

TUSC aims to field 1,000 candidates in local elections and stand a further 100 for seats in Westminster in the 2015 general election. It claims that its election challenge will represent the biggest socialist challenge in Britain since 1945.

TUSC features a number of former Labour Party councilors who were suspended for their opposition to austerity measures, which are broadly accepted by the Labour leadership as necessary.

If they can do it in Greece, we can do it here! British left stage Greek embassy demo

Dave Nellist, former socialist Labour MP for Coventry South East from 1983 to 1992, was expelled from Labour at a time when the party's stance was shifting to the right

A wave of protests from supporters and opponents of the 'anti-Islamization' PEGIDA movement continued in Germany on Monday night, with rival civil marches taking place in Berlin, Dresden, and Frankfurt.

Anti-Islamization' & 'pro-tolerance' activists march in Berlin

Over 550 activists united under the motto "Berlin patriots against the Islamization of the West" (Bärgida) gathered in the center of the German capital to march on the Federal Chancellery and highlight their concern over the "unfair" treatment of native Germans. Police have deployed tear gas to disperse some 2,000 protesters, who rallied in Kosovo's capital, Pristina. The demonstration called for the dismissal of a Serb minister accused of insulting Albanian war victims.

Tear gas at Kosovo rally demanding minister resign over war victims comment

Aleksandar Jablanovic, the minister for communities and returns of Kosovo, sparked anger earlier this month when he branded as "savages" a group of Albanians, who blocked a group of Serb pilgrims from entering an Orthodox Christian Church in the town of Djakovica.

The Islamic State extremist group called on Muslims to initiate new attacks against Western targets, saying it would regard as "enemies" those who are able to carry out such assaults but fail to do so.

ISIS urges new attacks on 'infidel West' following Charlie Hebdo massacre

Abu Mohamed al-Adnani, spokesman and high-ranking leader of Islamic State (IS, formerly ISIS), called on Muslims to carry out attacks on "the Crusaders," while promising to go after them in their "Christian bastions," the recording said, as reported by AFP.

Oxfam GB has called for a multimillion dollar post-Ebola "Marshall Plan" to aid the recovery of Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea, which have been worst affected by the Ebola outbreak.

More than 8,600 people have died, the vast majority of them in the three West African countries, since the outbreak began in March last year.

"People need cash in their hands now, they need good jobs to feed their families in the near future and decent health, education and other essential services," said Oxfam's executive director, Winnie Byanyima. "They've gone through hell, they cannot be left high and dry."

She added: "The world cannot walk away now that, thankfully, cases of this deadly disease are dropping. Failure to help these countries after surviving Ebola will condemn them to a double disaster. The world was late in waking up to the Ebola crisis, there can be no excuses for not helping to put these economies and lives back together."

The Marshall Plan was the post-World War II scheme for European recovery.

Ebola crisis: Oxfam calls for multimillion dollar 'Marshall Plan'

Oxfam said there were three main priorities for any successful recovery package: Immediate cash to millions of families affected by the crisis; investment in jobs; and budget support for essential services such as health, education, water and sanitation.

The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) has come under fire for delaying the release of a report into the crisis rescue of Halifax Bank of Scotland (HBOS) until after the general election in May.

Senior Labour politicians, bankers and financial regulators are expected to receive damning criticism for their role in the bank's near-crash in 2008.

Originally scheduled for publication in April 2013, the deadline was pushed back to the end of 2013 last summer and is now unlikely to be published until September at the earliest.

Business Secretary Vince Cable attacked the delay, saying the employees who lost their jobs as a result of irresponsible management at HBOS deserve better.

This latest delay is believed to be caused by a procedure called "Maxwellisation," named for 20th century British media mogul Robert Maxwell, whereby individuals facing criticism in an official report are allowed to respond before its publication.

Disgraced former HBOS executives Andy Hornby, James Crosby and Lord Stevenson are expected to come under fire for their role in the bank's downfall

Damning report on banking collapse stalled until after UK election

Plunging oil prices, even as low as \$30 per barrel, won't offset the world's largest-listed oil company, Rosneft's investment and development plans, according to the company's VP.

"The company can weather \$30 per barrel prices, but problems with the Russian budget will arise," Rosneft Vice president Viktor Ishayev told reporters at a press conference in Khabarovsk.

Rosneft, Russia's biggest oil exporter contributes 3.5 trillion rubles (\$51.7 billion) to the revenue side of the of the country's 14.2 trillion ruble (\$210 billion) revenue budget.

Oil prices are still teetering on a six year low, with Brent and WTI both dropping below \$45 a barrel for the first time since 2009. On Tuesday, WTI traded near the \$45 mark, while Brent has made slight gains to \$48 a barrel.

Urals crude, Russia's key export blend, usually trades slightly lower than Brent. The Kremlin's 2015 draft budget assumed Russia' key Urals export blend at \$100 per barrel, which has now been revised to \$70 per barrel, as of Tuesday.

Rosneft says its can weather \$30 oil

The rapid devaluation of the ruble plays into Rosneft's favor, according to Ishayev.

Russia and Turkey have agreed on the route of the 'Turkish Stream' pipeline under the Black Sea. The first gas pipe with a capacity of 15.75 billion cubic meters will be operational by December 2016.

Six hundred and sixty kilometers of the new Turkish Stream pipeline will go through the old South Stream corridor and a further 250 kilometers will head in the direction of the European part of Turkey.

The four threads which make up the pipeline will have a capacity of 63 billion cubic meters, Gazprom said in a statement following Tuesday's meeting between CEO Aleksey Miller and the Turkish Minister of Energy and Natural Resources Taner Yildiz.

The company will apply to carry out design and exploration work in Turkish territorial waters on Wednesday, January 28.

Russia will pay for the laying of the undersea pipeline while the capacity within Turkish territory will be developed jointly. The participating shares will be discussed at further meetings.

Russia and Turkey agree on new gas route

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Russia and Turkey agree on new gas route

Pollution in England is damaging its economy, an independent advisory group has warned, as it urged the government to rethink its attitudes to environmental wellbeing.

The Natural Capital Committee has warned that population growth will increase environmental pressures. It said a 25-year plan was needed to improve air quality and make cities more environmentally friendly.

The committee also advised creating large spaces for woodlands and wetlands to protect from extreme weather as well as improving wellbeing.

"There is now a great opportunity to improve the wellbeing and prosperity of both urban and rural populations and restore some of the natural capital that has been lost," said the committee's chairman, Dieter Helm.

Pollution damaging English economy, public health – experts

British charities say they have been targeted in a "subtle" yet "menacing" fashion by prominent political figures for publicly criticizing the coalition's austerity policies. Others are silenced by gagging clauses in government contracts.

The coalition's ramped up efforts to silence dissent poses serious difficulties for charities that compete for government contracts to provide public services.

Gagging clauses embedded in such contracts have allegedly been used by the coalition to prevent voluntary groups from engaging in unwelcomed public debate.

A recent report published by the National Coalition for Independent Action (NCIA) examines these trends and their implications. The research, entitled "Voluntary Services in Austerity UK," was conducted by Dr Mike Aiken. It explores charities' declining campaigning role in an increased climate of privatization.

UK govt 'gags & intimidates' charities that criticize austerity policies

The report reveals that voluntary groups embroiled in government contracts regularly face threats to remain silent on key government policies

Britain's pubs are closing down because of Somali immigrants, a government minister has said, arguing that migrants are replacing white working class communities in the UK.

Stephen Williams, the Liberal Democrat communities minister, said that immigrants – most of whom do not drink alcohol – are partially responsible for the pub trade declining in some areas of the UK.

Speaking to the House of Commons about aims to protect pubs in local communities, the minister unveiled new government plans to stop pubs from being converted into housing or other commercial uses.

Williams – who is also the MP for Bristol West, which has 10,000-15,000 Somali residents – was referring to a clause in the Infrastructure Bill, which would allow people to have more say over the planning process of commercial businesses in their areas.

"In my own constituency, lots of pubs have closed but it is usually because of demographic change," the minister said.

"Particularly in some parts of my constituency, which used to have... 'a white working class community' 20 or 30 years ago are now populated primarily by recently-arrived Somalis and other people."

MP blames Somali immigrants for death of British pubs

The minister added that while some pubs have been converted into other commercial sites or private accommodation, others remain derelict.

Protesters opposed to a major, multi-national trade deal being negotiated in secret by a dozen countries – including the United States – hijacked a US Senate hearing early Tuesday to speak out against the proposal.

Capitol Police removed no fewer than three demonstrators Tuesday morning during testimony delivered before the Senate Committee on Finance by US Trade Representative Michael Froman concerning the controversial Trans-Pacific Partnership, or TPP.

Froman had just begun making his opening statements when a protester in the Senate gallery got out of her seat and interrupted the ambassador.

Anti-trade deal protesters hijack Senate TPP hearing

"You are not telling the American people the truth," said the woman.

Leading Jewish thinkers in France are warning that a doubling of anti-Semitism in the country and an alarming rise in anti-Jewish violence may lead to a new mass "exodus."

Mass 'exodus' of Jews from France probable as anti-Semitic attacks double

"Jihadism and Nazism... are two faces of the same evil," Moshe Kantor, head of the European Jewish Congress, told a Holocaust forum in Prague on Monday, as he warned France was "close to" a new exodus.

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Russia's response to a possible cut-off from the SWIFT international banking payment system will be "unrestricted," Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev vowed. The West is pushing for hitting Moscow with more sanctions as the Ukraine crisis deteriorates.

Russian PM vows 'unrestricted' response if banned from SWIFT payment system

"We will see what happens, but of course if such decisions are made, I want to note that our economic reaction and generally any other reaction will be unrestricted," the Russian prime minister said on Tuesday, calling on the government to "work out concrete decisions which would help our economy in those conditions."

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The leader of the far-right Sweden Democrats party has compared Islamists with Nazis, saying Islamism was perhaps a greater threat for the country. The statement has caused controversy with various Swedish religious communities.

Islamists greater threat than Nazis – Swedish right-wing MP

The leader of the anti-immigration party, Mattias Karlsson, said in interview to Swedish TV that one must take all ideologies seriously and fight them in every way. Nazism was “terrible” but Islamist ideology can even be more dangerous for the world, he said.

“If you look at what is happening in the world right now, you cannot hide the fact that Islamism is a major threat to human rights and democracy throughout the world,” Karlsson stated as quoted as saying by The Local.

Israeli jets struck several targets in Syria in response to Hezbollah rocket fire into the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights, the IDF said. The exchange came as Iran warned Tel Aviv of crossing a “red line” with the murder of an Iranian general in Syria.

Israel launches airstrikes on Syria following rocket attack

The Israeli Air Force (IAF) announced striking Syrian army artillery targets late on Tuesday night in response to an earlier rocket attack on Golan Heights and Mount Hermon.

“The IDF views the Syrian regime as responsible for what occurs in its territory, and will act at any time and any way it sees fit to protect the citizens of Israel,” the IDF said.

Israel's retaliation followed two rocket attacks believed to be perpetrated by Hezbollah in the northern Golan Heights on Tuesday afternoon. While the projectiles exploded in open territory and caused no damage or casualties, some 1,000 visitors to the Mount Hermon ski resort still fled for cover.

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Iran and Russia are planning to switch their bilateral trade to national currencies for which the states will create a joint bank or a mutual account, Iran's ambassador to Russia, Mehdi Sanaei, has announced.

Iran, Russia to create ‘joint bank’ for trade in national currencies – ambassador

“Both sides plan to create a joint bank, or joint account, so that payments may be made in rubles and rials and there is an agreement to create a working group [for this],” Ambassador Sanaei told Sputnik on Tuesday.

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In the wake of warnings from city and state officials about an impending and “historic” snowstorm, New Yorkers dutifully prepared for the worst. Grocery store shelves were emptied. Cars were banned from the roads. Even public transportation was shuttered.

The problem? For much of New York City – as well as New Jersey and Philadelphia – the “storm of the century” never materialized.

Storm of the century’ a bust in NYC as blizzard piles on other states

On Tuesday, most New Yorkers woke up to snowfall that measured in inches – not feet. The subways and buses were operating again, and many wondered just what all the fuss was about leading up to the blizzard. Various parts of New York City saw between four and 10 inches of snow. In New Jersey and Philadelphia, where more than a foot of snow was predicted, just three to five inches fell

Activist group Anonymous has joined Colorado protesters in asking for transparency during the investigation into the death of a teenage girl shot by police. The 16-year-old was driving a stolen car, which Denver police say she used to strike an officer.

A police officer responding to a call of a suspicious car in the Park Hill neighborhood of Denver early Monday morning arrived at the alley location, ran the vehicle's license plate, determined the car was stolen and called for backup, Police Chief Robert White told reporters at the scene.

"As the officer exited the vehicle, the driver of the [stolen] vehicle struck one of the officers in the leg," White said.

Protests held for teen girl killed by Colorado police while driving stolen car

He said both officers then fired several shots at the teenaged driver, adding that a total of five "very young" people were in the ca

The Chinese currency is the 5th most-used currency in international payments, according to the SWIFT network responsible for international financial transactions. Breaking into the top 5 is symbolic to balance dollar-denominated payments.

In 2014, yuan payments doubled by 102 percent, and increased by 20.3 percent in December alone, compared to the same time period last year, SWIFT said Wednesday. The yuan, or renminbi, surpassed the Canadian and Australian dollars.

"It is a great testimony to the internationalization of the renminbi and confirms its transition from an 'emerging' to a 'business as usual' payment currency," Wim Raymaekers, Head of Banking Markets at SWIFT said in a statement.

Chinese yuan now top 5 major intl payment currency

2.2 percent of all SWIFT payments made in December were yuan-denominated, according to the Brussels-based payment operator. Ahead of the yuan are the US dollar, euro, British pound, and Japanese yen, which has a 2.7 percent share.

The Singaporean dollar tumbled to a 4-year low against the US dollar after the Monetary Authority unexpectedly stymied currency appreciation. The move is just the latest in the trend of weaker currencies in 2015.

The unexpected move sent the Singapore dollar to 1.3570 against the US dollar, the lowest since 2010. The last time the bank intentionally slashed the appreciate rate of the currency was in 2011. Emerging Asian currencies - such as the Malaysian ringgit and the Thai baht - dropped on the move.

In a surprise statement Wednesday, the Monetary Authority of Singapore said it would reduce the band of the currency.

Singapore latest to join currency wars, hits 2010 low

Singapore dollar's appreciation against a weighted basket of currencies, which the bank keeps confidential. The announcement was made far ahead of its scheduled meeting in April.

Two million customers will be eligible for compensation from some of Britain's biggest banks after being deliberately sold useless credit card insurance policies.

A compensation agreement was reached between the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA), retail banks and credit card issuers, which could see individual claimants receiving as much as £200 apiece.

Credit card insurance was marketed as a safe way to protect against the fraudulent use of your card in the event it was lost or stolen.

However, such insurance was useless because banks are already obliged to cover customers for fraudulent expenses in the majority of cases.

Fundamentally corrupt': UK banks slammed for selling pointless card insurance

In a damning criticism, Liberal Democrat peer Lord Thurso condemned sales practices used by Britain's high street banks as being "fundamentally corrupt."

Scotland has imposed a moratorium on shale gas planning permits while an assessment on the impact of shale drilling is completed, ministers told the Scottish Parliament on Wednesday.

Energy Minister Fergus Ewing told Holyrood MSPs that an investigation into the effects of fracking for shale on public health and the environment had been launched and they would not be issuing any permits until its completion.

"We are imposing a moratorium on granting planning consents," the minister, a member of the Scottish National Party (SNP), said.

While there are no current plans to extract shale in Scotland, the moratorium also means none will be approved until it is lifted.

SNP govt imposes shale gas moratorium in Scotland

The White House has called for increased investment to fight antibiotic-resistant bacteria to prevent resurgent diseases once thought eradicated and new superbugs that similarly gain strength thanks to the modern penchant for profligate antibiotic use.

President Obama will ask the US Congress to nearly double funding that combats antibiotic resistance to \$1.2 billion, the White House announced Tuesday, calling the matter "one of the most pressing public health issues facing the world today." The announcement was a follow-up to an executive order the president signed in September that launched efforts against antibiotic-resistant bacteria.

White House wants \$1.2bn to fight antibiotic-resistant bacteria, looming superbug epidemic

The proposal called for funding research into new antibiotics, increased monitoring of infection outbreaks, new resistance efforts at veterans' and military hospitals, and efforts to curb antibiotic overprescription.

The French government has released a graphic video that "deciphers jihadist propaganda" in order to discourage young people from going to the Middle East to fight alongside extremists by saying they will find "hell on earth."

The video with the hashtag #StopJihadism was published in a bid to counter calls to join extremist groups in the Middle East, including the Islamic State militants who are rampaging through parts of Syria and Iraq.

The beginning of the video shows popular jihadist groups on social media and an anonymous invite to join the terrorists saying "the truth is out there and now is the time to go... if you want more info just give me your number..."

French govt launches campaign against jihadists

The water level at Lake Baikal, the world's deepest body of freshwater, is at its lowest in decades and nearing a critical threshold, authorities in Russia's Irkutsk region warn. Residents are advised to cut down their water and electricity consumption.

The power-saving and water-preserving mode is recommended due to a decrease in Lake Baikal's water level, which now stands at 456.07 meters above sea level, according to the Emergencies Ministry.

The critical indicator for the lake's minimum acceptable water level for economic activity is set at 456 meters. A similar situation was recorded back in 1982, when the level of Lake Baikal dropped to a record low of 455.27 meters.

"The depletion of the water level in Lake Baikal affects the deepness of the Angara River, on which the Irkutsk hydroelectric power station stands. The decrease of water in the upper pool affects the operation of hydraulic units of the power plant. Therefore, the Emergency Commission is asking Irkutsk citizens to limit the consumption of water and electricity," the Irkutsk mayor's office said on Wednesday.

Lake Baikal's water level nears critical low

was compiled and funded with "malicious intent".

Read: Broken Blue Line

National police commissioner Riah Phiyega objected to her photograph being used in the report, which linked her leadership to high levels of criminality in the police, according to a sample studied.

The South African Institute for Race Relations (SAIRR) did the research for the report, titled Broken Blue Line, and Afriforum, which regularly campaigns for what it calls "minority rights", funded it.

The SAIRR describes itself as a "classically liberal think-tank" that aims to contribute towards policy solutions to problems the country is facing.

The report's methodology involved scanning media reports to identify incidents of police involvement in serious or violent crime. The SAIRR studied 100 such reports, looking for "patterns of behaviour".

Easily identified

It was "easy" to identify 100 incidences and this process took less than a week, the SAIRR said.

Of these 100 reported incidences, the SAIRR said 32 related to murder and attempted murder, 22 related to armed robbery, 26 to rape and 20 to other crimes.

Police commissioner rejects SAIRR report on SAPS criminality

But police spokesperson, Lieutenant General Solomon Makgale, said the SAPS did not Political will and administrative and regulatory changes are needed to reduce the country's water problems.

Eight ways to fix our water woes

Apocalyptic images of the Siberian town of Dudinka, where a powerful storm has left residents without water or electricity, have reemerged on social media. Users are pleading for help from local authorities.

-40C in Siberia: Town buried in ice, residents turn to social media for help

Harsh winds disabled power lines, cutting off the hot water supply to the town's 22,000 residents in mid-January. With temperatures plunging to around -40C and water from pipes frozen on the streets, a state of emergency has been declared in the small northern town.

The EU is expected to extend and add new sanctions against Russia Thursday. They could include blocking Russia from the SWIFT global payment network, or further actions to block Moscow from Western lending.

Further sanctions against Russia will be revealed later Thursday, when EU foreign ministers meet in Brussels.

EU to tighten noose on Russia, expected to extend sanctions

The EU is worried by the recent gains by anti-Kiev rebels, and the 30 civilian casualties from a rocket attack in Mariupol last weekend, which both the anti-Kiev rebels and governments forces blame each other for. This was the latest surge in violence in Ukraine since the September ceasefire.

Just weeks after raising concerns that a new rival petrol and diesel storage plant in Cape Town could close down their Western Cape refinery and storage operation, Chevron announced that it would be spending more than R400m on "maintenance and safety inspection" at its refinery.

READ: Gloves off on Chevron's Cape dominance

In a statement released to Fin24, the company said maintenance and safety inspections are carried out annually to ensure the safe and efficient running of the plant. The process this year would generate some 3 000 additional jobs.

The inspection will take place from February 13 to the end of March 2015.

"Supply constraints are carefully mitigated through the building up of strategic fuel supply in the time leading up to the planned maintenance and safety inspection," said Doug Pottenger, general manager at the Chevron Cape Town refinery.

Chevron to spend R400m

"Investing in the maintenance of the refinery ensures adequate product supply across all our markets. This year Chevron will invest R412m, a majority of which will be directly injected into the Western Cape economy," he said.

China's total installed wind energy reached a total of 114.76GW at the end of 2014 after a whopping 23.3GW of new capacity was added for the year, Deutsche Bank reports.

The new figures, released by China's Wind Energy Association, mark a 45.1 per cent increase in added capacity year-on-year, and a 25.5 per cent increase in the country's accumulated installed wind power. 32204

According to the NEA, by end-2014, the nation's cumulative grid-connected wind energy total came to 95.8GW, while 18.7GW of the 23.35GW new capacity added in 2014 was connected to the grid.

China installed 23.3GW new wind in 2014, nearly double 2013 total

Bloombe

DESPITE a collapse in the oil price and India raising an export subsidy, indications are that the world sugar market is about to shift into deficit territory for a few years, Illovo Sugar MD Gavin Dagleish said on Friday.

With world supplies consistently surpassing demand for some years, sugar prices have been dented since reaching a 30-year high of US\$36.08c a pound in 2011. The international price for sugar was 14.76c on Friday, though forecasts are that excess supply is being reined in as major producers such as Brazil continue to close unprofitable mills. Brazil, the world's biggest producer, last year had the fewest number of mills operating in six seasons.

"There's lots of indications all over that the effect of increased demand, and stagnant if not declining production, has now closed that supply gap, and that we'll be going into several years of deficits," Mr Dagleish said.

Australian research firm Green Pool last week forecast global consumption to rise 1.7% this year, while saying production would be held back by "five successive years of output exceeding demand".

The world's two biggest producers are Brazil and India, though both have come under pressure with depressed prices.

Illovo last year hoped the Brazilian government's move to more market-friendly policies — where it allowed a rare rise in domestic fuel prices — would encourage its growers to produce more ethanol and less sugar.

Sugar deficit expected after production cuts

PROTESTS are set to continue in Malamulele this week, angry residents say, after the community was told that they could not have their own municipality.

The community learnt on Friday that a Municipal Demarcation Board feasibility study had found that a stand-alone local government administration in the Limpopo town would not be viable. Residents of the town have been demanding their own municipality for 14 years. There had been protests throughout last month. On Friday, protesters clashed with police, who fired rubber bullets.

Protests 'to resume in Malamulele'

Residents complained that they received poor service delivery from the Thulamela local municipality compared to services provided in the Thohoyandou area.

Police have arrested over 50 demonstrators in Vienna, who were protesting against a ball, sponsored by the right-wing Freedom Party of Austria. Six policemen were injured during scuffles, while around 5,000 people attended the protest.

Organizers of the protests say that around 10,000 demonstrators were present, while police said only half this figure turned up. Seven people were injured during the protest — six law enforcement officers and one demonstrator, while over 50 arrests were made, DPA news agency reported.

dozens arrested as crowds protest Vienna's right party-funded ball

"This is not a harmless dance event, but a meeting where Europe's extreme right comes to network," said one of the left-wing activists who organized the protests.

Al-Qaeda in Yemen says France has surpassed the US to become the main enemy of Islam. The group says the US has been "weakening" in recent years, and also claims to be behind the recent terror attacks on Charlie Hebdo journalists in Paris.

Yemeni Al-Qaeda says France replaced US as 'main enemy of Islam'

The announcement was made by Ibrahim al-Rubaish in an audio message that was published on YouTube. It claimed that with the "weakening" of the United States over the past few years, France has surpassed the US in the "war on Islam," AFP reported.

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Tens of thousands of Spaniards have taken to the streets of central Madrid in support of Podemos, a leftist political party campaigning on an anti-austerity platform. The party’s popularity has soared in the wake of the Syriza victory in Greece.

Spaniards hold mass rally for leftist Podemos ahead of elections

Podemos, which means “We can,” is currently leading in opinion polls, ahead of both of Spain’s mainstream parties as the regional, municipal and national elections approach.

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Islamic State militants have beheaded captive Japanese journalist Kenji Goto, after Tokyo’s negotiations with IS reached a “deadlock.” The gruesome video of the execution appears to be genuine, Japan said, vowing justice for those responsible.

Inhumane & contemptible’: ISIS beheads Japanese hostage

The horrifying video shows a hooded man standing over another man – apparently Goto – with a knife held to his throat. It then shows footage of a body with a head placed on it.

Thousands of people have taken part in the ‘March for Homes’ in London, to demand solutions to the escalating housing crisis.

Groups of protesters gathered to listen to speeches at Elephant and Castle and Shoreditch before marching towards City Hall.

Demonstrators carried banners reading “People before profit” and “Build council homes. Take the wealth of the 1%.”

As rents, evictions, and homelessness continue to rise, campaigners are demanding that London Mayor Boris Johnson take measures to create a fairer housing market. Protesters are angry with what they believe is the failure of politicians to take meaningful action to tackle the crisis.

Thousands march in London to protest housing crisis

An estimated 2,000 people rallied around City Hall, urging the mayor to build more council homes, control private rents, and put an end to the demolition of housing estates

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As rents, evictions, and homelessness continue to rise, campaigners are demanding that London Mayor Boris Johnson take measures to create a fairer housing market. Protesters are angry with what they believe is the failure of politicians to take meaningful action to tackle the crisis.

Thousands march in London to protest housing crisis

An estimated 2,000 people rallied around City Hall, urging the mayor to build more council homes, control private rents, and put an end to the demolition of housing estates

Thousands of people gathered on Sunday in Budapest to demand PM Viktor Orban's resignation on the eve of German Chancellor Angela Merkel's visit. Orban has been critical of the EU for alienating Russia and plunging into a painful trade war with it.

Thousands protest against Hungarian PM ahead of Merkel's visit

About 3,000 people rallied in front of the Hungarian parliament holding national and European Union flags chanted "Spring comes – Orban goes." Many held placards calling for an end to corruption and protesting against the current policies of the ruling party.

The SA POST OFFICE expects to post a loss of R1.3bn for the FY to end-Mar. 2015, Beeld reported today. For this and other reasons auditors expressed doubts that the parastatal will still be a going concern by the end of the current FY. The annual report was handed to parliament last week, four months late. Fruitless and wasteful expenditure amounted to R41m, and unauthorised expenditure R213.6m. SAPO lost R5.3m to fraud relating to the institution's treasury, and R5.5m to "commercial crime". In FY2014 the parastatal posted a loss of over R358m. On the positive side the POST OFFICE is still solvent, with its total assets at end-Mar. 2014 exceeding its liabilities by more than R2.3bn.

SAPO may cease to be going concern

Kenya's government will inject 500m shillings to bail out cash-strapped MUMIAS SUGAR, Agriculture Minister FELIX KOSKEI said on Thursday. The cash is meant to help turn around the struggling business, which accounts for close to a third of Kenya's annual sugar output.

Kenya offers bailout to rescue Mumias sugar

NAMIBIA POWER CORPORATION says construction of a planned \$300m gas-fired electricity plant will start before mid-2015. The 250MW project will be commissioned in the following 18 months, NAMPOWER MD PAULINUS SHILAMBA said on Friday. The plant, to be located in the Erongo region, will use fuel sourced from a US-based gas trader. "Gas and heavy-fuel oils were found to be the viable options for bridging the anticipated power supply gap in the short to medium term, taking into account the required operating regime of the plant post the commissioning of the Kudu project", SHILAMBA said. NAMPOWER plans to have the plant operational toward the end of 2016 or early 2017 to bridge supply imbalances ahead of its planned 1 050MW Kudu gas-to-power plant.

Nampower to start building gas-fired plant

RIO TINTO has told staff in Zimbabwe that government taxes might force it to close its only diamond mine in the country. The Murowa Diamond Mine was valued at \$279m by DEUTSCHE BANK in 2013, and produced 101 000ct of gems in Q4 2014. "The government has slated a regime of taxes that include ground rental fees, which are weighing down the business. The management team is continuously engaging government and hope for some positive outcome from this process; else the viability of Murowa Diamonds as a going concern will be impacted", Murowa MD ZEBRA KASETE said in a letter to staff on Monday. Land rental for diamond mines is \$3 000/ha and Murowa owns more than 30 000ha, costing the company about \$109m/year, a source said. In addition, there is a 15% royalty on gem sales as well as other taxes including corporate tax and a levy used to fund combating the HIV epidemic in Zimbabwe. Mines Minister WALTER CHIDAKWA said he was meeting with the finance minister "to discuss that 15% royalty issue".

Rio's Zim mine may face closure because of taxes

Russia accounted for a third of central banks' gold purchases in 2014 as the country spent more on the metal than at any time since the break-up of the Soviet Union. Central banks around the world bought a net 461t of gold in 2014 - 13% higher y/y and the second-highest level since the collapse of the gold standard in 1971. Moscow's shopping spree of the yellow metal was driven by a desire to shift away from a dependency on the dollar and provide support to the embattled rouble, which has lost half its value against the greenback in the past year. Russia's central bank purchased 152t of gold worth \$6.1bn at current prices - an increase of 123% y/y - in the first 11 months of 2014, according to estimates by metals research group GFMS. Russia's total international reserves amounted to \$385bn at end-Dec., compared with more than \$500bn a year earlier.

Russia buys record amounts of bullion

Far-right nationalists are planning a demonstration in a London borough next month to protest the alleged "Jewification of Great Britain." Anti-fascist groups have pledged to deny marchers "an inch of our streets."

The march, organized by British National Party-linked activist Joshua Bonehill-Paine, is called "Liberate Stamford Hill."

Bonehill-Paine is calling for a "fight back" against what he calls "Jewification and anti-white oppression" in the north London area.

Stamford Hill is home to one of the largest Orthodox Jewish communities in Europe. The march appears to be directly targeting the Shomrim, a Jewish community patrol group which supports the Metropolitan Police.

Bonehill-Paine further claims that "white people" in the area are subjected to abuse.

A Facebook post promoting the march condemns the Jewish patrol group for "enforcing their law" on the area.

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London's population has reached its highest level in history with over 8.6 million people now living in the British capital.

The Greater London Authority says London has now welcomed its 8,615,246th inhabitant, passing its previous peak population from 1939.

Mayor Boris Johnson said the figure was predicted to reach 11 million by 2050. He said the landmark meant London's population had grown by nearly 2 million in the past 25 years.

"London's incredible population boom is testament to the fact that this is the best big city on the planet. With more green space than any other European city, a thriving economy, a low crime rate and a roaring cultural scene it is no surprise that London is the place to be," Johnson said.

"As our incredible city continues to grow, Londoners should rest assured that we are working tirelessly to provide the homes, water, energy, schools, transport, digital connectivity and better quality of life they expect."

The figures show Hillingdon has had the greatest growth in population, while just over 3.8 million (44 percent) of the city's people are now of black or ethnic minority origin, which is expected to increase to 50 percent by 2038

Anti-Semitic protest planned in London

Anti-Semitic protest planned in London

London's bursting! Capital's population hits record 8.6mn

Air pollution in China is still incredibly high – 90 percent of its cities stand below the threshold for air safety standards in 2014.

The “war on pollution” started a year earlier is having some effect, but hazardous emergencies are still in the hundreds.

Only eight of China’s 74 large cities have managed to meet official air safety standards in 2014, according to the Environmental Protection Ministry. This is five cities more than in 2013, when only three cities – Haikou on the island of Hainan, the Tibetan capital of Lhasa and the coastal resort city of Zhoushan – officially met air quality standards.

Seven of the 10 most polluted Chinese cities are around Beijing, despite the capital’s efforts to combat the situation.

There were also “471 environmental emergencies in total in 2014, down 241 from a year earlier,” the ministry also said.

Air in 90% of China’s cities still not safe for breathing, despite ‘war on pollution’

The particles considered to be most harmful to health – PM2.5 – are slowly decreasing, down to 93 micrograms per cubic meter from 106 this year in Beijing, Hebei and Tianjin region last year.

Oil giant BP is set to announce plans on Tuesday detailing cuts worth billions of pounds to its capital spending program, following the dramatic plunge in oil prices and a 40 percent fall in its fourth quarter profits.

The spending cuts follow the axing of hundreds of jobs in Aberdeen and thousands more globally, as the effects of continuing oil price drop plagues the industry.

BP to slash spending by 15% in wake of oil crisis

CEO Bob Dudley is expected to announce a reduction in spending of over 15 percent, bringing the total target to below \$22 billion for 2015. The firm claims it will not, however, be making any further redundancies.

Anti-Islamism PEGIDA rally gathers hundreds in Austria

The German-born PEGIDA movement, which lobbies against the Islamization of Europe, has attracted hundreds of supporters and opponents to the streets of Vienna for its first march in neighboring Austria.

Mercury concentrations in tuna are increasing by nearly four percent a year, according to a new University of Michigan-led study, which suggests rising atmospheric levels of toxin are to blame.

Researchers came to this conclusion using the findings from three previously published reports, which studied yellowfin tuna caught near Hawaii in 1971, 1998 and 2008. In the studies, scientists tested the tuna’s muscle tissues, finding that nearly all of the mercury they detected was the toxic methylmercury.

Mercury levels on the rise in Hawaiian yellowfin tuna

As part of their reexamination of these studies, scientists included yellowfin tuna between 48 and 167 pounds and used a computer model that controlled for the effect of body size.

If Russia keeps its key lending rate above 12% for two quarters or more, domestic banks’ net interest margin will be squeezed by the higher funding costs, MOODY’s said yesterday. The Central Bank of Russia last week cut its key rate to 15% from 17%, and will again review it on Mar. 13. “Despite Friday’s two-percentage-point decrease of the CBR’s key rate, we do not view this level of interest rates as sustainable for banks and expect that the sector will be broadly loss-making in 2015. If the CBR key rate remains 15% and our expectation of a rise in problem loans occurs, we estimate that banks’ aggregate net loss would be around Rbs1tn in 2015, compared with net profits of Rbs600bn in 2014”, MOODY’s said. The rate cut provides marginal relief to banks and borrowers still adjusting to December’s key rate hike from 10.5%, but it also confirms that higher interest rates are no fleeting phenomenon, MOODY’s added. MOODY’s expects higher average lending and funding rates this year, with deposit rates climbing faster than lending rates

Moody’s says Russian banks face loss on margin

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Firestone Energy secures water use agreement

An in-principle agreement has been reached for the Waterberg Coal Project to use treated water from the Paarl water treatment plant, FIRESTONE ENERGY said yesterday. The company said that following talks with the Lephalale municipality, a memorandum of understanding had been tabled between WCP's holder of the rights, titles and interests, SEKOKO COAL, and the municipality. The agreement allowed SEKOKO to use all treated water, barring that currently contracted by the municipality to third parties, from the 10m litre/day plant. Further, discussions surrounding capacity at ports continued, with FIRESTONE ENERGY expecting a formal deal to be executed once final arrangements with offtaking parties had been completed and the volumes for the first five years confirmed.

Randgold looks to expand W Africa ops

RANDGOLD RESOURCES was considering the development of a third underground mine at its Loulo-Goukoto complex in Mali. CEO MARK BRISTOW yesterday said a feasibility study on an underground mine at Goukoto had been completed and that the findings would be made known when the company published its 2014 results later this month. The company was also planning to raise gold output from the existing Yalea and Gara underground and Goukoto openpit mine at the complex this year. BRISTOW noted that currently, Loulo-Goukoto had reserves in excess of 8moz of gold. Based on these reserves, the complex had an estimated mine life up to 2027. "We believe the Senegal-Mali shear zone, which hosts Loulo-Goukoto, is one of the most prolific gold regions in Africa, with the capacity to rival Ghana's Obuasi, and we are continuing our hunt for more multimillion-ounce gold deposits there. We're also expanding our presence in the area through joint ventures with junior miners who have promising early-stage projects", BRISTOW added.

Standard Bank takes knock on UK unit sale

STANDARD BANK yesterday said it sold a stake in its London business at \$75m less than what had been previously agreed. The lender had previously agreed to sell 60% of its London-based STANDARD BANK PLC global markets business for \$765m to the INDUSTRIAL AND COMMERCIAL BANK OF CHINA. Last year, the lender took an \$80m hit from its exposure to the alleged multi-pledging of metals in Qingdao, China. The company yesterday said it retains the right to any recoveries from that exposure. STANDARD BANK also flagged its FY earnings could range between a 5% increase or drop

Vast majority of students turned away

About 200,000 first-year students will sit for their first lectures at South Africa's 24 universities this week while a multitude of unsuccessful candidates will be dealing with rejection, either because they did not meet the requirements, or because the institutions of learning are full.

"First-year university applications tend to far outnumber vacancies," said researchers at the Institute of Race Relations in the 2014-15 South Africa Survey, released last week.

Zimbabwean President elected AU chair

This is in spite of an increase of almost 55,000 available spaces at universities over the past decade.

Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe has been elected as the new chairperson of the African Union (AU).

The Judicial Matters Amendment Bill is expected to enhance organisational efficiency and improve the application of different Acts of Parliament.

Justice and Correctional Services Minister Advocate Michael Masutha will introduce the Bill in Parliament within the next few days.

The Department of Justice and Correctional Services said while the amendments contained in the Bill are mostly technical in nature and seem mundane and without too much significance, their impact collectively will contribute to an improved administration of justice.

"Some amendments will also bring about cost savings. Others will eliminate prevailing uncertainties which have been identified in practice, while others will give impetus to the independence of the Office of the Chief Justice," the department said.

Some of the Acts the Bill aims to amend include the Magistrates' Courts Act, 1944, Prescribed Rate of Interest Act, 1975, the Magistrates Act, 1993, the Judicial Service Commission Act, 1994 and the Special Investigating Units and Special Tribunals Act, 1996.

Amended Bill to improve justice portfolio

France 'prepared to support Greece' in debt renegotiations

France's Socialist government offered support Sunday for Greece's efforts to renegotiate debt for its huge bailout plan, amid renewed fears about Europe's economic stability. Homeless encampments are growing and multiplying in L.A. neighborhoods beyond

More homeless camps are appearing beyond downtown L.A.'s skid row

downtown's boundaries

Aggreko, the international power company, parent of Aggreko Energy Services, has announced a three year contract extension to its 200 MW gas-fired power project in Ivory Coast, with an option to extend this by a further two years. The Aggreko plant in the Vridi area of Abidjan provides critical power to Ivory Coast and surrounding countries interconnected to the Ivory Coast grid.

The facility was installed in 2010 with the first phase of the project producing 70 MW. This was later increased to 100 MW in 2011 and again increased in June 2013 to 200 MW. With a booming economy and GDP growth of around 9%, demand for energy has been increasing steadily in recent years. The Aggreko plant injects vital capacity into the local grid, helping keep essential infrastructure and services running, while also ensuring power supplies are maintained to both business and domestic users.

"We are pleased to be extending the Aggreko project which forms an important part of our program of strengthening the energy infrastructure across the country," commented Amidou Traore, Director General, CI-Energies. "The 200 MW supplied from the Aggreko plant is an important component of our energy generation mix and helps us maintain supply to our customers while we develop our long-term infrastructure programmes."

Economies across Africa are growing at a phenomenal rate resulting in an increased strain on power generation, transmission and distribution infrastructure. By adding large-scale, fast-track interim power, countries can continue to supply the energy required to sustain economic growth while governments and state utilities work on bringing new generation capacity online.

"Our project in Ivory Coast is a great example of the value Aggreko brings to its utility customers in Africa," commented Christophe Jacquin, Managing Director, Aggreko North and West Africa. "Our solutions address shortages in power generation capacity, giving our customers the ability to maintain supply while they work to improve their systems."

Aggreko extends 200 MW Ivory Coast power project

commented that the company's polymer-based supercapacitor technology currently under development could help reduce the cost of solar energy storage.

According to the Solar Energy Industries Association, the demand for rooftop solar paired with energy storage systems will reach \$1 billion in the U.S. within four years, and will create pent up demand for cost effective solar energy storage solutions. Pairing with solar panels with batteries means users can store power during the day and use it at night, reducing electricity bills. Those savings can be more significant for customers who pay higher rates for electricity during peak periods.

Since solar energy is only available during the day and naturally sporadic because of weather and clouds, a large capacity and fast charge-discharge energy storage system is needed to quickly store the energy of the sun so that it can be used anytime -- day or night. Therefore, solar energy storage systems need battery banks with high specific energy (Wh/Kg) to store as much energy as possible without increased size. At the same time, the system needs to provide high specific power (mAh/g) for fast charge to harvest as much energy as possible when the sunlight is available. Most importantly, the system should be able to handle large number of charge-discharge cycles possible before requiring battery replacement.

Dr. David Lee, the company's CEO, said, "Existing battery technologies, such as lithium-ion batteries, are good for longer-term energy storage, but cannot be charged or discharged rapidly. Furthermore, batteries have limited charge-discharge life cycles resulting in premature capacity degradation over relatively short time span. By integrating our BioSuperCap, a low cost polymer-based supercapacitor, as the front-end to battery banks, fewer batteries can be used, and daytime solar energy can be quickly and cost-effectively stored for nighttime use at a substantially lower cost. The combined system also will be able to handle much larger number of charge-discharge cycles resulting in substantially

BioSolar Plans to Lower the Cost of Solar Power With Energy Storage Technology

On the occasion of the official visit to China by French Prime Minister Manuel Valls, EDF signed agreements aimed at further strengthening the long term partnerships forged with leading players in the Chinese energy sector.

As part of their strategic partnership, EDF and China General Nuclear Power Group (CGN) signed an agreement to share their experience of plant operation and engineering support for existing nuclear fleets, with the aim of preserving the highest safety levels and maintaining consistency between French and Chinese procedures and standards.

EDF also signed an agreement with Huadian, a leading Chinese electric utility, paving the way for future cooperation on joint projects in China as well as at international level. The three key areas of focus of this agreement are combined-cycle gas-turbine power plants, hydro power plants operation and renewable energies.

During his visit to China EDF Chairman & CEO Jean Bernard LEVY will meet also CGN and CNNC leaders to discuss potential involvement in the development of new nuclear power plant projects in China. This will pave the way for cooperation between EDF, AREVA and their Chinese partners in the development of step-by-step evolutions of medium-size reactors.

EDF Chairman and CEO Jean-Bernard Levy announced: "These agreements with our long-term Chinese partners will deepen our existing cooperation, and lay the foundations for new joint projects. EDF is delighted at this prospect; it demonstrates the lasting nature of our presence in China, which benefits the entire French nuclear sector, from flagship companies such as AREVA and ALSTOM to the dozens of small- and medium-sized French businesses who have had a presence in this market alongside EDF for more than 30 years."

EDF has signed new agreements with its long term partners in China

General Electric Company (GE) is set to establish a 1,200MW gas powered thermal plant in Ghana, Reuters reported citing company's CEO Jeff Immelt.

The plant will be operational in the next five year and it would address the West African country's power deficit.

Immelt said, "We stand ready to be a great partner for emergency power by the summer and also we'll invest and bring together some other investors to make this (thermal project) happen."

The project will be implemented in two stages, comprising a 750MW power plant estimated to be operational by 2017 and a second plant two years later, Immelt said.

According to Immelt, GE will also provide Ghana with emergency power systems in 2015 to help offset a current energy crisis.

GE to construct 1,200MW gas-fired power plant in Ghana

Ghana's Energy Minister, Kofi Buah, joined Ian Taylor, President and CEO of Vitol and Ciro Pagano EVP, ENI, today to symbolically kick off activities marketing the commencement of the OCTP development in Ghana, following the recent approval of the development plans by the Ministry of Energy.

This was evinced when the development partners paid a courtesy call on The President of Ghana, His Excellency President John Dramani Mahama, at the Peduase Lodge, Aburi, Ghana, to confirm their commitment to the project.

The OCTP development comprises five fields¹ (Sankofa East Cenomanian Oil, Sankofa East, Campanian Oil, Sankofa Main Gas, Sankofa East Gas, Gye Nyame Gas), and will access approximately 1.5 trillion cubic feet (tcf) of gas-in-place and around 500 million barrels of oil-in-place. The development of the pure gas fields contained in the project has been described by the World Bank as a 'top priority'² for Ghana, as it will underpin the growth of a domestic thermal power sector and accelerate Ghana's industrial development.

This is the first major development of gas in Ghana and will enable the transformation of the economy. The fields contain enough gas to continuously supply Ghana's thermal power sector until at least 2036. The non-associated gas will be produced at high rates, supplying both new and existing power plants, substituting crude oil and fuel oil and providing an environmentally cleaner and more efficient fuel for the country.

In addition to the energy source, Ghana will benefit from enhanced oil production, GNPC's participation in the project, and royalties and taxes generated by the oil and gas production.

Ghana, Vitol and ENI announce transformational gas project for Ghana

The government of Italy is planning to stop subsidies for new solar power plants as the sector does not need further backing, Reuters reported citing the nation's industry deputy minister Claudio De Vincenti.

"The decree on (renewable energy) incentives for the next three years should be ready by the end of February, but the photovoltaic sector won't be in it," De Vincenti said.

"The government believes there is no need to offer (solar) plants further support."

Solar power market in Italy took off at the end of 2010 when new rules sent production subsidies soaring.

Subsidies increased from €750m in 2010 to €3.8bn in 2011 and €6.7bn in 2013.

In the past five years, investors have dispensed over €50bn into Italian renewable energy.

Italy to discontinue subsidies solar power sector

Presently, Italy has nearly 17.1GW of operational solar power capacity.

the Miami HEAT a powerful new sponsor while transforming the existing East Plaza at the AmericanAirlines Arena into an elegant solar pavilion.

For NRG, the partnership also brings access to millions of fans and Miami visitors and showcases its clean energy products and services. The partnership will provide the HEAT with a long-term advisor on sustainable energy solutions for the well-known venue.

"We are currently celebrating the 15th anniversary of AmericanAirlines Arena and as a result, we've recommitted ourselves and redoubled our efforts to remain at the forefront of the green movement," said Eric Woolworth, President of The HEAT Group's Business Operations. "We've partnered with NRG because they are the game changers of the clean energy industry. They have the creativity to visualize the solar array project and unequivocal expertise to carry it out."

NRG Energy has a proven track record of equipping some of the nation's greatest sports venues with tailor-made renewable energy solutions, showcasing the potential that aesthetic clean energy can provide to homes and businesses today. In Miami, NRG intends to install a solar pavilion on the east side of the AmericanAirlines Arena. The new pavilion will be dotted throughout with circles spanning 16 to 24 feet in diameter and will appear to be sky lights, but are actually translucent solar panels utilizing Building Integrated Photovoltaic (BIPV) solar technology. The new solar panel-integrated pavilion is scheduled to be completed by the end of November 2015.

"We are in the midst of a social movement that demands attention to clean energy, and with the Miami HEAT, one of the most well-known international sports brands, as our partner, we hope to continue to serve as catalysts to this movement," said Tom Doyle, president and CEO of NRG Renew. "Leading organizations like the Miami HEAT are taking the reins and leading fans in the charge of energy freedom. As the world's perspective on

Miami HEAT, NRG Energy Launch Business and Clean Energy Partnership

Missouri American Energy, a unit of Onwa Group, Inc., signed an agreement with Nigerian government for constructing a 250MW power plant in the nation, Thisdaylive?.com reported.

The US-based firm will supply electricity produced at the facility to the national grid.

It is estimated that the project will be completed shortly, due to its smaller capacity, the government said.

Missouri American Energy inks agreement with Nigeria to construct 250MW power plant

Nigerian minister of power Chinedu Nebo has advised the US firm to catch-in on the provisions of the Power Africa initiative of President Barack Obama for which Nigeria is amongst other first-tranche beneficiary African nations.

RWE AG will not perform an early closure of its Gundremmingen B nuclear reactor and instead it will push through the planned 2017 closure date, Reuters reported citing RWE Power CEO Matthias Hartung.

The utility is trying to get back the fuel element tax that had been already paid, Hartung said.

Earlier, Germany had announced its plan to exit nuclear power.

RWE to close Gundremmingen B reactor in 2017

Hartung said that lower margins were likely to continue in the thermal plant sector, but the company would not rush to close plants too early.

Electricidade de Mocambique to Invest USD600 Million in Chimuara to Nacala Transmission Line in Mozambique

Electricidade de Mocambique, E.P., a power utility company, has agreed to invest USD600 million in the construction and development of 400 kV Chimuara to Nacala transmission line in central and northern regions of Mozambique. The 700 km long transmission line will start at the Chimuara substation, and go through Nampula to Nacala.

IBC Solar AG, a manufacturer and supplier of photovoltaic systems, has agreed to acquire KosiFrankensolar, a manufacturer and distributor of solar photovoltaic panels along with its network of franchisees in Turkey.

Under the terms of the agreement, IBC Solar will merge its Turkish subsidiary with KosiFrankensolar in the first quarter of 2015. Following the transaction, KosiFrankensolar will be managed as a subsidiary of IBC Solar based in Istanbul.

IBC Solar to Acquire KosiFrankensolar

The acquisition will enable IBC Solar to expand its international market position and strengthened its project and trade business.

New Energy Management Limited, a company engaged in property development and logistics business, has entered into an agreement to acquire all the shares in Comtec New Energy China Holdings Limited (Comtec New Energy (HK)), an investment holding company, from Comtec Solar (Cayman) Limited (formerly Most Talent Limited), a manufacturer of solar ingots and wafers, for a purchase consideration of CNY28.5 million (USD4.62 million).

Under the terms of the agreement, the consideration will be paid in two installments. In the first installment CNY14.5 million (USD2.35 million) will be paid upon completion of the transaction and CNY14 million (USD2.27 million) will be paid in the second installment within three business days after (i) the transaction has been completed pursuant to the agreement and (ii) Comtec New Energy having obtained the construction permit for its land use right. If, after completion of the transaction, Comtec Solar (Cayman) transfers the land use right held by Comtec New Energy Technology (Shanghai) Co., Ltd., a wholly-owned subsidiary of Comtec Solar Systems Group Limited, to other third parties, the Comtec Solar (Cayman) agrees to pay the second installment to New Energy Management within three business days after Comtec Solar (Cayman) having received the consideration of such transfer of the land use right.

New Energy Management to Acquire Comtec New Energy China from Comtec Solar (Cayman) for USD4.6 Million

Concurrent to the transaction, Shanghai Wan Qian Jia Mu Green Landscapes Constructions Co., Ltd has terminated the acquisition of Comtec New Energy Technology. Earlier on November 19, 2012, Shanghai Wan Qian Jia Mu Green Landscapes Constructions Co., Ltd, agreed to acquire Comtec New Energy Technology (Shanghai) from Comtec Solar (Hong Kong) Limited, an indirect wholly-owned subsidiary of Comtec Solar Systems Group Limited, and Shanghai Comtec Solar Technology Co., Ltd., an indirect wholly-owned subsidiary of Comtec Solar Systems Group Limited, for a purchase consideration of CNY28.5 million (USD4.53 million).

Comtec New Energy (HK) will acquire all the shares of Comtec New Energy Technology

Pattern Energy Acquires Majority Stake in Green Power Investment

Pattern Energy Group LP, a power generation company and a subsidiary of Pattern Energy Group Inc., has acquired a majority stake in Green Power Investment Corporation, a company engaged in developing renewable energy projects.

The acquisition increases Pattern Energy's power generation capacity up to 1,000 MW of near and longer term projects in development. The stake in Green Power Investment's projects are subject to Pattern Energy's right of first offer (ROFO). The acquisition enables Pattern Energy to expand wind and solar projects development in Japan.

Werpo to Form Joint Venture with Seedsowers Investors And Developers	<p>Werpo Corporation, a renewable energy company, has agreed to form joint venture with Seedsowers Investors And Developers Co. Ltd (Seedsowers), a trading and investment company, to construct and develop sea-wave energy projects.</p> <p>Under the agreement, as first stage, Seedsowers will invest USD5 million in the joint venture company to be formed by Werpo and Seedsowers. This investment capital will be raised by Seedsowers over a period of 24 months. In addition, in the first stage of the agreement, both the companies are committed to implementing a 2 MW plant in the allotted territory and expand this sea-wave energy project in the second stage of the partnership to a minimum of 5 MW.</p>
Sustainable Power to Acquire Stake in Beacon I, Beacon III and Beacon IV Solar Power Projects in California, US	<p>Sustainable Power Group, LLC (sPower), an independent power generation company, has agreed to acquire stake in Beacon I, Beacon III and Beacon IV solar PV power projects situated near Mojave, in Kern County, California, US, from Hecate Energy LLC, a developer and operator of power projects. The total combined installed capacity of the projects is 162 MW (AC).</p> <p>The Beacon projects will be designed and built by Hecate Energy, then jointly owned and operated by sPower and Hecate Energy. The construction of the projects is expected to start in the third quarter of 2015 and expected to become operational between March and July of 2016. The power generated from the projects will be supplied to Los Angeles Department of Water and Power under a 25-year power purchase agreements. The projects are expected to generate enough power to more than 25,500 homes.</p>
Hydro-Quebec to Invest USD49 Million in Montagnais to Romaine IV Transmission Line in Canada	<p>Hydro-Quebec, a power utility company, has agreed to invest CAD61 million (USD49.05 million) in the construction and development of 735 kV Montagnais substation to the Romaine 4 generating station transmission line in Canada. The transmission line construction will be completed by Thirau Ltée, a subsidiary of NAPEC Inc. Construction work is expected to begin in February 2015 and is expected to be completed by December 2016.</p>
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ISIS Group Claims Responsibility for Attacks That Killed 27 in Egypt	<p>An affiliate of the Islamist terror group ISIS has claimed responsibility for a series of deadly attacks in Egypt on Thursday, security consultants told NBC News. The four attacks in North Sinai and Suez killed 27 people, security and medical officials told Reuters.</p> <p>The attacks came after commemorations of the anniversary of the 2011 uprising turned deadly earlier this week. Egypt's government faces an Islamist insurgency based in Sinai and growing discontent with what critics perceive as heavy-handed security tactics.</p>
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U.S. homeownership hits 20-year low, but new households growing	<p>U.S. homeownership fell to a 20-year low in the fourth quarter, but a sharp rebound in the rate at which Americans are setting up home is expected to help drive a pick-up in housing.</p> <p>The seasonally adjusted home ownership rate slipped to 63.9 percent, the lowest level since the third quarter of 1994, the Commerce Department said on Thursday. The rate, which peaked at 69.4 percent in 2004, was 64.3 percent in the third quarter.</p> <p>Household formation, however, more than quadrupled to 1.7 million in the fourth quarter from only 356,000 in the same period in 2013. While the gains were driven by renter households, that should provide a boost to home building.</p>
Indian Banks' Shares Plunge as Bad-Loan Provisions Surge	<p>Bank of Baroda, India's second-largest bank by assets, plunged the most in seven years, and ICICI Bank Ltd.. the largest private lender, tumbled after their bad-loan provisions surged.</p> <p>Shares of Bank of Baroda closed 11 percent lower at 193.15 rupees in Mumbai. ICICI shares fell 5.2 percent.</p> <p>While India's benchmark stock index has climbed to records this year as foreign investors pile in, the banks' bad-loan outlooks may raise questions about the economy's strength after an unexpected interest-rate cut this month.</p>

Greek government: Fast Forward with anti-austerity measures	<p>Alexis Tsipras and his junior coalition partner Panos Kammenos pushed the Fast Forward button to restore a series of so-called “reforms”, that is austerity measures imposed by the country’s lenders, the Troika. Several new appointed ministers of the SYRIZA-Independent Greeks coalition started to announce thorough changes, right after they assumed office on Tuesday – and some even before they took their portfolio. Among the left-wing reforms are: scraping planned privatizations, scraping fees in public hospitals and prescriptions, restore “the 13th pension” for low-pensioners and other actions that SYRIZA had promised before the elections.</p>
Rwanda: Indian Agro-Processor Eyes Rwandan Market	<p>Arjun Beeswax Industries, an India-based agro-processing firm, will soon set up shop in Rwanda, Arjun Bheda, the managing partner, said in a statement.</p> <p>Bheda said the firm was attracted to Rwanda by the country's conducive investment climate and the vast opportunities it presents.</p> <p>He added that his confidence in the country was greatly boosted when he met Emmanuel Hategeka , the Ministry of Trade and Industry permanent secretary, and Ernest Rwamucyo, Rwanda's high commissioner to India, at the Rwanda Booth during the recent Vibrant Gujarat 2015 Conference in Gandhinagar, India. Bheda noted that the ISO 9001: 2008 certified company would trade under the Arjun Beeswax Industries Rwanda Limited brand once they set up shop in Kigali.</p>
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Malawi, China Agrees Into Economic and Technical Cooperation	<p>Finance,Economic Planning and Development Hon.Goodal Gondwe and the Chinese Amb,to Malawi,HE.Mr.Zhang Qingyang during the signing ceremony at Capital Hill - Pic by Stanley Makuti</p> <p>Lilongwe, January 30, 2015, Mana: The Malawi Government and the Government of the People's Republic of China on Thursday entered into two agreements on Economic and Technical Cooperation.</p> <p>Under the two agreements, the People's Republic of China has given Malawi a sum of US\$16 million grant and US\$ 8 million loan.</p> <p>Speaking after the signing ceremony of the two agreements, Minister of Finance Economic Planning and Development Dr. Goodall Gondwe said the first agreement is for the grant amounting to US\$ 16 million and the second one is an interest free loan worthy US\$ 8 million.</p> <p>With more than 6,000 cases, malaria is still the most diagnosed disease in 11,018 pregnant women consulted in Maternal-Children Center of Luena, in 2014, revealed, Thursday, here, the head of this unit, Helena Mufana Antonio.</p>
Angola: Over 6,000 Cases of Malaria Diagnosed in Moxico	<p>Speaking to ANGOP on the activity of that hospital in 2014, Helena Antonio said after malaria come sexually transmitted infections, with 3,000 cases, and preeclampsia and vaginitis, with 'lower levels'.</p>
DR Congo Delays Vote on Disputed Law	<p>After deadly clashes in which a number of people were killed, the Senate has delayed a vote on legislation that would enable President Joseph Kabila - in power for 14 years - to extend his rule beyond 2016 when his second mandate expires</p>
Rwanda-DR Congo Border Tense Amid Deadly Riots	<p>Civil society organisations have declared Bukavu, a town bordering Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo, a "dead city" after violent demonstrations.As for Goma, another DRC town bordering with Rwanda's Rubavu district, situation worsened Thursday morning after three people were reportedly killed during an accelerating uprising.</p> <p>Deadly protests have been ongoing for the past week in DR Congo's capital, Kinshasa, following a proposed bill to postpone next year's presidential elections for three years.</p>

UN Forces Begin Action Against DR Congo Rebels

EU legislators endorse plans for cap on card payment fees

SADC is now prepared to enforce military action to deal with rebels destabilising the eastern parts of DRC where FDLR rebels have failed to meet their ceasefire pledges after only 26 percent surrendered against a pledge of over 70 percent. Members of the European Parliament have endorsed draft rules that would cap the fees that banks charge retailers for processing shoppers' payments

Germany ranked at the top of 17 of the 28 criteria the experts evaluated for each of the European's 28 Member States, divided into relations with five global regions (Russia, the US, wider Europe, the Middle East and North Africa and Asia), as well as multilateral issues and crisis management.

Some of the leadership roles Germany held in 2014 included developing sanctions on Russia, pushing for conclusion of the TTIP free-trade agreement with the US and acting to address the Ebola crisis.

"Standing up to Russia was the make-or-break issue in 2014," the ECFR experts wrote.

"It took until the end of the first half of 2014 for Berlin to fully abandon the idea that Russia's aggression [in Ukraine] could be countered with diplomatic means alone."

Crises make Germany EU foreign policy leader

After that, Germany became "the clear leader in consolidating a common sanctions policy".

shortfall in funding. The move will impact some 150,000 Ugandans living in refugee settlements, \$30 million is needed to continue the needed level of assistance.

In recent years, Uganda has become a major hub for the region's refugees. Instability in the DRC and conflict in South Sudan has caused the numbers of those escaping violence to swell to more than 300,000. These are the largest numbers the WFP has ever worked with in Uganda and it's causing incredible strain.

On January 27th, the WFP announced they will cut rations for certain refugee groups in Uganda by 50 percent. The cuts will be rolled out according to length of stay, targeting those who have been here at least 3 years or longer. Those who are disabled, unable to seek work, ill or elderly will still receive their full rations.

Deputy Country Director of the WFP Michael Dunford explains the need for targeted cuts.

So prior to this ration cut, we would have broken across all of our commodities by April. So particularly in light of the uncertainty that is happening north of the border, or west of the border, we needed to build up some contingency stock. In addition you never want to run out completely, because otherwise refugees have nothing. So it's better to gradually reduce, ensure there are provisions to meet the needs of the most vulnerable, to continue to provide something to those that are longer term, and to ensure there is a contingency should we have a dramatic increase in numbers, as a result of what's happening externally to Uganda.

World Food Program Cuts to Affect Nearly 150,000 Refugees in Uganda

Although the Ugandan government has one of the most progressive refugee policies in the world - providing refugee housing settlements, plots of land, freedom of movement and access to employment - hundreds of thousands still depend on the daily food rations

A senior member of the Turkish opposition has criticized the president for seeking the authority to dissolve parliament, saying that such powers will turn Turkey into a dictatorship.

Akif Hamzaçebi on Thursday said the model proposed by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is what would bring the democratic system of Turkey to ruins.

"This is a system uniquely designed for Erdoğan, which will drag Turkey into a dictatorship," the English website of the Hurriyet newspaper quoted Hamzaçebi as saying.

The legislator's remarks come as Erdogan on Thursday elaborated on the major benefits of introducing a presidential system in Turkey. Under such a presidential system, Erdogan said, the country could make more progress concerning rights and freedoms.

Hamzaçebi, however, said that the model proposed by Erdogan considers authority for the president that even outweighs that of the US president Barack Obama.

"The powers given to Obama are seen as insufficient [by Erdoğan]. Obama has no power to dissolve Congress, but Erdoğan wants this power," he said.

Erdogan slammed for seeking authority to dissolve parliament

"This is called dictatorship," he said

The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) is appealing for more funds to help address the recent exodus of refugees into Cameroon from Nigeria, saying that a risk in attacks on both sides of that border has made it increasingly risky for humanitarian agencies to operate there.

The security situation in Central Africa has significantly deteriorated in the last month. Boko Haram attacked several cross-border villages in northern Cameroon, raising fears that the insurgent group is expanding its attacks. Following the spate of violence, Chad announced that it was sending soldiers to Cameroon to halt the attacks from spreading.

At a press briefing in Geneva this afternoon, WFP spokesperson Elisabeth Byrs said that despite the increasing insecurity, the agency is planning to assist 96,068 people in Cameroon, including Nigerian refugees, internally displaced person (IDPs) and vulnerable local populations.

ongoing violence sends desperate Nigerians fleeing to Cameroon

"New population movements into Cameroon from Nigeria have been reported in recent weeks in addition to increasing displacement of local population fleeing from border areas, where whole villages had been destroyed and services closed," she said.

benefits of solar energy. However, with the introduction of the Community Solar Garden Program, the barriers to solar power have been removed for SPPHA residents. Geronimo Energy's project was selected from a group of competitive proposals received by SPPHA. The project will help offset roughly 90% of SPPHA's electricity usage at 16 high-rise buildings, comprised of 2554 housing units, as well as the main office facility in Saint Paul. Over the life of the contract with Geronimo, SPPHA will support the generation of 864,354,001 kWh of solar electricity and save over \$4,000,000 in electricity expenses, while annually offsetting over 25,000 metric tons of CO2 emissions.

"We are excited to help SPPHA harness the benefits of solar energy through Xcel Energy's game changing community solar garden program," said Geronimo Energy Director of Solar, Nathan Franzen.

Geronimo Energy Brings Solar Savings to Saint Paul Public Housing with Community Solar Garden Program

Under the Community Solar Garden program, Xcel customers can purchase a subscription to a Community Solar Garden in exchange for a credit on their monthly Xcel bill. The program was approved by the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission in early 2014 and is designed to improve access to solar for businesses and homeowners. The Community Solar Garden program utilizes economies of scale to reduce overall construction costs which are then passed on to subscribers through savings on their electricity bills.

South Africa's Solidarity union said yesterday that MTN, Africa's biggest telecommunications provider, plans to issue dismissal notices by May 1 to up to 578 people at its South African enterprise business unit. The network provider has been involved in back-and-forth negotiations with the workers it plans to lay off and the workers union since last year.

SA Workers Union Confirms MTN Will Lay Off 578 workers

According to Reuters news agency, Marius Croucamp, spokesman for the Solidarity union, said consultations begun on Jan. 21 and that MTN was offering two weeks severance pay for each year of service. The South African company had last week revealed plans to restructure its business in a bid to strengthen competitive advantage. 476 employees have lost their jobs at the company in the last 12 months, Croucamp said.

Gauteng will spend more than R94-billion on both social and economic infrastructure projects over the next three years, Finance MEC Barbara Creecy said on Wednesday.

"By investing in social and economic infrastructure, including quality public transport, re-engineering the province's spatial framework in new human settlements, mainstreaming township economies and providing quality health care and education, we intend to put our global city region on a new trajectory of integrated development and social and economic inclusion," Creecy said.

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R94bn for Gauteng infrastructure projects

To finance the social and economic infrastructure programme, the province will increase its revenue through better planning and co-ordination between different spheres of government on infrastructure priorities and spending.

... from interest rates from 27% to 15%, the latest indication that concern about recession is replacing fighting inflation and stabilising the ruble as Moscow's economic policy priority. The currency, which has fallen 14% against the dollar so far this year, fell another 3% in morning European trade, sinking below 70 to the dollar. The rate cut comes after the January 26 downgrade by international ratings agency Standard & Poor's (S&P) of Russia's sovereign credit rating to junk status (from BBB- to BB+) and the January 28 announcement of an economic plan that will see the government spend 2.34 trillion rubles (35 billion dollars) to bolster key industries, including banks, and to boost its troubled economy particularly in the regions. As part of the measures, Moscow plans a 10% cut in the budgets of all but a handful of ministries. Defence, agriculture and social spending are spared.

Impact

Discussions between liberals are not as important to economic policy as they were. Further measures to boost the economy are likely in order to forestall more rating agencies downgrading Russia to junk status.

The Security Council will exert greater influence over economic policy, further marginalising economic liberals.

What next

Maintaining defence and social spending will remain critical for Moscow. Some infrastructure projects will have to take the main hit from the spending cuts although it is possible that President Vladimir Putin may turn to Russian oligarchs and China to help finance them. Smaller, less high profile infrastructure projects are at greatest risk. Discord will grow between liberals who urge radical cuts and hawks who favour high defence spending. Government will look to support development of domestic high-tech industry and try to boost the non-oil sector.

Russia readies for long economic struggle

As the woes in Russia's banking sector continue it is likely that the government will clamp down on small and medium-sized banks in an effort to reduce the overall number of financial institutions that may need support. In December 2014, as reported by Reuters, Moscow agreed to provide 2.4 billion dollars in financial support to Trust Bank, Russia's 32nd largest lender.

woes in Russia's banking sector continue

The African Union on Friday endorsed plans for a regional force of 7,500 troops to fight militant group Boko Haram.

Word of the endorsement came as the AU opened its annual summit in the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa.

AU Endorses 7,500 Troops to Fight Boko Haram

Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Benin recently agreed to work together against the militants, who have killed thousands of civilians in Nigeria, and control large parts of Borno state on the borders with Cameroon and Lake Chad.

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A woman was killed on Saturday in Cairo after the police fired shotgun pellets at a handful of socialist activists marching to Tahrir Square with flowers to commemorate the hundreds of demonstrators killed there during the revolution that began on Jan. 25, 2011, witnesses said.

The protester, Shaimaa al-Sabbagh, was shot at close range and died a short time later, according to a statement from the organizers of the march reported by Aswat Masriya, a local news site supported by the Thomson Reuters foundation.

Egyptian Police Attack Marchers Carrying Flowers to Tahrir Square, Killing Protester

News photographs taken before the march was attacked showed the protesters holding a wreath of flowers and a banner that read: "The fourth anniversary of the martyrs who died during the January 25 revolution."

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Utilities will move away from the traditional vertically integrated utility model towards a more distributed, service-based model.

- The industry's three biggest growth opportunities are distributed energy resources, the customer relationship, and transmission.
- The industry's three most pressing challenges are old infrastructure, the aging workforce, and the current regulatory model.
- The vast majority of utilities are seeing minimal, stagnant or even negative load growth in their service territories. The industry is undecided on how to best address the issue of depressed electricity sales growth.
- Utilities plan to use more natural gas, solar, wind, distributed energy resources, and energy efficiency over the next 20 years. Meanwhile, the industry expects to use significantly less coal and oil.
- Utilities see a big opportunity in distributed energy resources, but are unsure of the best business models.

STATE OF THE ELECTRIC UTILITY

President Benigno 'Noynoy' Aquino on January 29 addressed the nation on the shooting of 42 police commandos in Mindanao's Maguindanao province on January 25 in a protracted firefight with Muslim rebel forces. The shooting, called a "misencounter", has cast a shadow on today's meeting in Malaysia between Manila and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) peace negotiators to sign the agreement on rebel disarmament. This may not ultimately produce its intended result. Meanwhile, Manila and the MILF have set up panels to investigate the shooting's causes, aiming to avoid similar future occurrences.

Impact

The MILF is unlikely to hand over the terrorist suspects the police sought. Further Bangsamoro progress is unlikely before investigations close. Ratings agencies may revise Philippines forecasts downwards. Police coordination difficulties may constrain other anti-terrorism efforts. Even if the Bangsamoro Basic bill is passed this year, it would probably face Supreme Court challenge. What next

Philippine police shooting risks Mindanao peace effort

The police shooting has dented public and legislative support for the Mindanao peace process and the Bangsamoro Basic bill. Despite Aquino's political will to save the counter-insurgency effort, passing the bill in the next seven weeks is unlikely. Unless the bill is passed by June, the peace process could be lost.

New measures set to be legislated in the coming months will increase the scale and scope of short-term immigration to address labour shortages, though in all likelihood only modestly. Immigration on a much larger and more permanent scale would be needed to significantly relieve Japan's demographic pressures, and this would require a more thorough overhaul of the system than the incremental changes the Abe government is prepared to push.

Japan will ease immigration rules, with modest effect

An official report today proposed a new body to oversee the Foreign Training Internship Program, a system whereby foreign trainees are allowed into Japan to work for up to three years in specific sectors. In practice, the 'trainees', who number around 150,000, generally function as a low-cost flexible labour force. The programme has repeatedly been implicated in reports of exploitation and legal violations by recruitment agencies and host businesses. The new regulator would possess greater powers to license, investigate and penalise firms. The relevant legislation due to go before parliament in the current session. The government also plans to expand the programme, particularly to address a labour shortage in nursing care -- something the health ministry approved on January 23.

0.5% in the year to January, largely due to the sharp drop in oil prices. Chancellor Angela Merkel faces a rising tide of euro-area members in favour of a policy shift away from austerity and possibly towards more favourable debt deals for euro-area black spots. Adding to the pressure for change, her own voters may prefer a slower pace of debt reduction: German government debt has already been falling as a percentage of GDP -- from over 80% in 2010 to under 77% at the end of 2014 -- and debt is starting to fall in absolute terms as well. The government has delivered enough stabilisation (ie, austerity) and growth to tame the 2009-10 debt surge and maintain its AAA credit rating, but is now over-achieving in terms of its own tough targets because the greater-than-expected fall in debt interest costs is pushing the budget into surplus. Some modest spending adjustments look likely to curb this windfall surplus, yet many will argue that more could be done to re-energise the sluggish economy -- and boost the euro-area.

Impact

The plummeting euro will provoke another rise in German exports (already near 50% of GDP) and tensions over Germany's bulging trade surplus. While a fiscal stimulus and/or higher wage payments could address these tensions and raise imports, there is no sign of such action. Germany's critics are gathering support to end austerity, to the point of ignoring the risks of deficit financing and renegeing on debts. Ultra-low German bond yields, encouraged by the prospective supply fall, are dragging down euro-area yields, delivering wider benefits. What next

German shift on austerity would risk 'wrong' lessons

Even if Germany moves to ease up on fiscal tightening and provide a little more stimulus, this will be seen as a success for the critics in forcing Merkel's hand rather than the

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German shift on austerity would risk 'wrong' lessons

Price contraction intensified in January, with signs of cheaper energy feeding through to core components. If lower inflation becomes embedded below the ECB's target, it risks a deflationary spiral that could lead to postponed investment and consumer spending decisions. The recently announced sovereign quantitative easing (QE) programme by the ECB could help avoid such an outcome.

Inflation slowed in January to minus 0.6% year on year from minus 0.2%, Eurostat said today, matching its largest decline (July 2009) during the financial crisis. Core inflation slowed to 0.6% year on year from 0.7%, an all-time low. Inflation has been driven down by cheaper energy, which fell 8.9% on a yearly basis, reflecting the sharp reduction in oil prices. The food, alcohol, tobacco component of the index was little changed at minus 0.1%. The downward trend in the non-core components is starting to feed through to core inflation: services inflation slowed by 0.2 percentage points to 1.0% and prices of non-energy industrial goods contracted (minus 0.1%). These data vindicate the ECB decision to launch sovereign QE.

Inflation data will justify ECB's QE programme

State-controlled oil company Petrobras will probably seek to finance reduced investment plans through cash rather than borrowing at a time when its other options are severely constrained. However, there is almost no likelihood that the company would be allowed to default, although fallout from the corruption scandal may blight Brazil's economic outlook more broadly.

Moody's yesterday cut Petrobras's senior unsecured debt to Baa3, in response to continuing corruption investigations and financial pressures. Also yesterday, a Rio de Janeiro state court froze the assets of former CEO Jose Sergio Gabrielli (2005-12) and allowed investigators access to his tax, banking and telephone records, in connection with claims that Gabrielli may have been involved in overcharging construction company Andrade Gutierrez by some 32 million reais (12.4 million dollars). Petrobras CFO Almir Barbassa said yesterday that it will use over half of its 25 billion dollars in cash holdings to meet debt and investment costs this year, leading to speculation that dividend payments will be suspended; Barbassa indicated that no decision had yet been taken in that respect. The share price continued its fall yesterday, ending the day down 3.1% at 8.75 reais

Brazil's Petrobras downgrade will fuel investor fears

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The United Arab Emirates (UAE) announced plans to increase its clean energy targets at the World Future Energy Summit hosted in Abu Dhabi on January 18-21. Over the past decade, the country has cultivated a reputation as a 'green' trailblazer in the renewable energy (RE) sector. In 2009, Abu Dhabi launched its drive to transform the UAE into a global leader in the sector, creating an economic blueprint requiring that renewables comprise 7% of energy production by 2020.

Impact

The UAE will develop a national carbon market to spur RE investment. Development of world-class RE technology could facilitate advanced technology transfer into other fields.

Hydrocarbons exports and petrochemical production will increase, boosting foreign revenues.

Significant subsidy cuts and the subsequent reduction in the fiscal burden should enable further RE investment in coming years.

What next

UAE set to lead world in renewable energy

The UAE will extend its lead as the Middle East and North Africa's top investor in renewable energy. Over the next decade it will expand its global RE investments and establish itself as a world-leading hub for research, development and export of advanced RE technology. It is also on course to produce around 10% of domestic power from RE by 2030.

The latest attack is likely to lead to a greater intensification of the military's harsh security crackdown in North Sinai, further alienating the local population from the central government in Cairo and stoking the insurgency. This will increase the risk of a jihadist offensive on Red Sea resorts; but the threat of violence spreading into mainland Egypt remains low.

Egypt jihadists pose higher threat to Sinai security

At least 30 people were killed in attacks on security forces in the North Sinai region yesterday. The attack was claimed by a local jihadist group, Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis, which recently pledged allegiance to the Iraq and Syria-based 'Islamic State' group. The attack is one of the worst to occur in the Sinai since the military removed Islamist President Mohammed Morsi from power in 2013. The government declared a state of emergency in the region and established a security buffer zone on the border with Gaza last October following another major attack on security forces. The long-running insurgency is rooted in the area's social and economic marginalisation from the rest of Egypt, but has escalated in the wake of the 2011 uprising and Morsi's removal from power in 2013.

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European finance ministers started work on reviving Greece's troubled rescue program as new Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras took office promising to end austerity. Finance chiefs from the 19-nation euro area signaled their willingness to do a deal with Tsipras -- so long as the new Greek prime minister drops his demand for a debt writedown. At a meeting in Brussels on Monday, ministers agreed quickly to work with the new government to help keep Greece in the euro, Dutch Finance Minister Jeroen Dijsselbloem said.

Tsipras Forges Anti-Austerity Coalition in Greece, Sets Collision Course With Euro Partners

"We stand ready to support them in that ambition," said Dijsselbloem, who led the meeting.

The United States has pulled more staff out of its embassy in Yemen, U.S. officials said on Thursday as Washington scrambled to cope with the collapse of a government that had been a key ally in the fight against al Qaeda.

U.S. pulls more staff from Yemen embassy amid deepening crisis

The scaling down of its presence in Yemen is the first sign that the latest turmoil there will affect U.S operations in a country that President Barack Obama hailed just four months ago as a model for "successful" counter-terrorism partnerships.

The U.S. diplomatic contingent in Sanaa was drawn down due to the deteriorating security situation in the Yemeni capital, the officials said. They insisted there were no plans to close the embassy, which could be seen as erosion of U.S. resolve in counter-terrorism operations in the volatile Arab country.

The United States has pulled more staff out of its embassy in Yemen, U.S. officials said on Thursday as Washington scrambled to cope with the collapse of a government that had been a key ally in the fight against al Qaeda.

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U.S. pulls more staff from Yemen embassy amid deepening crisis

China's 39 million civil servants and public workers will get a pay raise of at least 60 percent of their base salaries as part of pension plan overhaul.

Hu Xiaoyi, a vice minister of human resources and social security, said at a press conference on January 20 that government agencies and public institutions have been notified of detailed plans for the salary increase.

"[The pay raise] will make sure that the overall incomes for most of these workers will not decrease after the reform and some of them could actually earn a bit more," he said.

Hu did not provide details of the plan, which will cover civil servants and public workers, such as teachers and doctors.

Gov't to Give Employees 60 Pct Pay Hike as Part of Pension Reform

Diplomatic efforts from multilateral bodies, including the UN and African Union (AU), or the regional bloc, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, will achieve little by pressuring South Sudan's leaders into signing successive agreements. Instead, fighting between government and rebel leader Riek Machar's forces may yet escalate as the end of President Salva Kiir's presidential term (due in July) approaches.

Rushed South Sudan ceasefire deal unlikely to hold

Kiir and Machar today signed another ceasefire deal -- the fourth since the beginning of 2014 -- which outlines arrangements for an interim government. It follows the signing of a January 21 agreement outlining steps leading to the unification of the ruling SPLM's three warring factions. However, all previous ceasefires have broken down, in part due to sporadic attacks by armed militias nominally loyal to either leader, but which not necessarily recognise formally agreed pacts. Pressure from the AU, which is currently meeting in Addis Ababa, may have hurried leaders to sign prematurely: AU leaders allegedly pushed for a deal as a prerequisite for releasing a report implicating Kiir and Machar in atrocities.

A shift in oil prices or a seasonal uptick in imports would quickly negate recent improvements to South Africa's trade balance and, by extension, limit the prospects for narrowing the current account gap, which reached 6% of GDP in the third quarter of 2014. Downward pressure on the rand, which lost 9.4% of its value against the dollar last year, is likely to be sustained.

South Africa trade data does not signal recovery

Data released by the South African Revenue Service on January 30 indicates the trade balance shifted to a 6.8 billion rand (586 million dollar) surplus in December 2014 from a 5.27 billion rand deficit in November 2014 -- the country's largest monthly surplus since December 2011. Exports increased during the month by 3.8% (notably to the Americas and Oceania) and imports decreased by 9.9%, principally due to lower oil prices. However, the figures do not signify any fundamental shift in South Africa's trade position: on a cumulative annual basis, 2014 saw an overall deficit of 95.3 billion rand, up from 71.4 billion rand in 2013. Moreover, the December figures included data for Namibia, Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland, adding an 'artificial' boost

Hamas was established in 1987, and has its origins in Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood movement, which had been active in the Gaza Strip since the 1950s and gained influence through a network of mosques and various charitable and social organizations. In the 1980s the Brotherhood emerged as a powerful political factor, challenging the influence of the PLO, and in 1987 adopted a more nationalist and activist line under the name of Hamas. (Wikipedia)

REUTERS – SABC

An Egyptian court on Saturday banned the armed wing of the Palestinian group Hamas and listed it as a terrorist organisation.

The ruling came days after the country faced some of the bloodiest attacks on security forces in years.

Hamas is an offshoot of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood which the authorities have also declared a terrorist group and have repressed systematically since the army ousted one of its leaders, Mohamed Morsi, from the presidency in 2013.

Egyptian court bans Hamas armed wing, lists as terrorist organisation

American solar giant SunEdison announced in November of 2014 that it, together with its yield-co subsidiary, TerraForm, would be acquiring energy company First Wind in a deal worth \$2.4 billion, which would see SunEdison become the world's largest renewable energy development company.

SunEdison And TerraForm Close First Wind Acquisition Deal

Access Infra Africa has announced plans to invest \$500 million in developing renewable energy projects in Africa over the next three years. The company is expected to initiate this investment from Egypt, which recently conducted an auction of solar and wind energy projects.

solar panels egyptAccess Infra Africa — a joint venture between France's Eren Developpement and United Arab Emirates' Access Power — has successfully bid to develop four solar energy projects with total generation capacity of 200 MW and two wind energy projects of 100 MW.

Access Infra Africa To Invest \$500 Million In Renewable Energy Projects wind and solar power projects by 2020.

The Egyptian power sector seems a perfect start for the joint venture. The country plans to boost its renewable energy generation and source 20% of the total electricity needs from

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Access Infra Africa To Invest \$500 Million In Renewable Energy Projects

The trial of Australia's first grid-integrated 'network' battery is underway in Victoria, with the launch last month of AusNet Services 1MW Grid Energy Storage System (GESS), to test the ability of storage to help meet peak power demand.

The two-year trial — in partnership with ABB Australia and Samsung SDI — centres on using a portable 1MW battery system to automatically provide local support into the 22kV grid at peak demand periods — such as hot summer afternoons — and recharging during low demand periods.

Housed in four 20-foot shipping containers in a Thomastown industrial estate, the battery can operate at full power for one hour, and can transition to island mode to provide power as part of a mini grid when parts of the network become isolated.

First commissioned by the Victorian network operator in January last year, as we reported here, the system also includes a 1MW diesel generator as a secondary supply. Investment bank says wide deployment of battery storage will hasten the demise of fossil fuels and utilities that remain focused on centralised generation. It tips rapid fall in costs and a \$400bn storage market by 2030.

Australia Trials First Grid-Integrated Network Battery In Victoria

Citigroup Predicts Battery Storage Will Hasten Demise Of Fossil Fuels

Participating in an initiative to finance rooftop solar power units, National Bank of Egypt (NBE) and Banque Misr are offering loans to citizens in Egypt. As a preliminary stage, the initiative is being offered only within specific areas of Cairo. However, plans include expanding soon into Egypt's other governorates. First, citizens of Egypt are being offered loans for solar power systems on their rooftops. Almanzlaoy said that loans are being offered in accordance with a tripartite contract between banks, state-owned electricity companies and the EBA.

Egypt's Rooftop Solar Loan Initiative: Hot Or Not?

The European Union has decided to extend until September an initial group of sanctions against Russian and pro-Russia separatist officials due to the continued fighting in eastern Ukraine and has plans for further action.

EU foreign affairs chief Federica Mogherini said on January 29 after an EU foreign ministers' meeting in Brussels that sanctions due to expire in March had been extended by six months.

She added that 'we have shown that the EU is ready to take further measures.'

The extension was agreed to by all 28 EU member countries, including Greece, which had objected to the extension of the sanction the previous day.

The ministers also agreed to draw up a list of additional individuals to be potentially slapped with sanctions when they convene in Brussels on February 9.

EU leaders are due to hold a summit on February 12 to discuss new action against a fresh group of Russian and pro-Moscow separatist officials.

EU Agrees To Extend Russian Sanctions Over Ukraine

Pro-Russian rebels in eastern Ukraine claim they have nearly encircled government forces in a strategic town.

Eduard Basurin, a rebel military leader, said the highway linking the town of Debaltseve to other government-held areas had fallen into rebel hands.

Ukrainian military spokesman Andriy Lysenko confirmed Debaltseve is surrounded on two flanks and is being heavily targeted with Grad multiple-rocket launchers.

Other officials denied government forces were close to surrendering and said separatist claims were exaggerated.

Debaltseve, which straddles a key road junction between the rebel-held provincial capitals of Donetsk and Luhansk, is one of several sites of fighting that has intensified in recent weeks in what the White House has described as a 'Russian-backed offensive' by the separatists.

Kyiv and the West says rebel attacks violate a cease-fire deal signed in September in the Belarusian capital, Minsk, and decrease the chances of ending a conflict that has killed more than 5,000 people since April.

Rebels Claim Fresh Advances In Eastern Ukraine

With Eon's historic decision to restructure we now for the first time will have a large energy supplier not being pulled in two directions, but acting on the single imperative of bringing new energy solutions to customers. This removes one of the key obstacles that has been hindering the energy transition, writes Simon Skillings, former Director of Strategy and Policy at Eon UK and now independent consultant and associate at environmental think tank E3G. But Skillings warns that other obstacles remain: the energy market is riddled with rules and regulations that lock in a future for assets that, he says, "will not be required in the new world".

Eon's transformation: how it will change the energy debate in Europe

More than 120 suppliers have collapsed or stayed out of the wind business in the past two years, including 88 from Asia, 23 from Europe and 18 from North America, as the result of a "prolonged market contraction". That is the major conclusion to come out of the 2015 edition of the annual Global Wind Supply Chain Update published by FTI Consulting.

Wind industry shake-up as policy uncertainty drives 25% of suppliers out of business

The International Coal Ventures Limited, a special purpose vehicle formed by Steel Authority of India Limited and Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Limited, plans to invest INR50,000 million (USD814.47 million) in the construction and development of coal fired power plant near Benga mine in Tete, Changara District, Tete Province, Mozambique. The total installed capacity of the power plant is 300 MW. The investment per MW is USD2.71 million. The power plant is expected to be operational by 2017.

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Hanwha Q CELLS GmbH, a renewable energy company, has acquired Tower Hill solar farm situated in South Gloucestershire, UK from Green Hedge Group, a company engaged in developing, financing and operating renewable energy projects in the UK. The total installed capacity of the solar power plant is 6.46 MW. The northern African country of Algeria is doubling its previous 2030 goal for renewable energy, according to recent reports — with the new goal standing at 25 gigawatts (GW) by 2030, rather than 12 GW.

Hanwha Q CELLS Acquires Tower Hill Solar Farm in South Gloucestershire, UK from Green Hedge Group

While this change to the country's goals aren't official yet, considering that the news was released through the state press agency APS — and the country's minister of energy and mining (Youcef Yousfi) has stated that an official amendment to the previous (2011) goal would be made in the near future — I'd say there's a pretty good chance that there's something to this

Algeria Doubling Renewable Energy Target, Now 25 GW By 2030

New figures released by GTM Research show that the Latin America solar PV market grew by 370% in 2014, installing a total of 625 MW.

Latin America Solar Market Grew 370% In 2014

Latin America comprises Mexico, Central America, South America, and the Caribbean, a number of regions that have each been making big inroads in renewable energy generation

Eos Energy Storage will be making its megawatt-scale Aurora system commercially available starting in 2016 at a price of \$160/kWh, according to a recent press release.

The company's standard offering, the Aurora 1000|4000 product, is a containerized 1 megawatt (MW) DC battery system that can provide roughly 4 hours of continuous discharge — thereby representing a fairly cost-effective energy storage solution that's competitive with gas-peaking generation and/or conventional utility distribution.

Eos Energy Storage

Eos Energy Storage's Aurora Battery System Commercially Available In 2016, At \$160/kWh

"This system represents the culmination of many years of development and collaboration with our Genesis Partners to design a product with a clear value proposition," stated Eos CEO Michael Oster.

BRASILIA, Brazil Brazil is experiencing a debilitating drought as the nation endures the driest period since South America's most populous country began keeping records in the 1930s. As a result of the arid conditions, reservoir levels and lake water flow to hydroelectric facilities that supply power to Brazil's most densely populated city of Sao Paulo are nearing zero capacity.

According to the federal government, hydroelectric power facilities in the country's southeastern region that supply power to close to 20 million people in the metropolitan region of Sao Paulo (MRSP) are being deactivated. A list of the deactivated facilities is not immediately available, but Brazil normally receives about 70% of its electricity from hydroelectric plants, according to energy officials.

Brazil's Drought Brings Water Supply to Near Zero Capacity at Hydroelectric Facilities

The Billings Reservoir, in MRSP, supplies the 889-MW Henry Borden hydroelectric facility as part of the Cantareira water system. Local media outlets report Billings Reservoir is nearly dry.

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There's a new political movement in Portugal which aims to be just like Syriza, the radical left party that has come to power in Greece. Portugal's version is called Tempo de Avançar (Time to Advance) and combines four leftist political groups, the main one being Livre (Free Party), founded last year by Portuguese MEP Rui Tavares.

A Portuguese Syriza? Lefist parties aspire to Greek model

BBC News – At least 26 people, mostly soldiers, have been killed in a series of attacks by Islamist militants in the north of Egypt's Sinai peninsula. A car bomb and rockets hit several military targets in the North Sinai provincial capital of El-Arish.

Violence flares on Israel-Lebanon border, 2 Israeli Soldiers and UN Peacekeeper killed

Other attacks took place in the town of Sheik Zuwayid and in Rafah, near Gaza. Militant group Ansar Beit al-Maqdis, which pledges allegiance to Islamic State, said it carried out the "extensive, simultaneous" attacks.

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Global consulting firm Frost & Sullivan released a new analysis this week which forecasts the global installed capacity of renewable energy to more than double by 2025 — increasing from 1,566 GW in 2012 to 3,203 GW in 2025.

Specifically, solar photovoltaic, wind, and hydro will star as the top renewable energy methods — solar PV is expected to account for 33.4% of total renewable energy capacity additions over the 2012-2025 period, followed closely by wind at 32.7%, and hydro back at 25.3%.

One difficulty that Frost & Sullivan predicts for the coming years, however, is the impact the weak economic climate in the Western world will have on clean energy investment and support systems in those countries. For renewable energy to develop as the necessary energy source it has to be in the developing world, support schemes will be vital — and those are the exact things being impacted by a poor economic climate.

Frost & Sullivan Predict Renewables To More Than Double By 2025

The government of Central African Republic said on Thursday it rejected a ceasefire deal made in Kenya between two militia groups aimed at ending more than a year of clashes and attacks in which thousands have died.

Few details have emerged about the talks between the mainly Muslim Seleka alliance and the 'anti-balaka' militia who oppose them, though the two sides conducted low-level and sporadic peace negotiations for much of last year.

"The government categorically rejects the Nairobi accord because it was not associated with the discussions in any way. It is not a real accord, rather it's a series of grievances from the two armed groups which hold the country hostage," Communications Minister Georges Adrien Poussou told Reuters.

Central African Republic government says rejects ceasefire deal

Cuts to Russian social and defence spending will be increasingly taboo subjects for policymakers in coming months despite budgetary pressure. Despite the anti-crisis measures, cuts of 10% will be made to a wide range of expenditure with future infrastructure projects being potential casualties. As a result it is likely that the Kremlin will look to supportive oligarchs or foreign partners such as China for financing. As relations with the West deteriorate, liberal economic policymakers will be increasingly side-lined.

Yesterday Russia announced its new 2.34 trillion ruble (35 billion dollar) anti-crisis plan. As part of the move, Moscow announced that spending will be cut across a wide range of portfolios in a move to balance the budget by 2017 but, as expected, defence and social spending were protected. The government also plans to create a 'bad bank' to deal with problems in the financial sector and also announced a 1 trillion ruble programme to help the banking sector. With regard to social spending, 188 billion rubles has been earmarked to support the pension system. The IMF predicts that Russian GDP will contract by 3% in 2015 and 1% in 2016

Russia social and defence spending will be protected

Tensions within the EU are set to increase over the firmness of the bloc's position towards Russia. Greece's new government is taking a pro-Russian stance, and cooperation between the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) and Russia is ending. Moscow will probably embark on a major diplomatic offensive to influence those European states assessed by Moscow as being willing to block future harsh sanctions. This could further threaten EU unity.

PACE yesterday voted to suspend Russia's voting rights in the organisation until end-2015. Subsequently, Moscow withdrew an invitation for PACE members to visit Russia to inspect the condition of Ukrainian pilot Nadezhda Savchenko, captured last summer in Donbas and transferred to Russia. Moscow accuses Savchenko, who is very ill and on hunger strike, of involvement in the murder of two Russian journalists. Separately, Reuters reported yesterday that Greece had withheld agreement to the initial sanctions proposal draft to be discussed in Brussels today. New Greek Energy Minister Panagiotis Lafazanis reportedly said that Greece was against sanctions against Russia.

Greece and PACE add to Russia-Europe tensions

Understanding (MoU) with the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO) to promote collaboration in renewable energy, energy efficiency, and to develop sustainable energy projects and programmes to be a platform for knowledge exchange about sustainability.

The MoU underlines DEWA's efforts to enhance cooperation with international organisations and supports its strategy to support and develop sustainable energy projects in Dubai.

The MoU was signed by HE Saeed Mohammed Al Tayer, Vice Chairman of the Supreme Council of Energy in Dubai, and MD & CEO of DEWA, and Li Yong, Director General of UNIDO. Representatives and officials from both sides were also present. According to the MoU, the two sides will promote exchange of knowledge, expertise, and professional consultation. They will develop and facilitate technology sharing with a number of energy programmes and projects in the UAE and the region. The two sides will also develop an effective model for energy-service contracts in the region, and collaborate to increase the efficiency of one of Dubai's District Cooling projects.

The signing ceremony was attended by HE Ahmed Butti Al Muhairbi, Secretary General of the Supreme Council of Energy, Waleed Salman, Executive Vice President of Strategy and Business Development, Dr. Yousef Al Akraf, Executive Vice President of Business Support and Human Resources, Abdul Nasser Abbas, Senior Director of Treasury, and Ahmed Abdullah, Senior Manager of External Communications at DEWA. It was also attended by Ivano Iannelli, CEO of the Dubai Carbon Centre of Excellence.

Dubai Supreme Council of Energy signs MoU with UNIDO to develop renewable energy and energy efficiency in GCC

"In line with the directives of His Highness Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the UAE, to produce renewable energy locally and sustain our precious resources and support growth of this promising sector, and in alignment with the Green Economy for

The Russian Corporation ROSATOM demonstrated their support for nuclear development in Malaysia and the rest of the ASEAN countries at the 6th Nuclear Power Asia Conference (NPA) that took place from January 27 to 28 in Kuala Lumpur.

ROSATOM's participation at NPA 2015 focused on engaging stakeholders and offering support for the ongoing nuclear energy development initiatives by government agencies such as Malaysian Nuclear Power Corporation (MNPC) and Malaysia Nuclear Association (MNA). The first day of the conference saw experts discussing the development of nuclear energy within South-East Asia through a plenary session moderated by Nikolay Drozdov, Director of International Business, ROSATOM.

During the plenary session, Nikolay Drozdov shared that public acceptance has been one of the key challenges in the development of nuclear power not just in Asia but globally due to alleged safety concerns and the high cost required in developing and managing nuclear power plants. However, this can be attributed to lack of knowledge on the technicalities of nuclear related technologies and how it helps to improve quality of life.

"ROSATOM's industrial participation plans are not just limited to Vietnam - there is a lot of potential to work with other countries in the region. Our cooperation with Malaysia, Thailand, Myanmar and Indonesia was very well received by the government and local nuclear agencies. We had organized a number of NPP visits since 2012 and we will continue to share our expertise and knowledge on nuclear energy development as well as the benefits it offers", Mr. Drozdov said.

ROSATOM Spearheads Expertise And Knowledge Transfer Within ASEAN Countries To Develop Nuclear Industry

"We (ROSATOM) are keen to support Malaysia and ASEAN members in their nuclear development plans by offering an integrated solution that includes industrial and financial management, skills transfer, regulatory and infrastructure management and public acceptance education", he added.

Sustainable Power Group, LLC (sPower), an independent power generation company, has agreed to acquire stake in Beacon I, Beacon III and Beacon IV solar PV power projects situated near Mojave, in Kern County, California, US, from Hecate Energy LLC, a developer and operator of power projects. The total combined installed capacity of the projects is 162 MW (AC).

The Beacon projects will be designed and built by Hecate Energy, then jointly owned and operated by sPower and Hecate Energy. The construction of the projects is expected to start in the third quarter of 2015 and expected to become operational between March and July of 2016. The power generated from the projects will be supplied to Los Angeles Department of Water and Power under a 25-year power purchase agreements. The projects are expected to generate enough power to more than 25,500 homes.

Sustainable Power to Acquire Stake in Beacon I, Beacon III and Beacon IV Solar Power Projects in California, US

Rising interest rates and austerity measures will continue to dampen growth this year, undermining prospects for any significant recovery; close to zero growth remains likely this year, with the latest Central Bank weekly survey predicting GDP growth of 0.13% for 2015. Although 2014 inflation fell narrowly within the target band, further rate rises are likely, weakening consumer demand.

Brazil primary deficit prompts new austerity moves

The central government recorded a full-year primary deficit of 17.2 billion reais (6.6 billion dollars) in 2014, it was reported today, following a smaller-than-expected primary surplus of 1.0 billion reais in December. The result marked the first annual primary deficit since the current record series began in 1997. The deficit reflected attempts to boost growth, likely to have been close to zero last year, through tax cuts and increased spending. Those efforts have now been reversed, with tax increases and spending cuts; earlier this month the government announced 2015 budget cuts of 22.7 billion reais, focussed on discretionary spending, with more reductions likely in order to meet an announced primary surplus target of 1.2% of GDP for 2015.

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Complying with an important election promise, President Michelle Bachelet has presented a bill to Congress to strengthen trade unions and encourage more widespread collective bargaining in the private sector. Given the governing coalition's majority in Congress and broad agreement among its parties on the bill's terms, it is expected to become law largely in its current form, probably by mid-year.

Impact

Small companies, where unionisation is now uncommon, are particularly concerned about the reform's implications.

A key disincentive for union membership -- non-members' access to the benefits it obtains - would disappear with the reform.

Trade unions are urging authorisation of sector-wide collective bargaining but this would require constitutional reform.

What next

In the short term, with unemployment likely to rise this year as growth recovers only slowly from last year's downturn, it will be difficult for the government to prove its claim that the proposed reform will promote job creation. Although the reform promises to correct glaring abuses, such as the division of companies into smaller units for collective bargaining purposes, it will not necessarily mean more harmonious relations and may increase the low level of strikes that has prevailed since the early 1990s.

Chile's labour reform will pass this year

The labour market will stay tight in 2015, as growth benefits from the newly launched ECB sovereign quantitative easing programme. Stronger wage growth is likely, which, together with the falling energy bill, will support household purchasing power. Therefore, private consumption could accelerate and a stronger GDP rebound is likely in the fourth quarter, for full-year 2014 growth probably around 1.5%.

Germany's employment to stay strong as growth improves

Unemployment declined in January for the fourth consecutive month, dropping by 9,000 to a total of 2.84 million people in seasonally adjusted terms, the Federal Labour Office said today. Meanwhile, the number of vacancies dropped to 6,000 from 9,000 in December and the unemployment rate dropped by 0.1 percentage points to 6.5%, its lowest level since records began in 1991. The number of unemployed contracted by 5,000 in Western Germany and by 4,000 in Eastern Germany. The German economy dipped in the second quarter, pressured by Western sanctions against Russia, and rebounded modestly in the third quarter. It strengthened in the fourth quarter as highlighted by the most recent business surveys and the consumer confidence indicator, which hit its highest level since 2001.

Even if a proposal to ban foreign land ownership is carried through into law, it is unlikely to assist the government to achieve its land reform aims, which would be better served by releasing state-owned land. The move represents an attempt by the ruling ANC to outflank the populist opposition Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), partly by appealing to xenophobic public sentiment.

Anti-foreign sentiment in South Africa will increase (land ownership ban)

ANC Secretary General Gwede Mantashe yesterday said the party would "prohibit" land ownership by foreign nationals. Speaking at a press conference following a meeting of the party's national executive committee -- which traditionally precedes the official cabinet meeting -- he also announced that land ownership should be capped at 12,000 hectares for "all forms of legal persons". Foreign nationals own approximately 3% of property in South Africa, accounting for 8,530 out of 280,395 land registrations between 2013-14. Nationally, around 25% of land is state-owned, rising to 55% in Gauteng and the Western Cape. The statement comes amid days of attacks against foreigners in major cities and EFF calls for Zimbabwe-style land invasions. A recent survey indicates that 32% of Gauteng residents believe foreigners "should be expelled".

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increased production by dairy exporters in late 2013 and early 2014 eroded prices of dairy products traded on international markets, mostly butter, cheese and milk powders. This decline accelerated from mid-2014 due to reduced Chinese imports and Russia's embargo on food imports from several dairy exporters; the two countries together account for 22% of global dairy imports. Prices for internationally traded dairy products have fallen by more than 45% since mid-2014 as export supply, though scaled back, still outstrips demand.

Impact

Rising Chinese dairy output over the longer run could fundamentally alter the global market.

Dairy prices could remain subdued beyond 2016 if global oil prices do not rise.

Russian embargo will hit EU dairy exporters, but falling production costs will boost their competitiveness.

What next

Absent an unexpected weather shock, oversupply in the global dairy products market is likely through 2015. That will squeeze the margins of exporters, especially New Zealand and the EU, and trigger a reduction in output by early 2016. Developing-country importers (in Asia and Africa) will benefit, although increased competitiveness of EU exporters could hinder development of nascent dairy exporters such as India.

Global dairy market will be depressed through 2015

A senior Bank of England official has compared banks' failures to prevent Libor and foreign exchange rigging to a fighter pilot ignoring safety checks, saying it should be in the banks' own interests to stamp out bad behaviour.

Andrew Hauser, the BoE's director of markets strategy, said ensuring good conduct had become misaligned with profitability at banks, causing systematic failures that led to traders ripping off customers in an attempt to make money.

He said that despite an "enormous" focus on improving standards at many banks, promises to reform could become like a quickly-forgotten New Year's resolution if rules are not put in place to make sure it is in a bank's best interests to do so.

Banks have been fined billions of pounds for allowing traders to manipulate key benchmarks such as interbank lending rates and currency markets, colluding to fix them at the expense of customers.

Officials have said that repeated instances of bad behaviour, some even occurring after banks were fined, show that banks have not learned their lessons from the scandals.

Banks rigging markets are 'like careless fighter pilots'

The Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC) has granted an operating licence to Trombay Power Generation Limited for a 500 MegaWatts power plant.

The 500mw power plant is to be located at Wajari village along Dadinkowa Road, Yamaltu local government area of Gombe state.

Chairman of NERC, Dr. Sam Amadi who handed over the licence to the company in Abuja on Wednesday commended the company's President, Jitendes Kumar Sachdeva for the painstaking process the bid was subjected to in the course of the application for the coal-powered plant.

Nigeria: NERC Grants Firm Licence for 500 Megawatt Power Plant

Controversial Zambian business tycoon Rajan Mahtani whose banking licence was revoked in 2005 following evidence that he was involved in money laundering has opened a commercial bank today in Malawi's capital city Lilongwe.

A comprehensive investigation has established that Rajan Mahtani was reissued the licence allegedly having corrupted the then Malawi leader, Joyce Banda, with about MK 82 billion (US\$180 million) in business deals.

"Rajan Mahtani says he promised former Malawi president Joyce Banda a \$150-million biothermal energy plant in a bid to regain his banking licence which was withdrawn 10 years ago after accusations of money laundering," an investigative report compiled by The M&G Centre for Investigative Journalism reads.

Joyce Banda Corruption-Facilitated Bank Opens Its Doors in Malawi

Tati West MP, Mr Biggie Butale has voiced concern over Botswana's high unemployment rate particularly among the youth.

Addressing residents of Jackalas 1 during a kgotla meeting on Friday (January 23), Mr Butale said it was sad that despite its level of wealth, the country still failed to create jobs for its citizens.

He said though the efforts made in this regard over the years were indeed commendable, there was still more that could be done. He said it was time government considered using the country's large coal deposits to produce fuel; saying this on its own could create quite a number of employment opportunities for Botswana.

Such a development, he said would also serve to lower the amount of money used to import fuel from other countries. Furthermore, Mr Butale said the iron ore deposits that the country has could also be used to manufacture cars, in the process creating even more jobs

Alcatel-Lucent has been selected by Vodacom South Africa to build a gigabit passive optical networking (GPON) solution to expand Vodacom's customer base enterprise and residential markets.

The new converged network enables Vodacom to provide customers with ultra-broadband needed to access bandwidth-hungry services and applications such as online gaming and streaming video.

Vodacom will deploy Alcatel-Lucent's comprehensive end-to-end GPON solution, as well as the Motive customer experience platform to provide high-quality network performance through advanced performance management capabilities across both wireline and wireless. Vodacom expects to reach about 150,000 homes and 100,000 business within the next three years.

A R9.65-billion investment in infrastructure projects at Saldanha Bay, on South Africa's West Coast, was announced by the Transnet National Ports Authority on Monday.

These are aimed at enhancing the deep-water port's ability to service the offshore oil and gas industry.

TNPA, a division of state-owned entity Transnet, is mandated to control and manage all eight commercial ports on South Africa's 2 954km of coastline.

The project falls under the government's "blue economy" plans of its Operation Phakisa initiative, announced by President Jacob Zuma in 2014. The aim of the project is to clear infrastructure bottlenecks that may be constraining economic growth.

The Bank of England governor, Mark Carney, has launched a strong attack on austerity in the eurozone as he warned that the single-currency area was caught in a debt trap that could cost it a second lost decade.

Speaking in Dublin, Carney said the eurozone needed to ease its hardline budgetary policies and make rapid progress towards a fiscal union that would transfer resources from rich to poor countries.

"It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that, if the eurozone were a country, fiscal policy would be substantially more supportive," the governor said. "However, it is tighter than in the UK, even though Europe still lacks other effective risk-sharing mechanisms and is relatively inflexible."

Low yields, disease and root death brought on by the driest season in 100 years poses a mortal threat to KZN sugarcane farmers' livelihood.

Farmers will go under and thousands of farm workers will lose their jobs if the drought continues through the two remaining months of the rainy season.

KZN premier Senzu Mchunu in November approved an application brought by the department of co-operative governance and traditional affairs to declare KZN to be in a state of disaster, making the province eligible for financial assistance from the National Disaster Relief Fund.

Municipalities declared disaster areas within the Ilembe district include Maphumulo, Ndwedwe and KwaDukuza. Based on rainfall statistics, Mandeni is the driest municipality in Ilembe and it is unclear why they were not included.

The South African Cane Growers' Association North Coast regional manager Brendon Nothard said the KZN North Coast was one of the most severely affected regions.

Botswana: Butale Decries High Unemployment Rate

South Africa: Alcatel-Lucent to Build Vodacom South Africa's FTTH Network

South Africa: R10 Billion Boost for SA's Saldanha Bay

Bank of England governor attacks eurozone austerity

Cane farmers in trouble

Although community protest action in South Africa has remained stable over the past five years, the level of violence that accompanied them has increased, according to Johan Burger, senior researcher at the Institute for Security Studies (ISS).

Speaking to The Citizen on Tuesday, Burger said the escalation of violence had, according to police, increased by 90%.

"This indicates violence is becoming uniquely South African," he said.

"The possible reasons for the violent acts include the inequality gap among citizens, the high levels of frustrations, which also contributed to the recent looting of foreign nationals' shops, and communities feeling neglected due to lack of service delivery in some areas."

Burger said about 11 000 protests had been recorded annually in the past five years.

Burger said an economic indaba, similar to the political indaba that led to the first democratic elections in 1994, was needed.

"There is no immediate and quick solution to the violent protests, but government needs to improve the delivery of services, particularly to poor communities, as this can also contribute to the reduction in the high level of frustrations," Burger said.

The country has been engulfed in protests, ranging from lack of service delivery to the looting of shops belonging to foreign nationals.

Political analyst Elvis Masoga said a combination of genuine community grievances and criminality fuelled violent protests.

"Criminals always thrive on opportunities when realising community members are fighting. It has now reached boiling point, where criminals are hijacking and exploiting genuine grievances of locals," he said.

Two Israeli soldiers and a Spanish UN peacekeeper have been killed as Hezbollah militants traded fire with Israeli forces on the Lebanese border.

After Israeli forces were hit by missile fire, they responded by firing shells into southern Lebanon.

The UN Security Council is to discuss the fighting at an emergency meeting called by France in New York.

A senior UN official on the ground in Lebanon urged "maximum restraint to prevent an escalation".

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu held an emergency security meeting and said the attackers would "pay the full price".

The cross-border violence erupted when Israeli military vehicles were struck by anti-tank missiles at about 11:35 (09:35 GMT) near Mt Dov, in the Shebaa Farms area, a tract of land where the borders of Israel, Lebanon and Syria meet.

At least 10 people were killed in a suicide attack in northern Mali, United Nations and government sources said Wednesday, as well as four assailants.

Four suicide bombers exploded their vehicles near the northern town of Tabankort on Tuesday, sources close to the government and the UN peacekeeping mission in Mali (Minusma) told dpa.

Ten people were killed on the spot, as well as the suicide bombers, the sources said.

No further details about the attack or the identity of the rebels could be confirmed.

The attack comes a few days after Minusma carried out airstrikes against rebel forces in the area.

The poverty-stricken West African nation is recovering from a March 2012 military coup and an Islamist insurgency that prompted France to send troops to its former colony.

Protest violence increased by 90%

Three killed as Israel and Hezbollah clash on Lebanese border

10 dead in Mali suicide attack

FINANCE minister Patrick Chinamasa has tabled the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe (RBZ) debt assumption bill before Parliament seeking authority for government to take over the central bank's mammoth liabilities.

According to the minister, the RBZ, during the hyper-inflation era, incurred a debt of over \$1.3 billion to fund various quasi fiscal activities.

The programmes included election financing and a farm mechanisation scheme which critics claim largely benefited members of the ruling Zanu PF party.

During consultations with members of the public, most Zimbabweans rejected the proposal for government to take-over the debt saying those who benefitted from the RBZ's controversial programmes should foot the bill.

But Chinamasa said the debt had become a hindrance to the central bank's supervisory activities as well as the institution's creditworthiness to the international market.

Presenting the bill in the national assembly, Chinamasa said at least \$500 million of the debt would be added to the country's already existing foreign obligations of \$6.2 billion.

Zimbabwe: Chinamasa Pushes Takeover of U.S \$1.3 Billion RBZ Debt

Cases of deadly mosquito-borne Japanese encephalitis have risen nearly five-fold in five years in India's northeast Assam state as a result of warming weather and changing rainfall, health experts say.

Between 2010 and 2014, the number of annual cases rose from 154 to 744, with deaths rising from 41 to 160, according to data from the Assam health department. The disease, which in 2009 was recorded in only half of the state's districts, now is seen in all of them.

Doctors say climate change has played a major role in the spread of the disease, which once appear largely from May to July, but now is seen as late in the year as November, as mosquitoes survive longer in warmer conditions.

Deadly Japanese encephalitis surges in northeast India

Japanese encephalitis is characterised by inflammation of the brain and high fever.

MUZAFFARABAD, Pakistan (Thomson Reuters Foundation) - Financial hardship after a failed apple crop forced Aqeel Ahmed to give up his studies aged 20 and join a militant group fighting Indian rule across the border in the disputed territory of Kashmir.

His family, as in many remote villages in Pakistan-administered Kashmir, had banked on earning half a million rupees (\$5,000) from their orchard that year. But a sudden cold snap followed by torrential rains and a frost wrecked the apple blossom, dashing their hopes of making enough to buy food.

"I went from pillar to post to find any work I could to help my family come out of crisis after the crop loss, but I failed due to having no references or contact with government departments or businesses back then," Ahmed, now 46, told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

Climate stresses push Kashmir's poor into militancy, Pakistan experts warn

Eventually he was tempted by supporters of a militant group who were going round colleges to recruit students. They gave him a few thousand rupees for his family and took him to a training camp in Afghanistan for three months
Kobani had been battle site for 112 days

* Islamic State still controls surrounding areas

Kurds push Islamic State out of Kobani after four-month battle

* U.S.-led forces have carried out repeated strikes (Adds U.S. saying 90 percent of Kobani controlled by anti-IS forces, paragraph 12)

Hundreds of people protesting against air strikes on Tuareg rebels by United Nations peacekeepers in Mali occupied the airport in the northern town of Kidal on Wednesday, forcing U.N. troops to abandon positions there.

The protest by several hundred people - mainly women and children - in the rebel stronghold comes a day after Dutch U.N. attack helicopters hit rebel forces in northern Mali during clashes over a separate town, the first such engagement by peacekeepers.

"They were violent. They threw stones, they burned some assets," U.N. spokeswoman Radhia Achouri told Reuters. "We ordered our units guarding the airport to go inside the camp."

Hundreds protest in northern Mali town against UN strikes on rebels

Achouri said 200-300 people were involved in the protest.

The Niger government has lifted a ban on refugee camps in the south of the country as record numbers flee Boko Haram attacks in neighbouring Nigeria.

The government had banned the camps fearing Boko Haram fighters might use them as bases to launch attacks in Niger and Nigeria as part of their drive to carve out an Islamic caliphate.

But a Niger government official said communities in Niger's Diffa region had been overwhelmed by new arrivals, prompting the government to reverse the two-year-old policy, a move welcomed by the United Nations.

"We hoped the displacement would stop, but people continue to arrive, and our villages and towns can no longer absorb the masses of people coming," Hassane Ardo Ido, general-secretary of Diffa province, told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

According to government figures, some 150,000 refugees as well as returning Niger migrants are seeking shelter amongst locals in Diffa, an impoverished region recovering from drought

Niger lifts refugee camp ban as record numbers flee Boko Haram

Plague has killed 57 people out of 213 known cases in Madagascar and more deaths are feared after recent flooding forced tens of thousands of people from their homes and set rats on the run, the World Health Organization said on Tuesday.

The U.N. agency's first update since late November, when there were 119 cases including 40 deaths, was based on new figures from the Health Ministry.

Plague cases rise in Madagascar, fear of more epidemics

The outbreak began in August on the Indian Ocean island, one of the world's poorest countries, where the disease is endemi

The South African water crisis is a complex series of interlocking problems that preclude a silver-bullet solution. Each water system is unique, with different geographies, weather, populations and quirks, such as an unwillingness to reuse treated waste water.

Read: Heels drag while taps run dry

Read: South Africa's great thirst has begun

Read: Editorial: A thirsty future beckons

Some short-term interventions are obvious, if expensive, such as reducing demand by cutting losses from leaking pipes. Other solutions are both expensive and less obvious, such as moving towards renewable electricity sources – which do not require water for cooling or to run turbines – as quickly as possible.

But much of the problem is political, administrative and regulatory, and these are the issues that have not been addressed over the past 20 years.

These are the eight most important interventions that can mitigate the water crisis.

Admit that water provision is a serious problem

At the moment the government is congratulating itself for rolling out water infrastructure to 95% of the population, but it is not publicly drilling into these numbers. In reality, a third of South Africans do not have regularly flowing water. Although the government has made huge strides in supplying water to people the apartheid government ignored, it has to acknowledge that there is a lot more to be done. This includes fixing water projects that do not work because they were not built properly

Political will and administrative and regulatory changes are needed to reduce the country's water problems.

Electricity theft, meter tampering and faulty meters cost the City of Tshwane R416 million in the 2013/14 financial year. This is an 83% increase over the previous year.

Together with technical losses, the municipality lost income from electricity to the value of R819 million, up from R622 million in the previous financial year.

In total 14.25% of all electricity available for sale was lost. This is a sharp increase from 11.03% in the previous financial year and comes as the country is subjected to load shedding because of a supply shortage.

The norm for electricity losses in big cities is 6%-8%, Leon Claassen, analyst at Ratings Afrika earlier told Moneyweb.

The extent of the electricity losses was disclosed in the Auditor-General's (AG) audit report that will be tabled in council on Thursday.

Tshwane electricity theft spirals out of control

Water scarcity or lack of safe drinking water is one of the world's leading problems affecting an estimated more than 1.1 billion people globally, meaning that one in every six people lacks access to safe drinking water.

Zanzibar with a population of 1.3 million people (2012 census) may be better off compared with other nations, but the recent shortage of water in many areas including villages and in the municipality indicates that the islands need to do more to have water.

In many public political rallies, and even during events to celebrate the 51st anniversary of the Revolution, the issue of water shortage dominated many meetings, as people raised their voices demanding water.

Scarcity of safe water remains one of the social challenges which sparked heated debate in the House of Representatives, as backbenchers press the government to solve the problem.

President Ali Mohamed Shein could not also avoid including the issue of water in his speech at the climax of the 51st anniversary celebrations saying the revolutionary government in all its phases of 51 years has implemented various programmes to provide clean and safe water to the people, believing that water is life.

Zanzibar Is Overcoming Water Scarcity

Kenya Power has just launched a programme whereby more than 30,000 residents of Nairobi's Mathare Area 4, a low-income estate, will benefit. Residents will pay a very generously subsidised Sh1,160 per connection, against the usual charge of Sh35,000. The World Bank will contribute Sh19,350 and Kenya Power Sh11,970 per connection. The wags of Mathare Area 4 will doubtless soon boast about being personally powered and empowered by no less an entity than the World Bank. This is as it should be. The slum electrification project, which has also been rolled out in Kibera, Mukuru and parts of Mombasa, will also be installed in Kiambiu in Eastleigh, Mji wa Huruma near Runda estate, Gituamba and Korogocho in Kasarani, Soweto in Kahawa West and Carton City in Buru Buru.

The electrification of low-income areas is a species of wealth redistribution and inclusiveness. The way Kenya Power and the World Bank are doing it is a benefit at minimal cost

Kenya: Slum Electrification

Parliament in the Democratic Republic of Congo has passed a new election law after contentious provisions ordering a pre-election census were removed. The previous version had caused deadly protests.

Lawmakers in the Democratic Republic of Congo on Sunday gave final approval to a disputed new election law in a version amended to remove provisions that the opposition claimed would extend President Joseph Kabila's term in office.

The law, which in its previous version ordered a national census before the next presidential election in 2016, triggered days of protests that killed dozens after the lower house passed it last weekend.

The second vote in the National Assembly on Sunday came after the Senate, under public and diplomatic pressure, on Friday amended the bill to read that the electoral roll only had to be updated by the time elections take place in 2016.

Congo-Kinshasa: Democratic Republic of Congo Parliament Passes Election Law Without Controversial Provisions

Opponents fear Kabila will hang on to power

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conductor from aramid nanofibers," the U-M team described how they extracted nanofibers of aramid from Kevlar, and layered them on top of each other in the form of thin sheets to create a new membrane.

The basic idea was to engineer a membrane with pores big enough to allow lithium ions to hop through, but too small to admit dendrites.

As described by U-M, the tip of a dendrite fern ranges from 20 to 50 nanometers across, but conventional membranes typically have pores in the hundreds-of-nanometers range, allowing for relatively easy passage.

In contrast, the aramid fiber membrane has pores that only range between 15 and 20 nanometers, blocking all but the very smallest dendrites.

That takes care of those dendrites, now what about lightweighting? Well, it seems that the U-M team got a twofer. Because the aramid membrane is extremely thin, it improves energy density, so you can shrink the size of the battery cell and still get the same energy. Alternatively, you can have a battery cell the same size, but with more energy.

The next step for the team is to improve the flow of lithium ions through the membrane, with the aim of developing improved fast-charging (and fast-discharging) batteries.

Meanwhile, the team has already spun off a company called Elegus Technologies to market the new membrane material, with commercial production expected late in 2016.

Energy Storage Breakthrough From Bullet Proof Dendrite-Squashing Yellow Fuzz

For the record, the research was funded partly by the National Science Foundation, the Office of Naval Research, and the Air Force Office Scientific Research, so go ahead and give

As the crisis in Ukraine increases, former Soviet Union states will look to boost security, leading in some cases to a further clampdown of democratic pluralism. Defence budgets and increasing military capabilities will be key requirements. A robust security response to peaceful protests heightens the risk of significant escalation and possibly major unrest.

Following a visit to Kazakhstan over January 19-27, United Nations Special Rapporteur Maina Kiai criticised Kazakhstan for limiting peaceful assembly and the fact that there was very little room for dissenting views, Reuters reported today. The UN official said yesterday that Kazakhstani government officials were limiting peaceful assembly out of fear of a revolution. Belarus has also adopted a new law stating that Minsk will consider the uninvited appearance inside Belarus of foreign armed groups, irregular or regular military forces as an act of aggression. This appears to be a message to the West and Russia that Belarus will resist foreign interference. Violence continues in Ukraine and yesterday Kyiv's parliament adopted a resolution branding Russia an aggressor state. Also the European Commission approved the issue of 1.80 billion euros (2.04 billion dollars) in Ukrainian financial aid.

Ukraine crisis increases instability fears in region

On January 14, Malaysian commercial banks CIMB Group, RHB Capital and Malaysian Building Society (MBS) confirmed in a statement that their merger plan had been cancelled, blaming adverse economic conditions and falling share prices. The merger's cancellation has compounded difficulties facing Malaysian banking, and disadvantaged Malaysia in ASEAN financial industry integration and in expanding its Islamic finance industry.

Impact

Malaysia will face increasing competition in Islamic finance.

Until market conditions improve, Malaysian banks cannot realistically strengthen their capital bases.

RHB may seek a merger to strengthen its business position.

What next

ASEAN financial integration requires Malaysian banks to consolidate, so the three-bank merger failure will not preclude mergers when market and business sentiment improves. More crucially, Malaysian banking faces significant fundamental difficulties: its Islamic finance lead is threatened and its advantage in ASEAN integration is constrained

Malaysia bank merger failure exacerbates future risks

THE value of spending on new infrastructure, central to the government's stated strategy of using infrastructure investment to spur growth and create jobs, halved last year compared with 2013.

Nedbank Capital's expenditure project listing, released on Tuesday, found the private sector contributed 77% of the 65 new projects worth R95.4bn announced last year. This was down from 85 projects worth R187.9bn in 2013.

In the public sector new projects announced last year were worth R10.5bn — significantly lower than R42.4bn in 2013, according to Nedbank.

Treasury declined to comment on this figure on Tuesday.

The government has been trying to use infrastructure expenditure as the trigger to lift SA's economy out of its low-growth trajectory despite a desperate electricity crisis. It hopes large-scale spending on infrastructure will create jobs.

Reserve Bank governor Lesetja Kganyago said last week that SA had a "significant implementation deficit" when it came to its development plans.

Private-sector spending was at its lowest in a decade last year, and government spending was the lowest since 2010, amid low global growth and drawn-out strikes in mining and manufacturing.

Bad omen as capital spending halves

The Chinese government is seeking the secondment of its officials to key Zimbabwe parastatals to ensure that Chinese loans for government projects are not lost to "leakages", it emerged this week.

A Chinese delegation was in Zimbabwe to lay the groundwork for the implementation of economic agreements signed in August by the two countries. There are now concerns from some government officials that the Chinese government is angling for a greater stake in, and control of, Zimbabwe's natural resources and government entities before the agreements are implemented.

Zimbabwe has so far failed to get the \$27-billion it is seeking to implement its ambitious economic blueprint, the Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Socio-Economic Transformation (ZimAsset), which the government sees as a panacea to the country's economic problems.

Zimbabwe signed a number of memorandums of understanding with China during President Robert Mugabe's visit there last year, which the government said would kick-start the implementation of ZimAsset and aid efforts to revive the economy.

China pledged to assist Zimbabwe in implementing infrastructure -projects in various sectors of the economy, including power generation, water, telecommunications, agriculture and mining.

China puts screws on Zim wants to safeguard its loans

Japan's energy storage market looks set for a boost in 2015 thanks to a planned cash injection of 81 billion yen (\$700 million).

The support package is being mulled by the Japanese Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) alongside an additional 93 billion yen (\$779 million) for energy efficiency measures such as light-emitting diode lamps and efficient boilers, Bloomberg reported.

A METI official said the details of the funding package, including how businesses could apply for energy storage incentives, had yet to be made public.

It is understood the budget will be available to consumers, companies and industry associations, and that METI is working closely with the Energy Conservation Center of Japan on the fine points of the scheme. The funding is being considered to balance the grid in the country.

Japan Plans to Pump \$700 Million Into Energy Storage

Russia is looking to strengthen relationships with emerging markets, including reorienting its energy trade by increasing oil and gas exports to China to offset its reliance on the European market. At the same time, it is cementing bilateral relationships along its western and southern borders with Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan through the extension of the Eurasian Economic Union.

Russia is cementing bilateral relationships along its western and southern borders

Water shedding a possibility for KZN

The eThekweni Municipality is appealing to residents to continue using water sparingly as the current status of the Hazelmere dam level is sitting at 35.06 percent and the water level is dropping consistently. According to a statement released by the municipality it has had to operationally shut down certain reservoirs on the northern region. "Despite our appeal urging customers to save water, consumers have not heeded our call to conserve water in the predicament that we currently face," says eThekweni spokesperson Tozi Mthethwa. "It must also be noted that the recent rainfall did not make any positive impact on the level of Hazelmere dam," Mthethwa added. The municipality says Umgeni Water is monitoring storage dams closely and advising them accordingly regarding action to be taking.

Corruption protest in Kenya's Maasai Mara region turns violent

At least seven people were injured on Monday in clashes between Kenyan police and protesters from the Maasai ethnic group who accuse a local governor of corrupt handling of tourism funds from the Maasai Mara game reserve, the Kenya Red Cross said. Kenya television said at least one person was killed during the violence, in which witnesses said police used teargas and fired shots as thousands of Maasais clad in traditional red cloaks marched to the governor's office. Police had no immediate comment on the report and the Red Cross did not report any deaths.

Corruption protest in Kenya's Maasai Mara region turns violent

At the gates of Governor Samuel Tunai's office in Narok town, the administrative centre of the sprawling Maasai Mara game park, demonstrators chanted: "Tunai must go." Some hurled rocks. At least seven people were injured on Monday in clashes between Kenyan police and protesters from the Maasai ethnic group who accuse a local governor of corrupt handling of tourism funds from the Maasai Mara game reserve, the Kenya Red Cross said. Kenya television said at least one person was killed during the violence, in which witnesses said police used teargas and fired shots as thousands of Maasais clad in traditional red cloaks marched to the governor's office. Police had no immediate comment on the report and the Red Cross did not report any deaths.

UN agency delivers food to thousands of refugees on Nigeria-Chad border

At the gates of Governor Samuel Tunai's office in Narok town, the administrative centre of the sprawling Maasai Mara game park, demonstrators chanted: "Tunai must go." Some hurled rocks. With a "tense and highly volatile" situation in North-Eastern Nigeria at the Chadian Lac border, United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) announced today that it has begun distributing food to thousands of refugees who have recently been displaced by the region's escalating violence and urged that it required some \$11 million to continue to meet those needs. Distribution of 159 tons of WFP rations started today in the border region in Baga Sola, and the agency is planning a first round of distributions for 10 days to more than 7,800 refugees from Ngouboua in Nigeria, of whom 4,103 are new arrivals, WFP spokesperson Elisabeth Byrs told reporters at a press conference in Geneva. The situation in the Central Africa region has been deteriorating in recent months. Just last weekend, Boko Haram insurgents pillaged villages and abducted some 80 people in Cameroon in one of the group's biggest kidnappings to take place outside of Nigeria. This sparked fears through-out region that the insurgents were gaining ground and expanding their attacks.

On Monday, Chad's Government said it would deploy troops to Cameroon to help fight the armed group and keep the violence from spreading to other countries.

Thousands of panic stricken Cameroonians are fleeing the border with Nigeria for safer localities in the hinterlands following persistent attacks and killings by fighters of the Nigerian militant group Boko Haram. The government says humanitarian and food crises loom as insurgents loot food and livestock from farms. In last Sunday's attack, in which dozens of people were kidnapped, the attackers also left with more than 200 cattle.

Thirty-two-year-old Lamsi Mamaina has just arrived at the palace of the lamido, the traditional ruler, of Rey Bouba in north Cameroon. She said she fled from Tourou, on Cameroon's border with Nigeria, where she had been living for 15 years. She came to Rey Bouba to tell her husband's parents that she had not seen him since the attack by suspected Boko Haram fighters.

She added that she does not know where her family members are. She said some died in front of her and others cried in pain while she was able to escape. Wherever they are, she said, she can only give thanks to God and hope to meet them one day.

The lamido of Rey Bouba, Aboubakari Abdoulaye, said he has been receiving hundreds of refugees from the border with Nigeria.

He said all of his people have been educated on the need to work in solidarity with their suffering brothers and sisters. He said they have organized themselves and are receiving all the displaced people, who, he added, tell horrifying stories.

But not all the people are ready to receive the strangers. Lakinjo Amidou, a cattle rancher in Rey Bouba, said Cameroonians have to be sure that the people they are helping are not Boko Haram militants in disguise.

Thousands Flee Boko Haram Threats

The listed property sector is expected to achieve a significantly lower total return this year than the 26.6 percent achieved last year in terms of the South African listed property index. Stan Garrun, the managing director of Investment Property Databank South Africa, believed this year will be tough for the sector.

Garrun attributed this to the sluggish economy, property rentals being under pressure and vacancies remaining sticky with no signs yet of any turnaround, while retail sales were expected to "take a hit".

Interest rates were on the way down and inflation could soften but the fundamentals would "take the cream off the top" of the performance of the sector, he said.

Listed property to achieve lower returns

Garrun did not believe that the listed property sector would have as good a year this year as last year, largely because of the economic fundamentals.

On this at least there is consensus: South Africa faces a thirsty future – even if there is still disagreement on the important details, such as just how bad the situation is right now and when it will be appropriate to call it a crisis.

From the vantage point of early 2015 the consensus seems laughably obvious, with every study and statistic and projection in agreement and anecdotes of daily struggles too numerous to ignore.

Our next crisis, WATER

Recent years have seen a rise in the number of French Jews leaving for Israel, with fear of attacks being the most important reason for making the so-called "Aliyah," as the "return" to Israel is referred. And the list of attacks is long. In 2006, young mobile-phone salesman Ilan Halimi was kidnapped by a youth gang and tortured to death. Two years ago, gunman Mohamed Merah shot and killed children and a teacher at a Jewish school in Toulouse. Just two months ago, a couple was robbed in the Créteil district on the outskirts of Paris and the woman was raped.

Increasing Numbers of French Jews Moving to Israel

The upgrading and augmentation of the Johannesburg Water's Olifantsvlei Wastewater Treatment Works Module-3 in the southern part of the City of Johannesburg is finally nearing completion according to the City.

The augmentation from the current capacity of 180 megalitres per day by 50 megalitres per day is intended to cater for increased growth in demand from population, higher densification, and will service an additional 50 000 new housing units as well as meet the stringent treated effluent compliance standards to mitigate contamination of streams and rivers in the catchment area.

The upgrade costs approximately R170 million and consists of an activated sludge reactor, mixers aerators, recycling pumps, a flow divider, three clarifiers, a pump station, three electrical rooms, a monitoring building, inter-connecting pipework, paved roads, storm water drains and cable trenches.

Johburg water treatment facility nears completion

Africa needs to soften its borders, and expand intra-regional trade. This was a repeated call at this year's World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos, Switzerland.

In a panel discussion on CNBC, held at WEF, Sunil Bharti Mittal, chairman of Bharti Enterprises, puts intra-Africa trade at 9% of the continent's overall trade. "That needs to rise," he says.

Intra-Africa trade is growing, slowly

Mittal calls attention to a common situation: products are shipped to Asia to be processed, only to be imported back to Africa. "You need to have much more alignment in Africa. The AU (African Union) needs to start discussing massive infrastructure linkages within the countries – wherever possible around the coastal areas, you need to link the continent," he says

One of Nigeria's most lucrative agricultural sectors, the Poultry industry, has been struck with the H5N1 virus more commonly known as the Bird Flu. Reports from the country's Ministry of Agriculture suggest that over 140,000 birds may have been exposed to the deadly disease.

Bird Flu Is Back In Nigeria

Over 21 farms spread across seven Nigerian states, including its commercial hub, Lagos have either recorded cases or been exposed to the disease, the report added. Authorities, according to ThisDay, believe the disease arrived in Lagos and Kano – the country's two biggest commercial communities in Nigeria – last week. One resident of Lagos state told Ventures that the Lagos outbreak might have originated from a farm in Ajah, a small community on the Lagos Island

South Africa-headquartered Standard Bank has invested half a billion US dollars in different sectors of the Mozambique's economy, mostly in the form of loans. It revealed this through an official statement this week.

"The telecommunications, construction, agri-industry, manufacturing, mining and infrastructure sectors were the main areas for which the bank granted loans," said Director of Corporate and Investment Banking at Standard Bank, André du Plessis in a statement.

The bank added some of the biggest investment projects it supported in Mozambique include the expansion of the Sena Railway line that runs through the centre of the country. It is currently the main vehicle used by mining companies operating in Moatize, Tete province, to export coal amounting to about six million tons. The rail line is managed by the Mozambican Port and Railway Company (CFM).

Standard Bank Says Investments In Mozambique Have Exceeded \$500m

In the energy sector, the bank said it provided funding to the tune of \$170 million. The funds went into the construction of a thermal gas-fired power station, with an installed capacity of 118 megawatts in the town of Ressano Garcia, south of Mozambique. The plant is operated by Gigawatt Moçambique, SA.

The countries worst affected by tropical storm Chedza (Mozambique, Malawi and Madagascar) all face the possibility of depressed export revenues due to flood-damaged crops. This will exacerbate their deteriorating fiscal outlooks -- already under strain from aid suspensions (in the case of the latter two) and heavy borrowing (in the case of Mozambique). This situation may create momentum for emergency financing from the IMF.

Southern Africa floods will hit agricultural exports

The Malawi government announced it will need over 65 million dollars in emergency aid to assist the 120,000 people displaced by flooding, media reported today. The rains -- the worst in 24 years -- have caused 62 deaths in the country, 71 in neighbouring Mozambique and 13 in Madagascar. Around 63,000 hectares of agricultural land is submerged in Malawi, causing extensive damage to its primary export crops (tobacco and maize). The expected loss in food stocks is 48,000 tonnes. Meanwhile, the UN has warned that flooding in other parts of the Zambezi River basin is "above alert level". This could spell a wider downturn in agricultural output for the region. South Africa, Japan, Canada and the United Kingdom are providing aid or in-kind assistance.

National Foods has invested \$6,2 million into contract farming in the 2014/15 agricultural season spread across maize, wheat and soya bean crops. Chief executive Mike Lashbrook said the scheme covers 58 farmers and is administered by Paperhole Investments (Pvt) Ltd.

"The investment into the 2014/15 contract farming program totals \$6,2 million spread between Wheat, Maize and Soya Bean crops," he said.

Mr Lashbrook said combined hectareage covers 7 500 hectares.

Under the scheme last season, the group produced 15 000 metric tonnes of maize and soya beans in the as well as 25 000MT wheat.

Zimbabwe: National Foods Invests U.S.\$6,2 Million Into Contract Farming

The company also procures grain from local farmers and imports in cases where there is inadequate local product.

Chancellor Angela Merkel has told a convention organised by the German Renewable Energy Federation (BFE) that she is not in favour of capacity markets.

The chancellor's statement is a blow to coal and gas-fired power plant operators who are lobbying for payments for their unprofitable facilities in return for maintaining the country's energy security during renewable power fluctuations.

Addressing the reception on Wednesday, she said, "I share your scepticism as regards to capacity markets. We want the most efficient solution." Reuters reports that while Merkel acknowledged the thermal power plant producers' concerns at the event, she said this could not mean helping plants with high CO2 emissions survive under Germany's climate protection targets.

Merkel shoots down payments to gas and coal power utilities

Merkel also said that building planned power transmission lines to transport wind power produced in Germany's north to the industrial south and west had a high priority, despite protests by locals who do not want new infrastructure nearby

African countries have come under scrutiny for failure to prioritise water in their development agendas.

Speaking to the Inter Press services (IPS), Thomas Chiramba, Head of Freshwater Ecosystems Unit at the U.N. Environment Programme (UNEP) in Kenya, said that in spite of progress on the third component of the Millennium Development Goals 7 water scarcity still poses a significant threat to sustainable development in Africa.

Attending the United Nations' International Water Conference being held in Zaragoza, Spain last week, he said that "there is too much focus on household water access indices and not enough on linkages between water and sustainable development."

While there are now more people in Africa with improved sources of water and sanitation, experts say that this is not enough. The continent is still facing water scarcity, with negative implications for growth and health.

Africa fails to prioritise water in development agenda

Nearly 25 000 Kannaland municipality residents, mostly poor workers, face disconnection from the electricity grid next month if the municipality does not pay its outstanding debt to Eskom. The municipality is about 340km north-east of Cape Town and comprises Calitzdorp,

Ladismith, Vanwyksdorp and Zoar. Many people living in the areas work on apricot, peach and grape farms, as well as in dairy factories. For the last five years the municipality has been in debt with the parastatal and has racked up a bill of about R12-million, part of which has been outstanding and in escalation since May last year. Kannaland municipality jointly owes Eskom R55-million in unpaid bills, together with surrounding Oudtshoorn and Cederberg municipalities. Eskom issued a notice to the municipality at the end of last year, which explained that its failure to pay its electricity account has jeopardised the financial sustainability of supplying electricity. Eskom provincial spokesperson Jolene Henn said the disconnection of electricity is a last resort. "Eskom is continuously engaging with defaulting municipalities and has made significant progress with payment negotiations. Eskom continues to address the issue with the relevant stakeholders to find a sustainable solution to

Eskom to decide on Kannaland switch-off

the issue of municipal debt.

Eskom Holdings agreed to provide 300 MW of off-peak electricity to Zambia

Eskom Holdings agreed to provide 300 MW of off-peak electricity to Zambia as its own grid stabilises. "Eskom signed a power-supply agreement with Zesco and an independent power producer, Copperbelt", which are both members of the Southern Africa Power Pool, where utilities sold surplus electricity to each other, Eskom said on Friday. Zambian Energy and Water Development Minister Dora Siliya expressed interest in the supply of 300MW when she met President Jacob Zuma last week.

Zambia's electricity problem, crisis on country's forestry sector

Zambia: According to media reports, in mid-June last year, Zambia found itself faced with a crippling electricity shortage. The country started struggling with a 560 MW power deficit and to date, the situation has not changed as demand for electricity grows to 200 MW annually. Zesco has reportedly embarked on a countrywide power rationing scheme in its efforts to maximise the power generated from the limited water currently available for power generation, until the 2015/16 rainy season kicks in.

Zambia's electricity problem, crisis on country's forestry sector
FTSE climbs after global sell-off sparked by oil plunging below \$28 a barrel

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Japanese stocks hit one-year low on Monday morning after Middle East saw more than £27bn wiped off stocks as Tehran enters oil war

Germany proposes EU petrol tax to pay for refugees

Germany's finance minister Wolfgang Schaeuble has proposed an EU-wide tax on petrol to cover the costs of the refugee crisis.
"If the funds in the national budgets and the European budget are not sufficient, then let us agree for instance on collecting a levy on every litre of petrol at a specific amount," he said in an interview with Sueddeutsche Zeitung newspaper published on Saturday (16 January).
The German minister, a key ally of chancellor Angela Merkel, said the funds were necessary to strengthen the bloc's external borders.

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NERC warns discos against rejecting electricity from TCN

Nigeria: Head of the Service of the Federation, Mrs. Winifred Ekanem Oyo-Ita, has pledged to assist the nation's electricity distribution companies in getting all ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs) of the Federal Government to settle their electricity bills. The Guardian had recently reported that a debt of about 49,305,181,196.66 naira, owed to electricity distribution companies, was one of the impediments against their efficient operation

proposed LADWP electricity hikes are 'reasonable

U.S.: The Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP) is attempting to raise electricity rates and a ratepayer advocate says the increase is reasonable. The LADWP wants to avoid power outages, but with the ageing infrastructure, customers do not always experience reliable electricity supply. Fred Pickel, executive director of the Office of Public Accountability, said the rate increases are acceptable. "The proposals are for increases in capital spending to improve infrastructure and also for increased conservation measures, increased operating costs", he said

Schools, varsity switch to solar energy to save on power bills

India: In an attempt to dodge Haryana's "sky-rocketing" power tariff, many private schools and universities in Gurgaon are reportedly installing solar generation plants in their campuses. Reports state that the move will help reduce rising air pollution levels in Gurgaon, which saw a major increase in November and December. Additionally, as the state discoms struggle to bridge the gap between the demand and supply of power, Gurgaon has been hit by frequent and long power cuts. The crisis worsens in summer, when residents depend on diesel generators

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Nigeria: World Bank approves 459MW gas-fired Azura IPP

The World Bank has announced its approval to support the development of the 459MW gas-fired Azura Independent Power Project (IPP) to be located in the remote area of Benin City in Edo state, Nigeria.

Local media, This Day Live, reported that the bank confirmed the development on Friday last week in a company statement. The Bank stated that its Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA), a political risk insurance and credit enhancement arm of the World Bank Group, has approved its support towards the development of Azura-Edo IPP. The project has now attained its financial close.

NPOs fear increasing state control, and an amplification of the existing dysfunction

Although registration with the department is voluntary, nonprofits rely on their registration number to secure funding from donors. Now, the department has set a deadline of March 2016 for the completion of the formal processes with the Cabinet, Parliament and the public sector that will lead to a draft NPO Bill. At the end of 2012, a civil society organisation reported that there was an astonishing mass deregistration of 50 000 NPOs, which led to them losing their registration status, and possible funders.

The department contested the figure and said just over 23 000 organisations had been deregistered. Tens of thousands more were listed as noncompliant. Nonprofits are listed as compliant or deregistered when they fail to comply with the NPO Act, namely by failing to file annual financial reports and narrative accounts of their activities.

In the same year, the department released a policy framework to review the Act. It recommended that two new statutory bodies, the South African Nonprofit Organisations Regulatory Authority (Sanpora) and the South African Nonprofit Organisations Tribunal (Sanpotri) be established to better regulate the sector.

These bodies would ultimately give the state more power over NPOs because of their regulatory authority, which is just one of the concerns that NPOs have fought against. For the past year, the department has been silent on the progress of the Bill, but the NPO directorate, which is a branch of the department that implements the Act, has remained woefully ineffective. The department has admitted many times that the directorate is underresourced and "does not have the capacity to discharge this function effectively", because it is unable to keep up with the high number of nonprofits that apply for registration.

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Outa takes aim at nuclear and SAA

A YEAR has flown by since the Constitutional Court delivered its judgment in the latest round of public interest litigation in which businessman Bob Glenister and the Helen Suzman Foundation have participated either as applicant or, in the case of the foundation, as amicus curiae. Let’s call the case “Glenister III”.

The litigation, which has been spread over the years following the 2007 Polokwane resolution of the African National Congress (ANC) to disband the Scorpions and transfer its investigative personnel to the police, has steadfastly been aimed at preserving or creating an effective and independent anticorruption entity of state that is capable of dealing with the tsunami of corruption in SA.

The success of the Scorpions was the reason for the downfall of the unit. Too many important ANC-aligned politicians and their friends received unwelcome attention from them, and their willingness to investigate without fear, favour or prejudice so discombobulated the leadership of the party that the unit had to be closed down. Unfortunately, the Scorpions were not clothed with security of tenure of office — Parliament made them and Parliament had the power to close them down

Arrest rate shows hobbled Hawks hardly functioning

"After resolving disputes related to the composition of the University's Commission on insourcing, there was a lengthy meeting on Saturday. Unfortunately, no agreement was reached. The protesters have demanded immediate insourcing of all contract workers and a minimum salary of R10 000 per month," said a statement issued by the university's Department of University Relations.

It said access to the entrances to the institution was being impeded by protest action.

The university had tabled a proposed phased approach to the insourcing of services linked to the expiry of existing contracts and in the interim has agreed to a "top up" of existing salaries.

This is in line with similar agreements at several other universities such as Wits and University of Johannesburg.

"Regrettably, this was rejected by the worker representatives and student representatives," the university said.

The university added that there are several complex issues to be considered including the fact that the institution has long-term legal contracts with service providers and should these be cancelled, there would be significant financial penalties.

"We remain committed to continuing with the commission on insourcing and a further meeting of the commission has been scheduled."

The university urged staff and students to consult university portals for updates

University of Pretoria remains closed

Burkina Faso and Mali have agreed to work together to counter the growing threat of Islamic militants in West Africa, by sharing intelligence and conducting joint security patrols following two deadly and well-coordinated attacks in the region.

Their prime ministers met on Sunday, two days after al Qaeda militants seized the Splendid Hotel in Burkina Faso's capital Ouagadougou, opened fire on a restaurant and attacked another hotel nearby, killing at least 28 people from at least seven countries, and wounding 50 other people.

Burkina Faso and Mali to join forces to counter Islamist attacks

The assault, claimed by al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (Aqim), follows a similar raid in November on a luxury hot

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Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, often seen as a fractured and undisciplined group, has carried out its second major terror attack in two months. This time more than 20 people were killed in the assault on a luxury hotel and two other targets in Ouagadougou, the capital of Burkina Faso. The gun attack on the Splendid Hotel bears many similarities to that on the Radisson Blu hotel in Bamako, Mali, on November 20 in which 22 people were killed. Both targets were popular with Westerners and international officials; they were "soft," rather than military installations or police stations

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Namakwa water project, South Africa	<p>The project is being rolled out in phases, with the primary challenges inhibiting water delivery to communities being addressed first.</p> <p>To ensure that an estimated 90 000 residents of the Namakwa district municipality have access to potable water, the DWS is building water infrastructure that will supply 16-million litres of water a day.</p>
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Rukwa coal-to-power project, Tanzania.

Client
Edenville Energy.

Project Description

A scoping study completed on the Rukwa coal project has indicated an economically sound project with a relatively low capital expenditure (capex) cost and a 50-year life-of-mine. A small-scale mine and power plant (coal-to-power) scenario to provide electricity for local markets has been identified as having the best balance for shareholder return, deliverability and achievable capital requirements.

Rukwa coal-to-power project, Tanzania.

The Rukwa coal-to-power project hosts 171-million tons of coal in the south-western Tanzania, just south of Lake Rukwa. Kibo is undertaking a twin-track development at Mbeya.

Rukwa has total in situ resources of 109.39-million tons of coal, with the coal to be fed into a 250 MW to 300 MW mine-mouth thermal power station.

Seven different coal seams exist for the Rukwa coal mine.

It has been proven that constant coal production over the total life-of-mine can be achieved.

Phase 2, Stage 1, of a prefeasibility study (PFS) on the intended Rukwa coal mine completed in August 2015 has identified four possible mining methods for the development of the mine.

- Option 1 – surface miner, contractor, no crushing.
- Option 2 – surface miner, owner mining, no crushing.
- Option 3 – free dig, contractor mining, crushing.
- Option 4 – free dig, owner mining, crushing.

The differences in the options are mainly applicable to alterations in mining operating costs and mining capital costs, with the project financially feasible for all the options.

The mining project has been assessed for a 28-year mine life, with average coal production estimated at 1.48-million tons over the life-of-mine.

Mbeya coal-to-power project, Tanzania

Meanwhile, a prefeasibility report on the project's thermal power station component The City of Johannesburg's power utility City Power will spend about R500-million over the next three years to upgrade six power substations, adding 1 000 MVA to its capacity. The existing network, which is more than 40 years old, has limited capacity to meet Johannesburg's increased power demand. The substations are in Roodepoort, Wilro Park, Kloofendal, New Fleurhof, Tshepiso and Princess. The Roodepoort distribution network will be upgraded from the current 33/6.6 kW to 88/11 kW.

City of Johannesburg to spend R500m on power substations upgrade

Residents of Molapowabojang have called on the government to come up with an elaborate water management plan that will help ease water shortage experienced in the southern part of the country due to frequent North/South water carrier pipe breakages.

They said this during a kgotla meeting addressed by Area MP, Dr Alfred Madigale that alternative water sources for both potable and non-potable water needs to be sought.

Botswana residents urged to seek alternative water sources

One of the residents, Clement Mmope said the use of untreated groundwater for industrial purposes needs to be undertaken by the government.

The devastating dry spell which has gripped much of Southern Africa in the wake of the El Nino weather phenomenon is fast raising the possibility of a serious water crisis in the entire drought-prone Matabeleland region in Zimbabwe.

According to the Financial Gazette Local authorities have been watching the prolonged dry spell with horror as water supplies continue to dwindle in dams.

The country's second largest city, Bulawayo, is already on edge as the dry spell poses a real threat to its water supplies.

Bulawayo city fathers might meet this month to discuss the issue as they seek to conserve water before the situation deteriorates into a major disaster.

More water restrictions are on the cards for KwaZulu-Natal, after the uMgungundlovu District Municipality said there was a "compelling need" to have them in place.

A committee to evaluate water restrictions has been set up.

The uMgungundlovu District Municipality said it was forewarning businesses, ratepayers, and communities about the compelling need to introduce water restrictions to alleviate the effects of the ongoing drought.

The debilitating drought had especially hit the Midlands hard, it said in a statement.

District Mayor Yusuf Bhamjee said details of water restrictions would be made public after all technical assessments had been conducted.

"The aim of the water restrictions would not be to penalise members of the public, but is done as a last resort in an effort to secure and maintain future water supply for our people and local businesses."

Muslim women can be banned from wearing veils in schools, courts and other British institutions, David Cameron has said.

The Prime Minister said that he will give his backing to public authorities that put in place "proper and sensible" rules to ban women from wearing face veils in comments which will reignite debates.

It comes as the Government prepare to announce a series of measures designed to stop British Muslims becoming radicalised and traveling to the Middle East to join terrorist groups like the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (Isil).

Four renewable energy projects in developing countries have secured vital funding loans totalling \$46m.

The money comes from the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) and the Abu Dhabi Fund for Development (ADFD), and was announced on the eve of the launch of Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week.

The loans will finance a wind and solar project in Antigua and Barbuda, a solar scheme in Burkina Faso, solar and wind plants in Cabo Verde and a solar site in Senegal, and together the quartet of projects will result in nearly 12 MW of new renewable capacity.

The funding comes via the IRENA/ADFD Project Facility, which is now in its third cycle and so far has allocated \$144m in financing.

At a press conference in Abu Dhabi on Sunday, IRENA director-general Adnan Amin (pictured) stressed the need for renewable energy financing.

He said that the agreements reached at COP21 in Paris last month "will only be met if we are able to mobilize significant financial resources".

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Latest Tata job cuts mean more than 5,000 steel jobs axed as industry buckles under pressure from cheap Chinese imports

The supermarket is expected to have performed worse than its rivals during the key festive season, resulting in 200 job losses

Water crisis looms in Zim's Matabeleland

KZN to tighten water belt

David Cameron backs bans on Muslim face veils

Renewable projects in Africa and Caribbean win \$46m funding

Renewable projects in Africa and Caribbean win \$46m funding

Tata confirms 1,050 more jobs to go as steel crisis intensifies

Asda to cut 'hundreds' of jobs after weak Christmas

German photovoltaic (PV) mounting systems manufacturer Renusol has established a presence in South Africa's promising solar market

MetasoleRail-free mounting solution MetaSole+. (Image source: Renusol)

The company supplies its innovative solutions for mounting photovoltaic modules on roofs to South African wholesaler Lumax Energy, which sells Renusol's entire product portfolio.

Frans-Willem Vermaak, business development manager at wholesaler Lumax Energy, said, "The solar market in South Africa is continuously growing. On top of the estimated 100MW of roof-top and agricultural photovoltaic output that have already been installed in the country, the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research predicts a significant rise in new installations in the future – 500MW per year is possible – if the government provides even greater support for solar power generation, for example by enhancing regulation, introducing tax incentives or a feed-in tariff in all provinces. The Western Cape is currently the only province with a feed-in tariff scheme."

By 2030, South Africa's energy requirements could double to around 90 gigawatts (GW), of which approximately 22.5 GW could be covered by solar power generated from roof and commercial installations, according to estimations made by the South African Department of Energy in its current Integrated Resource Plan for Electricity.

Renusol enters South African solar market

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Renusol enters South African solar market

A road connecting Port Reitz and Moi International Airport in Kenya has been commissioned by President Uhuru Kenyatta

portroad flickr The Port Reitz road will be the only way to access the Moi International Airport and links the second container terminal at the Mombasa Port to the Northern Corridor, East and Central Africa. (Image source: Flickr)

The road is being financed by UK's Department of International Development (DFID) through Trademark East Africa (TMEA) with a grant of US\$20mn. The government of Kenya is providing US\$11mn.

UK High Commissioner to Kenya Nic Hailey said, "The UK is proud to support the Mombasa Port modernisation project. It will reduce the cost of doing business, improve infrastructure, and boost trade and economic growth in the EAC. This is a critical road. Our support, in partnership with and fitting with the overall vision of the Kenyan government, will benefit the population of Mombasa and reduce the cost of goods to millions of EAC residents

Kenyan port and airport to be connected via US\$31mn road

Algeria and China have signed a US\$3.3bn deal to build a new transshipment port around 60km west of Algiers

portconstruction washingtonstatedeptoftransportation flickrAlgeria as a trade hub is rising in importance in East Africa, making it viable to build a port. (Image source: Washington State Dept of Transportation/Flickr)

The agreement was signed between Algeria's transport ministry, China Harbour and Engineering Company (CHEC) and China State Construction Engineering Corporation (CSCEC) in Algeria.

The companies will construct the port with 23 docks, capable of processing 6.5mn 20-foot containers and 26mn tonnes of goods per year.

Construction is likely to take seven years and will be put into service within four years, with China's Shanghai Ports Group ensuring management of the port.

With port traffic set to hit 35mn tonnes by 2050, the construction of a new port with larger capacity comes at an apt time. In addition, Algerian transport authorities are getting assistance from Chinese port and ship authorities, to ensure construction is carried out as per quality standards and the port itself would enhance trade for Algeria, once operational.

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There is no shortage of negativity when it comes to South Africa and its economy. Whether it's the rand, the president, the far-reaching and devastating impact of the El Nino drought, protesting university students, the likelihood of a ratings downgrade or interest rate hikes – the list is long.

Suffice to say that the 'impending doom' narrative, although justified, is so common that it has become South Africans' daily bread.

In light of this, Moneyweb went in search of a silver lining behind the dark cloud that is our economy, if only to break the monotony of peril and despair.

Mining and tourism

This year saw the rand reach a new low to around R18 to the dollar. The massive collapse, which has seen the rand lose well over a third of its value against the dollar in the past year, is perhaps the most depressing aspect of being a South African right now.

But the silver lining is that it could provide a much-needed boost to the country's ailing mining sector, which has been struggling with falling commodity prices for more than 18 months. On Tuesday, Bloomberg reported that Sibanye Gold, the biggest producer of gold in South Africa, had seen its profit margins double in the past six weeks on the back of the rand's depreciation, which saw gold priced in the South African currency rise 19% to R587 000 a kg since December 2015.

PSG Capital MD Johan Holtzhausen, says South Africa's tourism industry is likely to benefit as well, with the rand-dollar, rand-euro and rand-pound exchange rates all making South Africa a more attractive holiday destination

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Farmers in the Western Cape say Eskom's proposed price hike will cripple the wheat sector, already in dire straits due to drought, and will add millions to production costs in the stone fruit and table grapes sectors. Wheat production has been devastated by the drought, with the West Coast region producing no harvest last season. The Caledon region, which produces 47% of the yield, grows wheat under irrigation, requiring electricity. Agri Western Cape CE Carl Opperman joined a chorus at public hearings into Eskom's revenue clearing account application yesterday, appealing to the National Energy Regulator (Nersa) not to grant the increase proposed by Eskom as it is "a threat to the viability of the wheat industry".

Eskom hopes Nersa will allow it to recoup R22.8bn in overspend and unearned revenue from customers this year, on top of the normal tariff for electricity. If allowed, this will bring Eskom price increases for this year up to 16.6%. Opperman also highlighted increased costs for pome and stone fruit and table grapes, which need irrigation, an unbroken cold chain to bring their products to market and that face input costs that are exchange-rate driven. Also appealing against Eskom's application yesterday was the Cape Chamber of Commerce, which accused Eskom of trying to force consumers to pay the price for its poor planning and

budgeting. Included in the R22.8bn is R11bn in unearned revenue due to lower-thanexpected

electricity sales as well as R8bn for overspending on diesel-fired turbines.

Executive director of the chamber Sid Peimer said Eskom should not be compensated for unearned revenue as it had "got its projections badly wrong

Eskom hikes threaten Cape agriculture

Editor at large, Hilary Joffe writes: "As the National Energy Regulator of SA takes its hearings on Eskom's application for more money around the country, for the third time in as

many years, it's worth reflecting on the changing face of Eskom, which has lost an extraordinary number of senior people over the past three years. Starting with the resignations of former chief financial officer Paul O'Flaherty and former CE Brian Dames in 2013, the list includes about a dozen departures at executive committee or senior GM level, plus several more at the core GM level. Like Caroline Henry, the long-time Eskom treasurer whose resignation was announced last week, many of those who have left had worked at Eskom for 20 years or more. Some resigned or took early retirement for quite straightforward

reasons; others walked out because they simply couldn't take it anymore. There were a good few instances of people who eventually agreed to resign in return for good packages after they were suspended for no good reason except, perhaps, that they had refused to go along with deals they deemed dodgy. The board's bizarre suspensions of former CE Tshediso Matona, former chief financial officer Tsholofelo Molefe and the then head of the build programme, Dan Marokane, made headlines last year — all were subsequently completely exonerated and resigned. There were other lower-profile, but similarly groundless

suspensions of senior executives in coal and information technology during 2014; they too ultimately left. And at least one executive was asked to resign on the grounds that they didn't

"fit". Those who have gone include people who had long experience and expertise in Eskom's core mandate of keeping the lights

Eskom's brain drain poses significant long-term risk

Lusaka: Water level in southern Africa's Lake Kariba have dropped to 12% of capacity, the authority in charge said on Tuesday, raising concerns about severe power rationing in Zimbabwe and Zambia. Both countries rely heavily on the Kariba dam for electricity. The levels were 477.25m above sea level on Monday, just 2m above the point their working capacity, the Zambezi River Authority, which manages the lake for Zambia and Zimbabwe, said on its website. "The Kariba Lake was created and designed to operate between levels 475.50m and 488.50m," it said. The dam was 12% full on Monday compared with 53% on the same date last year, underscoring the severity of a prolonged drought that threatens crops across the Southern African region where the United Nations has warned that 14-million people face hunger. Zambia asked SA last week for up to 300MW of emergency power to ease an electricity crunch that has hit mining companies already grappling with a slide in global copper prices. Zambian power companies and mining firms in August 2015 agreed to cut power supply to the mines by 30% due to a power deficit which rose to 985MW

Zimbabwe's Kariba dam level sinks to 12% as drought scorches

in September from 560MW in March

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Zimbabwe: The proposed 49% increase application

U.S.: As part of the Energy Department's Grid Modernization Initiative, which aims to improve the resilience, reliability and security of the nation's electrical power grid, the Department of Energy announced \$18-million in funding for six new projects across the United States. These projects will enable the development and demonstration of integrated, scalable, and cost-effective solar technologies, which incorporate energy storage to power American homes after the sun sets, or when clouds are overhead

Energy Department announces \$18-million to develop solar energy storage solutions, boost grid resilience

Philippines: The Commission on Elections (CE) said they fear blackouts in parts of Mindanao on election day, even though battery powered poll machines can run to 15 hours.

These concerns came about after a power transmission tower was bombed on Monday. Comelec spokesperson, James Jimenez, stated, "These things are the possibilities that are being considered, especially if you're looking at a situation where there is darkness

Comelec fears blackouts in parts of Mindanao

South Africa's annual consumer price inflation increased to 5.2% in December 2015, in line with expectations and 4 percentage points higher than November's 4.8% rise. It was the highest rate for the year as consumers battle with increased food and fuel prices and interest rate hikes.

On average, prices rose by 0.3% between November 2015 and December 2015, Statistics SA announced on Wednesday.

In December the CPI for goods increased by 5.3% year-on-year (3.8% in November), and the CPI for services increased by 5.7% year-on-year (5.7% in November).

The rand held steady at around R16.83/\$ from R16.88 before the data's release.

The SA Reserve Bank (Sarb) increased the repo rate by 25 basis points at its last monetary policy committee meeting, citing inflationary pressures as a reason for hiking interest rates. South Africa has seen a total increase of 125 basis points in interest rates since the Sarb started its tightening cycle 23 months ago. The SA housing market could deteriorate this year due to expected interest rate hikes of between 1.5% and 3%, warned Neville Berkowitz, property economist and adviser to estate agency HomeBid.

His research shows that 289 631 homes were sold and transferred in 2015 - 0.2% fewer than in 2014. The average house price was R1 234 120 in 2015 - up 0.94% compared to 2014.

"Home buying and selling activity as well as house prices are expected to deteriorate this year and there are a number of factors that are going to affect the housing market," said Berkowitz.

In his view the biggest impact will come from the expected interest rate hikes which will negatively affect mortgage affordability, while the stalling economy will limit salary increases and new employment across the board.

The reduced affordability of both existing homeowners paying higher monthly mortgage amounts and first-time home buyers will translate into a buying down in the market, according to Berkowitz.

"The buying pyramid will see more activity towards the more affordable lower part of the market," he said

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Inflation hits highest level for year

Brace for slowdown in property sales, house prices

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Big changes are coming to the working world, according to a report entitled The Future of Jobs, published on Monday by the World Economic Forum (WEF). The so-called fourth industrial revolution will cause widespread disruption not only to business models but also to labour markets over the next five years, with enormous change predicted in the skill sets needed to thrive in the new landscape, said the WEF.

There will be substantial variations in the impact of this disruption across industries and gender, as well as job type. The jobs toll will be highest in the Healthcare industry in the next five years, according to the report. This will be followed jointly by Energy and Financial Services and Investors.

The biggest winner in the job stakes will be Information and Communication Technology, followed by Professional Services and Media. Most of the survey's respondents - chief human resources officers and top strategy executives from companies across nine broad industry categories - believe the best way of dealing with these sweeping changes is by investing in reskilling current employees. "Other practices, such as supporting mobility and job rotation, attracting female and foreign talent and offering apprenticeships, also scored high," said the report. Across all sectors, the most significant driver of change is the changing nature of work itself. "As new technologies make 'anytime, anywhere' work possible, companies are breaking up tasks in new ways, leading to a fragmentation of jobs across many industries," said the report.

These effects are heightened by the rise of mobile internet and cloud technology, making possible the rapid spread of internet-based service models. And while this new "gig economy" may be one of the most visible and current manifestations of disruptions to the labour market, further changes in specific sectors, both good and bad, will lead to new management and regulatory challenges, according to the WEF.

Revolutionary changes on cards in the global jobs market

The City of Johannesburg (COJ) has been announced as a winner of the prestigious C40 Cities Award for its leadership in tackling climate change. The city was among 10 global cities announced as winners at the 3rd Annual C40 Cities Awards held in Paris, France, during the COP21 climate negotiations.

City of Johannesburg awarded for tackling climate change

COJ won its award for the first-ever listed green bond in South Africa. This bond has helped the City to diversify its portfolio. It cements the City's commitment to responding to climate change and provides an opportunity to accelerate the advancement of new technologies and environmental solutions.

Alfalfa growers in South Africa are among the winners from the nation's worst drought on record as animal-feed shortages and surging exports fuel prices for the hay.

Demand for lucerne higher as drought bites

Prices for alfalfa, also known as lucerne, have surged by a third in a year, said Bester Feed & Grain, a Stellenbosch, South Africa-based agricultural trading company. Higher demand risks depleting stocks before the onset of the Southern Hemisphere's winter, when local farmers need to supplement grazing, said Johan Strydom, a regional co-ordinator for the Milk Producers' Organisation lobby group.

Engineers say the power grid is holding back the development of the electric car. The storage capacity of batteries are continuously improving, as are the speed at which they can be charged and discharged.

But high capacity, fast-charging batteries require large amounts of power to charge. Current infrastructure for electric car charging isn't up to the task.

To supply that charge, a team of researchers at Ecole Polytechnique Federale de Lausanne, the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Lausanne, have developed an intermediary power storage device. The technology can quickly charge a car without putting a drain on the power grid.

Charging a car could soon be as quick as filling a tank

The goal is to make charging an electric car battery as quick and easy as filling up a tank with gas.

According to Greg Nemet of the University of Wisconsin-Madison and the lead author of the report, "We find that low-priced PV systems, those cheaper than 90 percent of other systems nationally, are more prevalent in local markets with fewer active installers, and are more likely to be installed by companies that have more county-level experience installing PV systems.

Not surprisingly, low-priced PV systems are also associated with a variety of system characteristics. For example, such systems are more likely to be customer owned (vs. leased), be larger in size, and use lower-efficiency modules; and are less likely to use tracking, building-integrated PV modules, micro-inverters, and batteries."

The analysis also finds significant variations across states. After accounting for other differences among markets, PV systems are more likely to be low-priced in Maine (51 times more likely than California, the "reference" state in the statistical analysis), Arizona (23 times more likely), New Hampshire (10 times), New Mexico (4 times), and New Jersey (3 times). Finally, the research finds that policy incentives can affect the prevalence of low-priced systems, though those influences are nuanced and require additional analysis to fully verify.

has been caused by carbon dioxide emissions. But what does that mean locally? A new study published in Nature Climate Change pinpoints the temperature increases caused by CO2 emissions in different regions around the world.

Using simulation results from 12 global climate models, Damon Matthews, a professor in Concordia's Department of Geography, Planning and Environment, along with post-doctoral researcher Martin Leduc, produced a map that shows how the climate changes in response to cumulative carbon emissions around the world.

They found that temperature increases in most parts of the world respond linearly to cumulative emissions. "This provides a simple and powerful link between total global emissions of carbon dioxide and local climate warming," says Matthews. "This approach can be used to show how much human emissions are to blame for local changes

CLIMATE SCIENCE

Study maps temperature increases caused by CO2

by Staff Writers

Montreal, Canada (SPX) Jan 21, 2016

This is a map of climate change. Image courtesy Nature Climate Change. For a larger version of this image please go here.

Earth's temperature has increased by 1C over the past century, and most of this warming has been caused by carbon dioxide emissions. But what does that mean locally? A new study published in Nature Climate Change pinpoints the temperature increases caused by CO2 emissions in different regions around the world.

The Netherlands has "serious" concerns about neighbouring Belgium's ageing nuclear reactors, the Dutch environment minister said Wednesday during a joint inspection of one plant with her Belgian counterpart.

Belgium has recently opened up its two nuclear plants to inspections by ministers from Germany, Luxembourg and the Netherlands after a series of problems including shutdowns, leaks and cracks.

"There are concerns because of the age of the nuclear plant and the incidents that have been occurring," Dutch environment minister Melanie Schultz van Haegen told a press conference after an inspection at the Doel plant near the Dutch border.

"The incidents have not caused any risk to the nuclear site. Now it's not a nuclear incident but maybe tomorrow it is. These worries are serious and this is why we are here, to give maximum transparency, to show them what it is really about," she said.

But she added that "what the experts are telling me gives me the certainty at the moment that the Doel plant is safe."

Researchers pinpoint the drivers for low-priced PV systems in the United States

Study maps temperature increases caused by CO2

Netherlands says 'serious' concerns about Belgium nuclear plants

"A sunburnt country... with a pitiless blue sky", so the famous poem goes, but where once Australia could rely on "steady, soaking rain", a trend of hotter and drier weather as the climate warms is making it more vulnerable to severe bushfires.

US government scientists are widely expected to announce Wednesday that 2015 was the planet's hottest year in modern times.

Climate experts warn that with rising temperatures, as well as decreasing rainfall in the south, parts of Australia are so dry the risk of bushfires is rising.

Since November huge swathes of the country have been scorched by ferocious blazes, leaving a total of nine dead and hundreds of homes destroyed. In South Australia, locals told of an "Armageddon-like" inferno sweeping through some areas, while in Western Australia bushfires raged out of control in a situation residents described as "like hell".

Already this year there have been scores more bushfires -- a recent incident at Yarloop, 110 kilometres (70 miles) south of Perth, left two dead.

Climate change fuels bushfire risk as Australia heats up

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Climate change fuels bushfire risk as Australia heats up

Eleven people have been killed by the swine flu virus in Syria since September, the country's health ministry said on Tuesday.

"Since September, 27 people infected with the H1N1 virus have been hospitalised. Eleven of them died," Ahmad Damiriyeh of the health ministry's division on chronic and contagious diseases was quoted in the state-run Al-Thawra daily as saying.

11 swine flu deaths in Syria since September: health ministry

The H1N1 cases were spread across Syria, according to the newspaper.

More than 1,200 people have been evacuated from their homes to escape a gurgling volcano in eastern Indonesia spewing clouds of ash and toxic gas into the air.

Officials said Tuesday they had distributed thousands of gas masks to villagers around Mount Egon in eastern Flores island as the choking fumes from the volcano intensified.

All residents within three kilometres (1.9 miles) of the volcano were ordered to evacuate and roads were also closed. Authorities said they were prepared to issue a wide-scale evacuation order if the situation deteriorates further.

More than 1,200 flee as Indonesia volcano spews ash, gas

The water comes in two-litre soft drink bottles, five-litre plastic drums and a 1,000-litre bowser -- all of it donated by city residents, as intense drought and continuous heat waves devastate South Africa's farms.

For Janine Boshoff, 35, the spur to action was a Facebook post by a cattle farmer who was distraught at the choice of either watching his starving herd die -- or shooting them.

"I thought if a farmer could feel that much for an animal, I would hope that humans could feel something for each other, too," she told AFP.

She began rallying neighbours in suburban Boksburg to fill their old bottles and bring them to her house.

Within days, her sister's employer had offered a company truck to transport the haul a few hours' drive to parched towns in the Free State, South Africa's agricultural heartland

Volunteers send water as S.African temperatures soar

Energy still drags on US inflation

A core measure of US inflation last month rose at the fastest pace since 2012, even as the swooning oil price hit the headline rate and underlined the dilemma facing policymakers as they debate when to next hike interest rates. Excluding the volatile food and energy components, prices rose at a 2.1% rate, from 2% the month before. The energy index fell 12.6% from 2014, with all of the major components decreasing. The headline rate rose 0.7% in Dec. y/y, up from a 0.5% pace in Nov. Analysts forecast a 0.8% increase

China scramble fanned \$735bn of EM outflows

The flow of capital out of China and other EMs was much worse than initially thought in 2015, according to new estimates. In a report released yesterday, the Institute of International Finance said outflows increased as foreign investors pulled out of EMs and Chinese companies scrambled to pay off overseas loans in the final quarter of the year amid a weakening renminbi. EMs saw an estimated \$735bn in net capital outflows last year, with all but \$59bn of that coming from China. In Oct., the IIF had predicted 2015 would see net outflows from EMs of \$540bn. The IIF said the discrepancy revealed yesterday came in large part because of accelerating capital flight from China in the final quarter of 2015 via channels used to circumvent capital controls. Over-invoicing for exports, cash transactions and other such flows recorded as "errors and omissions" accounted for \$216bn of the \$676bn in China's net outflows in 2015, according to the IIF. IIF chief economist and MD CHARLES COLLYNS stressed that the weakness "extends well beyond China as we have seen persistent portfolio outflows out of a broad range of emerging markets, with investors increasingly worried about growth prospects and high corporate indebtedness

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SA top risk country according to IIF

Among the top emerging markets at risk, the IIF named Brazil, South Africa and Turkey, which are all plagued by inconsistent macroeconomic policy, massive foreign currency-denominated corporate debt and negative balance sheets.

Read more: <http://sputniknews.com/business/20160120/1033432892/market-review-dollar-capital.html#ixzz3xrc0514U>

DA calls on Eskom to pay back bonuses

The DA yesterday handed a petition to ESKOM CEO BRIAN MOLEFE calling on the utility's executive to pay back R63m in bonuses. DA shadow public enterprises minister NATASHA MAZZONE said the petition was supported by "over 76 000 South Africans" and demanded that ESKOM executives repay the bonuses and that no further bonuses are paid until the electricity crisis is over and load-shedding is no longer a threat. ESKOM said the protesters had arrived "without prior approval... They then proceeded to occupy the reception area and demanded to see ESKOM Group Chief Executive BRIAN MOLEFE". The utility said this action was "unnecessary" and "cheap politicking and electioneering of the worst kind". The utility claimed that some of the ID numbers of the signatories to the memorandum are nonsensical and do not exist, and that "at least one cellphone number is the call centre number of the Financial Services Board". ESKOM said it would conduct a forensic probe to determine the authenticity of the signatories and the possibility that fraud may have been committed.

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SARB will act with resolve on inflation

The SARB will "act with resolve" if price pressures stemming from the weaker rand spread more broadly in the economy, governor LESETJA KGANYAGO said yesterday. The weaker rand is adding to pressure on inflation, which accelerated to 5.2% in Dec. as the worst drought in more than a century pushed up food prices. Economists are split on whether policymakers will stick to raising the benchmark rate in moves of 25 bps at a time, or take more aggressive action. Seven of the 12 analysts surveyed by Bloomberg said the central bank will hike the repo rate by 50 bps next week, with one analyst predicting it will stay unchanged at 6.25% and the rest expecting a 25 bps increase. KGANYAGO said the country is "facing a policy dilemma" of slower growth and rising inflation.

Kumba tells union to prepare for lay-offs

KUMBA IRON ORE has told the NUM it will issue lay-off notices this year if low prices persist for the commodity, NUM general secretary DAVID SIPUNZI said. "The price has put them in dire straits and there is a prospect of them issuing a Section 189 notice at Sishen mine", SIPUNZI said. KUMBA has said it plans to reconfigure its Sishen mine and was targeting 2016 production there of 26mt, down from a previous guidance of 36mt. SIPUNZI said he expected to see more lay-off notices this year from other sectors,

Gryphon sees R20/\$ unless Zuma leaves office -

he rand may weaken from current levels should SA's credit rating be downgraded to junk under President JACOB ZUMA's leadership, GRYPHON ASSET MANAGEMENT's ABRI DU PLESSIS said yesterday. "If we do not change the ZUMA regime, then I think we're going to see a downgrade somewhere in the year", DU PLESSIS said earlier this month. "And in that instance, the rand can easily go to 20 against the dollar". STANDARD & POOR's cut the outlook on SA's BBB- rating to negative from stable last month. FITCH has an equivalent reading of BBB- with a stable outlook, while MOODY's has SA's rating one level higher at Baa2. DU PLESSIS said if the country were to avoid a downgrade, the rand would likely trade around 17-17.50/\$, adding that the only way he could see that scenario happening would be if ZUMA stepped down and the ANC's old guard took over. "The rand is not going to improve under these circumstances so my best asset class from a South African investor point of view would be as much offshore cash as possible, in particular the dollar... I would take maximum dollar cash exposure and the risk that I have to have in the local markets, I would just have in local cash".

Kariba water levels fall to 12% of capacity

Water levels in Lake Kariba have dropped to 12% of capacity, Reuters reported citing the Zambezi River Authority, which manages the lake. This compares to 53% levels a year ago and raises the prospect of further power shortages in the countries. Zambia asked SA last week for up to 300MW of emergency electricity to ease a power crunch that has hit all industries

Thermal coal prices tumble	<p>Benchmark thermal coal prices for immediate delivery have fallen to or below \$50/t for the first time since before the financial crisis as demand and a mild winter in the northern hemisphere dent consumption. The weakest of the main physical prices were European cargoes for delivery into ARA, last closing at \$44.40/t, down 10% since early Jan. Coal cargoes for shipment from Australia's Newcastle terminal last settled at \$48.60/t, almost \$10 below the floor seen during the financial crisis of 2008/09. Prices for cargoes from SA's Richards Bay have been the best performers of the three benchmarks, yet they too fell over 7% since early Jan. to \$50/t. The futures market does not look better. API2 2017 coal futures hit \$37.70/t this week, down over 80% since their historical 2008-peak and at a level not seen since Jun. 2003.</p>
Rouble slides to record low	<p>The Russian rouble has just hit a record low against the US dollar as deteriorating oil prices have greased the slide for the currency. The rouble has slumped another 1.4% against the dollar today, taking it to a fresh low of Rbs80.0065/\$. It has finally surpassed the previous low of Rbs79.9125, hit in Dec. 2014 amid a currency rout that forced the Central Bank of Russia into an emergency 6.5 percentage point rate hike, which lifted the benchmark to 17%. The rouble has dropped 9.6% against the greenback since the start of 2016.</p>
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Shell warns of 40% drop in Q4 profits	<p>ROYAL DUTCH SHELL expects Q4 profits to slide by at least 40% y/y to \$1.6bn-\$1.9bn, following the collapse in crude prices. CEO BEN VAN BEURDEN said he was pleased with the oil major's operating performance in 2015, as well as the momentum in the group to reduce costs and improve competitiveness. SHELL's drive to improve competitive performance is delivering at the bottom line. Operating costs have been reduced by \$4bn, or around 10% in 2015, and the company expects costs to fall again in 2016, by a further \$3bn. Synergy from the planned BG acquisition will be in addition to that. Together, these actions will include a reduction of some 10 000 staff and direct contractor positions in 2015/16 across both companies, as streamlining and integration of the two companies continue. VAN BEURDEN reiterated plans by SHELL to reduce capex by 20% from 2014 levels to \$29bn last year, and indicated the spending for the enlarged entity would be \$33bn in 2016 - a reduction of around 45% in combined spending, which peaked in 2013</p>
Zim miners, farmers oppose 42% power tariff hike	<p>Zimbabwe's mining companies and farmers are resisting a proposal to hike electricity tariffs by 42%, arguing it would hurt the struggling economy. The ZIMBABWE ELECTRICITY TRANSMISSION AND DISTRIBUTION COMPANY last month said it planned to hike tariffs from 9.86c/KWh to 14c/KWh to raise money for power imports. The Chamber of Mines of Zimbabwe, the Confederation of Zimbabwe Industries and farmers' groups are opposing a tariff hike. ZETDC is owed \$1bn, a sign that consumers are already battling to pay at current rates, the organisations said today. "At this stage the economy of Zimbabwe cannot have cost increases in any of the inputs. We strongly oppose the application for tariff increase by ZETDC", the joint statement said.</p>
SA unemployment to rise by 300 000	<p>SA's unemployment rate is expected to rise by 300 000 people by 2017, the ILO said yesterday. The UN agency warned that if there was no change in policy response to the global economic slowdown, about 3.4m more people would be without jobs by 2017. It is estimated that 5.3m people in SA will be unemployed this year, and 5.4m in 2017. Last year, 5.1m people were unemployed.</p>
CPI hits highest level for year	<p>SA's annual CPI increased to 5.2% in Dec., in line with expectations and 4 percentage points higher than November's 4.8% rise. It was the highest rate for the year as consumers battle with higher food and fuel prices and interest rates. On average, prices rose 0.3% between Nov. and Dec., Statistics SA said. In Dec. the CPI for goods rose by 5.3% y/y (3.8% in Nov.), and the CPI for services increased by 5.7% y/y, unchanged from Nov</p>
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US budget deficit to rise for first time since crisis

The US budget deficit is set to rise this year relative to the size of the economy for the first time since the financial crisis, as tax breaks agreed in the Congressional budget deal weigh on federal revenue. The Congressional Budget Office projected a \$544bn deficit for 2016, around \$105bn more than the shortfall recorded last year. That equates to 2.9% of GDP, up from 2.5% in 2015. Over the period 2016-2025, the cumulative budget deficit will be \$1.5tn more than the CBO expected as recently as Aug. Around half of the rise in forecast borrowing reflects laws sealed at the tail-end of 2015, including the extension of provisions reducing corporate and individual income taxes. The projections mark a sharp reversal following years of shrinking deficits driven by a combination of spending constraints and an improving US economy. The CBO warned that if current trends persisted, US debt would in three decades equal 155% of GDP - higher than any previously recorded figure. Government debt stood at 73.6% of GDP as of 2015, and was set to rise to 86.1% in 2026

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J&J to cut 3 000 jobs

JOHNSON & JOHNSON said it would cut 3 000 jobs at its medical devices unit as part of a restructuring effort designed to save up to \$1bn/year in costs. The cuts equate to around 6% of the company's medical devices workforce, and will be heaviest in the orthopaedics division as well as the surgical and cardiovascular segments. The contact lens unit and diabetes segment will be unaffected. J&J said the move would result in annual savings of \$800m-\$1bn, most of which will be achieved by end-2018. It said the moves would result in it booking a restructuring charge of \$2bn-\$2.4bn, with some \$600m falling in Q4 2015.

Global unemployment set to rise

The number of unemployed people in the world is set to rise this year as problems in emerging markets prevent the global jobless rate from returning to pre-crisis levels. The UN's International Labour Organisation forecasts that the number of jobless people in EMs will increase by 4.8m in the next two years. This will offset improvements in the US and Europe. The rise in the number of the world's jobless from 197m in 2015 to 199m this year would keep 2016's global unemployment rate at 5.8% - the same as the last two years - due to population growth. The global unemployment rate peaked at 6.2% in 2009 as the financial crisis cost millions of workers their jobs. The ILO forecasts significant rises in unemployment in Brazil, Russia and SA will have knock-on effects on their respective regions "as spillovers from migration, reductions in remittances and slower earnings growth affect neighbouring economies"

China's holdings of US Treasuries rise in Nov.

China's holdings of US Treasury securities rose in Nov. 2015, according to data released yesterday. After selling \$16bn of Treasuries in Aug. and Sep., the country's holdings bounced back by \$10bn in Nov. to a total of \$1.264tn, data from the US Treasury showed yesterday. China's total forex reserves increased slightly in Oct. but continued to fall into the end of the year, according to Bloomberg data.

Tiffany to cut jobs as dollar sinks sales

TIFFANY & CO. is cutting jobs after the strong dollar stung profits over the holiday shopping season. The retailer yesterday warned that earnings for the FY to end-Jan. will now be about 10% lower y/y, a steeper drop than the 5%-10% it had earlier forecast. The company blamed the strong greenback, saying the dollar's rally over the last 18 months continues to hurt the value of overseas sales and temper the spending of foreign tourists in the US. TIFFANY CEO FREDERIC CUMENAL said "we believe overall sales results were negatively affected by restrained consumer spending tied to challenging and uncertain global economic conditions and we expect 2015 earnings to come in at the low end of our previously-set range of expectations". It didn't say how many jobs it is cutting, but added it is taking a 4cps charge in Q4 for "staff and occupancy reductions"

Brazil bears brunt of IMF downgrades

The IMF's new economic output forecasts for Brazil are bleak. The fund expects the economy to shrink by 3.5% in 2016, shedding 2.5 percentage points relative to its forecast in Oct. For 2017, it expects a reading of 0%, a decline of 2.3 percentage points. The IMF also cut its global growth forecast by 0.2 percentage points. "The revisions are largely accounted for by Brazil, where the recession caused by political uncertainty amid continued fallout from the PETROBRAS investigation is proving to be deeper and more protracted than previously expected; the Middle East, where prospects are hurt by lower oil prices; and the United States, where growth momentum is now expected to hold steady rather than gather further steam". The IMF now sees Russia's economy shrinking by 1% this year, down by 0.4 percentage points relative to earlier estimates. For the US, forecasts are down by 0.2 percentage points to a still upbeat 2.6% this year and next.

IMF slashes SA growth forecast

The IMF cut its economic growth forecast for SA by almost half to 0.7% yesterday, citing weak commodity prices and high borrowing costs. The fund's forecast is a full percentage point lower than the growth rate forecast by the Treasury for 2016. The IMF said in its World Economic Outlook report the continued adjustment to lower commodity prices and higher borrowing costs are weighing heavily on some sub-Saharan African nations, including SA, Nigeria and Angola. To this end most countries in the region will see a gradual pickup in growth, but with lower commodity prices. The IMF adjusted its projection for SA's growth to 0.7% in 2016 and 1.8% in 2017 from its Oct. estimate of 1.3% and 2.1%, respectively. With economic growth slowing to 0.7%, job shedding will continue with fewer job opportunities available for the 8.4m people who do not have jobs or have given up looking for jobs, DA MP DAVID MAYNIER said. "As the economy tanks all eyes are on whether President JACOB ZUMA will announce new measures to boost economic growth and job creation during his State of the Nation Address on 11 February 2016 in Parliament", MAYNIER said. For sub-Saharan Africa, the IMF lowered its growth forecast for 2016 by 0.3 percentage points to 4% and reduced next year's estimate by 0.2 percentage points to 4.7%.

Economist warns of negative 'consequences' of NHI

The timing of the implementation of government's planned National Health Insurance scheme is questionable and could have dire consequences for the economy, Free Market Foundation economist JASON URBACH said yesterday. URBACH said the NHI was an "impending disaster" and that the NHI White Paper was introduced at a time when the country had three finance ministers in one week, the rand was plummeting, investors were pulling out of resources and the economy was, and remains, in turmoil. "You would think that a policy requiring extracting billions of rands from taxpayers would be released at a time when there is an abundance of confidence in the future of the country and not at a time when the economic forecast is dimly bleak". URBACH said the NHI would further reduce the quality of healthcare provision in the country and drive professionals out of the country. He also said it would impose an "unnecessary and intolerable" burden on taxpayers and government. URBACH said it was worrying that there was a lack of information on how the NHI would be funded, and what the cost implications would be. According to the White Paper, the scheme's figures were based on a modified costing from the Green Paper on the NHI which, in 2011, estimated that costs would amount to R255bn by 2025. However, there was no indication of what these figures were based on, URBACH said, adding that the "so-called comprehensive package of health services has still not been adequately defined. URBACH noted that the White Paper stated that "focussing on the question of what NHI will cost is the wrong approach", opining that this was "disingenuous, trite and downright cheeky

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Zambian maize crop may fall to 7-yr low

Zambia's maize production may fall by around 30% this year as long dry spells hurt crops, the Zambian Farmers' Union said yesterday. Production fell 22% to 2.6mt last year due to erratic rains, the union said. A further 30% decline would imply 1.8mt of production of the country's staple crop in 2016, the lowest for seven years. "These are modest estimations. If the current weather pattern continues, we are likely to have a reduction well above 30%", ZFU spokesperson KINGSLEY KASWENDE said

Kenya targets spending cuts

The Kenyan government plans to cut spending by 1% of GDP in the next six months as it seeks to rein in its ballooning budget deficit and create buffers to counter EM turbulence. Finance Minister HENRY ROTICH said he was looking to slash up to Ks60bn from the state's budget for the FY to end-Jun. when he presents a supplementary budget next month. Kenya's GDP is about \$60bn. "As we go into the medium term [we need] to create some buffers, some fiscal space because we are now living in a world where there is a lot of vulnerability", ROTICH said, adding that most of the cuts would be in current expenditure. Analysts say investors would welcome a Ks60bn spending cut - the equivalent of 10% of the government's recurrent expenditure

White maize spot price hits new record high

The spot price of white maize hit a record high of R5 140/t yesterday morning. The white maize spot price ended 2014 at R2 121/t, so the price has more than doubled since then. It rose nearly 120% during the course of 2015 and is already up more than 10% since the start of this year.

Government wants to promote power generation through solar panels on roof tops of educational campuses and government buildings as well as cooperative societies and private buildings. He said state government is also trying to promote solar power pumps for water distribution scheme in rural areas and use of solar energy at government hostels to cook food. According to the policy, Maharashtra will set a target of five years to generate 200 MW power from roof top solar panels, install 10,000 solar pumps for small and medium water distribution scheme, generate 4,000 kilo Watt power from biogas and operate micro-grid pilot project in two villages during upcoming five years span. Once the state cabinet approves the policy, Energy department will install solar heaters having capacity of 318.75 lakh litres in government hostels. "Legislators and Members of Parliament can use their development funds to promote these schemes," Bawankule said. It will be made mandatory for District Planning Development Council (DPDC) to reserve 3 per cent funds and the state will allocate Rs 300 crore from its annual plan every year to implement the policy, he said. Government offices, cooperative societies and apartments, hospitals and educational trusts will be eligible for a subsidy of Rs 20 per Watt or 20 per cent of the project cost whichever is lesser. "Promoting renewable sources of energy will reduce the burden on conventional power plants and it will also save energy," the minister said.

Read more at: http://www.moneycontrol.com/news/economy/maha-govt-to-unveil-off-grid-policy-big-push-to-solar-energy_5099321.html?utm_source=ref_article

Maha govt to unveil off grid policy, big push to solar energy

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Nigeria's inflation rate accelerated to a three-year high in Dec. as food prices rose. The CPI increased by 9.6% on a y/y basis, compared with 9.4% in Nov., the National Bureau of Statistics said on Sunday. Food price inflation climbed to 10.6%, from 10.3%. Inflation is now at its highest since Dec. 2012 and has been above the central bank's target of 6%-9% every month since May 2015. Inflation will be driven higher in the coming months by increased energy prices and government spending as President MUHAMMADU BUHARI implements a record budget meant to stimulate the economy

Nigeria inflation accelerates

GAZPROM managed to keep a lid on its Q3 loss, which was far more moderate than analysts had expected, despite the precipitous drop in natural gas prices. GAZPROM suffered a net loss of Rbs2bn, compared with analyst forecasts of a Rbs17.6bn loss. That is a significant deterioration from the Rbs105.7bn net profit it made in the same period last year. Natural gas prices have more than halved since the start of 2015, although the devaluation of the rouble has helped to cushion the blow for energy exporters by boosting the rouble value of dollar-denominated exports. The narrower than expected loss came as GAZPROM managed to increase its revenues to Rbs1.29tn in Q3, up from Rbs1.13tn y/y, which was roughly in line with forecasts.

Gazprom keeps a lid on loss

More unions have joined COSATU in expressing their displeasure with new tax law amendments signed into law by President JACOB ZUMA. This means all retirement reforms related to tax harmonisation on retirement contributions and benefits will come into effect on Mar. 1, 2016. The Food and Allied Workers Union condemned the signing into law of the acts as nothing but the declaration of war against the working people of the country by government. FAWU believes that the amendments "amount to the undue meddling in what is dear to the employed, particularly low paid workers, being their hard-earned and deferred wages that should never be controlled by the state". The union undertook to call for a 3-day national strike within two weeks of the implementation of the amendments. The NUM said it is deeply shocked and saddened by ZUMA's signing of the legislation into law, adding that "the workers are tired of being undermined and disrespected by this government"

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SA will need to import up to 6mt of maize

SA will have to import 5mt-6mt of white and yellow maize this year, Agriculture Minister SENZENI ZOKWANA said on Friday. National Agricultural Marketing Council CEO RONALD RAMABULANA said this would have a significant impact on the cost of maize in SA, while Grain SA CEO JANNIE DE VILLIERS outlined that it would cost around R20bn to import the maize. DE VILLIERS warned that SA's stock of white maize would run dry by Sep., adding that it would not be easy to secure supply from elsewhere as only the US and Mexico produced white maize. ZOKWANA said he was confident that the country's ports had capacity to handle the expected imports, but better coordination between port use and internal logistics would be needed

Gazprom in partnership deal for SA coal gasification project
Tesla shifts production to its Gigafactory to accommodate Powerwall demand

ANGLO AFRICAN CAPITAL has inked an MoU with Russia's GAZPROM to secure the sole distribution rights for the latter's underground coal gasification technology in sub-Saharan Africa. GAZPROM has also agreed to partner with AAC to develop the underground coal gasification of its coal assets in the Springbok Flats in Limpopo. GAZPROM will also participate in a prefeasibility study of the project. AAC said it decided in 2014 to pursue more environment-friendly options for the development of its coal assets in the Springbok Flats and started research into the viability of UCG. AAC CEO HEINE VAN NIEKERK noted that having a partner with the stature and influence of GAZPROM is a great step forward for AAC and its ambitious to become a regional energy producer. As it begins delivering its stationary batteries, strong demand prompts Tesla to shift production to its Gigafactory.

Nevada PUC denies request to stay solar net metering reforms

The Public Utilities Commission of Nevada denied requests to delay implementing the new net metering remuneration rates and fixed fee rate hikes on rooftop solar users. Austin Energy is preparing to introduce a new distributed energy management system "Austin Shines," with a formal launch in February. A combination of wind, gas and solar generation made up 96% of new capacity added last year, according to SNL

Austin Energy poised to launch new distributed energy management system
Solar and wind comprise 61% of 2015 capacity additions, gas contributes 35%
Solar moves ahead of wind, hydro in California fuel mix, toward 10% of state's power

Huge growth in the sector, along with a hydro-hampering drought, means that solar now accounts for more generation than any other renewable resource in California.

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Huge growth in the sector, along with a hydro-hampering drought, means that solar now accounts for more generation than any other renewable resource in California. Driven by new liquefied natural gas (LNG) export capacity, the United States is forecast to be a net exporter of natural gas by mid-2017, according to EIA's January Short-Term Energy Outlook. Forecasts for continuing declines of U.S. pipeline imports from Canada and increasing U.S. pipeline exports to Mexico also contribute to the United States becoming a net exporter.

EIA forecasts that the United States will be a net exporter of natural gas in mid 2017

Crude oil prices will remain relatively low through 2016 and 2017

The Short-Term Energy Outlook (STEO) released on January 12 forecasts that Brent crude oil prices will average \$40 per barrel (b) in 2016 and \$50/b in 2017. This is the first STEO to include forecasts for 2017. Forecast West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude oil prices average \$2/b lower than Brent in 2016 and \$3/b lower in 2017. However, the current values of futures and options contracts continue to suggest high uncertainty in the price outlook (Figure 1). For example, EIA's forecast for the average WTI price in April 2016 of \$37/b should be considered in the context of recent contract values for April 2016 delivery (Market Prices and Uncertainty Report), suggesting that the market expects WTI prices to range from \$25/b to \$56/b (at the 95% confidence interval).

Maize plantings down by half

The planting window for maize in the summer production areas has expired, with only about 50% of the four million hectares earmarked for maize production planted.

London staff at Credit Suisse face grim news

London workers at Credit Suisse are set to become the latest casualties of the rout that has left analysts poised for another round of poor results from top investment banks in the US and Europe. The Swiss bank will this week tell up to 1,800 London staff their jobs are at risk, following through on a cost-cutting commitment made in October, bank insiders said. The pressures forcing Credit Suisse into action were evident in last week's fourth-quarter results from JPMorgan Chase and Citigroup, where revenues from the core fixed income, currencies and commodities businesses were a weak spot among broadly positive numbers. At JPMorgan, FICC revenues slipped 3% to \$2.57bn. Citi's FICC revenues rose 7% from a strikingly weak period a year earlier, but still capped a nine-month run of consecutive falls from a volatility-boosted first quarter. Morgan Stanley and Goldman Sachs report their numbers this week. "Fixed income continues to be a hard-hat area," said Huw van Steenis, analyst at Morgan Stanley.

US, EU lift sanctions on Iran

The US and EU today waived sanctions targeting Iran's oil and petrochemical sectors after UN nuclear watchdog the IAEA confirmed Tehran has completed nuclear disarmament commitments agreed under the July 2015 deal with global powers. The IAEA today confirmed Iran's compliance with the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, setting in motion the process of waiving US and EU sanctions imposed in 2012 that crippled Iran's crude exports and cost Iran an estimated \$150bn in sales revenue. Iranian president Hassan Rohani congratulated the negotiators, tweeting "I thank God for this blessing and bow to the greatness of the patient nation of Iran." IAEA director general Yukiya Amano released the report after US secretary of state John Kerry, EU high representative for foreign affairs Federica Mogherini and Iranian foreign minister Mohammad Javad Zarif met in Vienna to discuss the final steps ahead of sanctions relief. The EU and the US will lift their sanctions on Iran immediately, Mogherini and Kerry said following the release of the IAEA report. After the IAEA announcement, the White House issued an executive order lifting the US' nuclear-related sanctions.

Thousands of Mozambicans flee to Malawi as troops, rebels clash - UNHCR

More than 2,000 Mozambicans have fled to Malawi to escape fighting between government forces and rebels in the coal mining province of Tete in the last three weeks, the United Nations refugee agency said. UNHCR spokeswoman Karin de Grujil said refugees had told of soldiers attacking villages they believed were harbouring opposition party members and had burned down houses, in one case killing an elderly woman trapped inside her home. "Some parents also stated they have been separated from their children during flight and they have not been able to find them," de Grujil said. Two thirds of the 1,297 registered refugees were women and children, UNHCR said. A further 900 were waiting to register. Mozambique's main opposition party, Renamo started out as a guerrilla force backed by neighbouring then-Rhodesia's white-minority govt and later apartheid South Africa, on its southern border, to counter the communist Frelimo movement. The two sides fought a civil war from 1976 to 1992 in which a million people died. Frelimo has dominated politics since the end of the fighting but Renamo never completely disarmed and launched a low-level guerrilla campaign in late 2012 that analysts said was designed to extract political concessions before 2014 elections. Since then, there have been few reported outbreaks of violence in former Renamo strongholds in the southern African nation's central belt or around Tete, a major coal mining centre.. -- Reuters

Thousands of Mozambicans flee to Malawi as troops, rebels clash - UNHCR

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Glencore mine sale said to draw interest from ex-Barrick CEO

Regent competing against Chile-focused operators that have offered close to \$1 billion. Former Barrick Gold Corporation chief executive officer Aaron Regent is among the remaining bidders for Glencore's Lomas Bayas copper mine in the Chilean desert of Atacama, according to people familiar with the sale. Regent, who runs Magris Resources, is competing against a small number of Chile-focused operators that have offered Glencore close to \$1 billion for the mine, said two people who asked not to be identified as the sale is confidential. While the offering is at an advanced stage, Glencore may still decide to retain the asset, the people said.

A sale at such a price would be a boon for cash-strapped Glencore, which is seeking to trim its \$30 billion debt load to \$18 billion by the end of this year to appease investors concerned about waning commodity prices.

The Swiss firm said in October it was in talks to sell Lomas Bayas and the Cobar copper mine in Australia after approaches from potential buyers. Together, the operations produce about 125 000 metric tons of copper a year, and Citigroup and UBS Group said at the time they may fetch as much as a combined \$1 billion while Investec valued them both as \$400 million.

Union at BHP Billiton's Chile-based Cerro Colorado mine ends strike

Unionized workers at global miner BHP Billiton's Cerro Colorado copper mine in Chile have ended a four-day strike after accepting the company's latest contract offer, the union said in a statement on Friday. "On Thursday evening and after four days of legal strike, the workers of Cerro Colorado accepted the latest offer made by the company, ending four days of striking that started during the first shift on Monday, Jan. 11," said the union. The relatively small Cerro Colorado mine produced 55,600 tonnes of copper from January to September 2015, according to Chilean state copper commission Cochilco.

Fire partially suspends operations at Brazil port

Operations at Brazil's bustling Santos port have been partially suspended because of toxic smoke caused by a chemical fire that erupted yesterday afternoon. The fire is still blazing at containers holding chemicals at the Localfrio terminal in Guarujá. The incident was caused by leakage of chlorine chemicals stored in a container.

Santos Brasil, operator of Latin America's largest container terminal Tecon, suspended operations and sent staff home to avoid exposure to the fumes with no immediate schedule for resumption of activities. Four other terminals located on the port also suspended activities, according to a shipping agent. About 20 reefer containers were affected by fire, according to the agent. Terminals and roads within 100m (328ft) of the fire were also shut down by port administrator Codesp. Santos, which handles a quarter of Brazil's trade, was otherwise operating normally, Codesp said. Loading and unloading of other commodities including ethanol, petrochemicals and fuel were not affected by the Localfrio fire, Codesp said. Fire fighters said the flames were contained and expected to have the blaze under control by the afternoon.

Coal generates 76% of Aussie electricity

AUSTRALIA's total coal share of electricity generation (excluding rooftop solar) in the year to December 2015 was 75.9%, according to a report by Pitt & Sherry for the Australia Institute. Pitt & Sherry consultant Hugh Saddler said continuing rise in national electricity emissions was largely due to Australia's ongoing use of coal-fired power stations. "The Australian government has made a commitment to reduce the country's emissions by 26 to 28 per cent by 2030 from 2005 levels, but without significant policy change, it is difficult to see how this will come about," he said. "Australia is still largely dependent on coal for its electricity supply and assuming electricity demand continues to rise, Australia's carbon emissions will continue to rise, given that electricity emissions make up around one third of the country's total emissions. "While some changes may occur in the market such as new renewable energy development and improved hydro generation, it is likely the current scenario will continue for at least the next six months, and Australia will continue to rely increasingly on coal-fired power stations for its electricity supply." -- International Coal News

SPANISH COAL-FIRED OUTPUT TO DROP UP TO 32%

Spanish coal-fired generation will decrease between 23% and 32% in 2016 compared to last year as the country's generators will have to comply with European environmental legislation, competition regulator CNMC said this week. In a gas market outlook report released on Tuesday, but prepared in October 2015, the regulator said coal-fired plants, which produced 54.4 TWh in 2015, would reduce output in 2016 to between 37 TWh and 42 TWh, especially to meet NOx limits set out in EU's Industrial Emissions Directive (IED). The extent of the drop in coal-fired output will depend on the measures plant operators implement at their facilities throughout the year. So far, companies have delayed their decisions, with all but one small coal-fired power plant in the Balearic Islands signing on last year to Spain's transitional plan to gradually cut emissions by 2020. As power demand increases and companies carry out necessary upgrades, gas-fired generation and increased interconnection capacity with France will make up for much of the lost coal-fired generation, the CNMC said. Ultimately, switching to gas plants will depend on cross-border availability and fuel prices, but the regulator expects an almost 13% increase in gas-fired generation in 2016. Spain still needs to approve the rules that would set the emission caps for each individual plant, but political turmoil will delay any significant measure until a new government can be sworn in. A general election on 20 December resulted in no clear majority for the sitting government or the opposition.

Low prices may force Vattenfall reactor closures – analysts

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Swedish utility Vattenfall's warnings that poor profitability may force it to close more nuclear reactors should be taken seriously, analysts told Montel on Wednesday. "No matter how you add up the numbers it is impossible to make money from nuclear generation with a power price of EUR 20/MWh," said Christian Holtz, analyst at consultants Sweco. He expects the state-run company will make an announcement this year given that there are no major changes in factors affecting profitability. Since Vattenfall and Uniper-controlled OKG announced last year they were to close down four reactors (2,857 MW) by 2020, power prices at the long end of the forward curve have fallen by EUR 8/MWh or more. More closures? "It's more likely that more reactors will be decommissioned than not," said John Brottemsmo, analyst at Bergen Energi. "Removing the [two] remaining [Ringhals] units would lift the power price to EUR 30.26/MWh in 2022," he said. In comparison the 2022 forward contract was last seen at EUR 22.84/MWh on Nasdaq Commodities. Nena analyst Sigbjørn Seland agrees. "If Vattenfall made the right decision last year [to close two reactors], then it is clearly possible they may choose to shut down further units," he said. Last month Vattenfall senior executive vice president Torbjørn Wahlborg told Montel that the company's five remaining reactors (5,451 MW) faced closure by the mid-2020s due to the low electricity prices and Sweden's capacity tax of SEK 14,770/MW (EUR 1,597) on nuclear generation. The company will have to decide this year whether to make costly investments in safety upgrades.

Moody's places 55 mining companies on review for downgrade

Reflecting an effort by the ratings agency to recalibrate mining portfolio ratings to align with the fundamental shift in the credit conditions of the global mining sector, Moody's has placed 55 mining companies on review for downgrade. This included 12 mining companies from the Europe, Middle East and Africa region, 11 US companies, 12 Canadian companies, nine Latin American companies and four Australian companies. Print Send to Friend 0 0 The list included Anglo American, BHP Billiton, South32, Rio Tinto, Vale, Alcoa, Barrick Gold, Newmont Mining, Gold Fields, Petra Diamonds, AngloGold Ashanti, Metalloinvest, Nord Gold, Alrosa and Uranium One. As part of an ongoing assessment of mining companies, Moody's sharply reduced its price sensitivity assumptions in December, after which credit conditions in the mining industry weakened further, with prices continuing to decline. The company said the likelihood had increased that prices for base metals, precious metals, iron-ore and metallurgical coal would approach levels closer to Moody's 'stressed sensitivity' scenario. In addition, the strong dollar was a further factor contributing to weakening demand and driving prices lower, as most metals are traded in dollars.

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Shell to axe 10,000 jobs during 2016 to cut costs

Royal Dutch Shell has announced plans to cut 10,000 jobs and direct contractor positions by the end of 2016 in a bid to cut costs amid a fall in oil prices. The job cuts will occur across Royal Dutch Shell as well as BG Group, following an acquisition as part of a streamlining and integration of the two companies. In April 2015, Shell announced plans to buy BG Group in a \$70bn deal to become a dominant entity in the LNG market. Royal Dutch Shell CEO Ben van Beurden said: "Bold, strategic moves shape our industry. The completion of BG transaction, which we are expecting in a matter of weeks, will mark the start of a new chapter in Shell, to rejuvenate the company, and improve shareholder returns." "Shell's drive to improve competitive performance is delivering at the bottom line. Operating costs have reduced by \$4bn, or around 10% in 2015, and the company expects Shell's costs to fall again in 2016, by a further \$3bn." Synergies from the BG combination will be in addition to that. Together, these actions will include a reduction of some 10,000 staff and direct contractor positions in 2015-16 across both companies, as streamlining and integration of the two companies continue.

Private power stations coming to South African soon

South Africa is in line to receive privately-owned coal power stations, which would add capacity to the country's energy grid. January 2016 is the month in which South Africa's first privately-owned coal-fired power stations are expected to be announced. According to a report by the Sunday Times, several companies are vying for approval from the Dept of Energy to build the independent power stations. South Africa has suffered from severe electricity shortages since 2008, which has resulted in load shedding across the country and cost us millions in lost business and investment. The department aims to approve an additional 2,500MW of coal-fuelled electricity during its first round of approvals, stated the report, for which companies submitted their bids in November 2015. "It's really a mix of the good, the bad, and the ugly," said coal industry expert Xavier Prevost. The energy department has set several minimum requirements for the power projects, including the need for them to be 51% South African-owned, and 30% black-owned. Groundwork SA director Bobby Peek said he was concerned that the projects were being pushed through in terms of environmental approvals. This could lead to residents in nearby areas suffering from respiratory diseases, he said. He said South Africa was already exceeding its greenhouse gas emissions targets, and more coal power stations would add to emissions. South Africa's two latest power stations, Medupi and Kusile, are currently under construction and years behind schedule – with Eskom extending completion dates several times over recent years. Medupi and Kusile are expected to be completed by 2021.

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LOW WATER LEVELS FORCE ESKOM TO TURN OFF A HYDRO STATION

The utility has decided to stop using the hydroelectric station due to low water levels in the Gariep Dam.

Eskom says it's stopped using one of its hydro-electric power stations in the Eastern Cape due to low water levels but, in general, the drought has not had an impact on electricity supply. The country is facing the worst drought in 23 years, with infrastructure and food security already under threat. At the same time, South Africans have been living with an unreliable electricity system. While load shedding has been avoided for some time, there's still a shortage of generating capacity. Eskom uses four hydro-electric stations to generate electricity in the country and it also buys power from the Cahora Bassa hydro station in Mozambique.

The local power stations produce an estimate 2,000 megawatts in total, and the power utility says it's decided not to use electricity generated at the Gariep dam due to low water levels. Eskom's Khulu Phasiwe says even if all four stations were not used, supply wouldn't immediately be affected. "Technically we will still be okay with the contribution we are getting from our nuclear power station and the coal fire stations." South Africa buys about 1,500 megawatts from Cahora Bassa per day. Mozambique has not issued a warning about its water levels at this stage

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Chevron looks to dispose of 75% of South African business Back

US oil major Chevron said on Thursday it plans to sell 75% of its South African business unit which includes a 110 000 bbl/d refinery in Cape Town. Chevron is a leading refiner and marketer of petroleum products in South Africa, the most industrialised economy in Africa, where it has had a presence for more than a century. Print Send to Friend 4 0 Chevron said its call for expression of interest was in line with a three-year asset sales programme it announced in 2014. "This demonstrates Chevron's continuing focus on balancing our global portfolio with our long-term business priorities, and it is aligned with our previously announced \$15-billion divestment program," said Mark Nelson, the company's president for international products, in a statement. MORE INSIGHT Western Cape independent fuel storage and distribution project, South Africa Chevron Refinery in Milnerton opened its doors to the community Besides the Cape Town refinery, Chevron also has interests in a lubricants plant in Durban on the east coast. Its network of Caltex service stations makes it one of South Africa's top five petroleum brands, according to its website. Chevron has already disposed of several assets in Africa's top crude exporter Nigeria, as oil majors globally looked to cut costs and streamline business models in an over-supplied oil market and plunging prices.

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Universal Coal advises shareholders to accept CoAL takeover offer

The independent directors of ASX-listed coal miner and takeover target Universal Coal have recommended that its shareholders accept the takeover offer as proposed by Coal of Africa Limited (CoAL). The Independent Directors intend to do so in respect of all of their own Universal shares, which comprise in aggregate, 3.25% of Universal's total issued share capital. This follows CoAL's announcement on 26 November 2015 that it had offered A\$126.4 million to acquire the entire issued and to be issued share capital of Universal Coal. In order to accept the offer, Universal shareholders who hold their Universal shares in certificated form must complete and return their form of acceptance along with valid share certificates and/ or any other relevant documents of title to be received no later than 1:00pm (London time) on 3 March 2016. Meanwhile, Universal CDI holders who hold Universal CDIs through Universal's issuer sponsored subregister must complete and return the CDI acceptance form to be received no later than 7.00pm (Sydney time) on 26 February 2016.

HCCL workers petition High Court

HWANGE Colliery Company Limited (HCCL) workers have petitioned the High Court to save the coalminer from imminent collapse by placing the company under judicial management, the Zimbabwe Independent can reveal.

According to court papers filed by Bulawayo-based lawyer, Dumisani Dube of Mathonsi, Ncube Law Chambers, the company is saddled with current liabilities of US\$209 786 705, with chances of recovery seemingly very slim owing to what the workers claim is poor management at the company. The application, filed under case HC154/16, if granted, is likely to have far reaching implications on the coalminer whose tentacles and footprints can be traced to the London, Johannesburg, and the Zimbabwe Stock Exchanges. In an affidavit filed by four workers, Casper Kombana Ndlovu, Luka Katakoto, Simeon Tembo, and Charles Ncube, representing other hundreds of workers at Hwange Colliery, the applicants argue that judicial management is the only way to save the ailing coal miner from further collapse.

Anti-mining protesters occupy downtown Cusco

Thousands of protesters demonstrated in Cusco's town plaza to demand the repeal of dozens of mining licenses in a sacred region of the Quispicanchi province. Protest leaders say that gold-mining licenses granted in 2013 infringe on part of the sacred grounds of the Lord of Qoyllur Riti sanctuary. The religious festival observed by residents from throughout Cusco state sees thousands make the pilgrimage to the area for celebrations including indigenous dances which were recognized by the national government as cultural heritage in 2004. "If they do not void the mining licenses granted in the area of the Lord of Qoyllur Riti sanctuary, we are going to hold an indefinite strike," Lord of Qoyllur Riti celebrations board secretary Norberto Vega told El Comercio.

Petrobras Rescue Could Cost Brazil \$21 Billion, Citigroup Says

Bailing-out state-controlled oil producer Petroleo Brasileiro SA could cost the government as much as \$21 billion, according to research from Citigroup Inc. That would be the amount necessary to plug the company's cash hole and fix the capital structure on a sustainable basis were oil to fall to \$20 for 12 months, Citigroup credit analysts including Eric Ollom wrote in a report Friday. The company, with \$127 billion of bonds and loans, could see its ratio of net debt to earnings before items rise to what Citi called an "unsustainable level" of 6.5 times. Petrobras, as the company is known, slashed its 2015-2019 investment plan by 24 percent last week to cope with the collapse of oil prices amid a sprawling corruption probe at the state-owned oil producer that's spread to some of the country's biggest businesses and highest-ranking politicians. The Rio de Janeiro-based company is rated junk by the three major credit rating companies. "The market is correct to be concerned regarding the potential drain on sovereign credit metrics if nations are required to support their oil and gas quasi-sovereigns under a \$20 scenario," the analysts wrote. "Our analysis shows most of the direct impact of such support is mainly limited to Latin America, specifically Brazil, Colombia, and Mexico, but only in Brazil is the amount significant."

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Germany imports 54 mln tons of hard coal in 2015

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Last German lignite plant to close by 2050

Germany's environment minister, Barbara Hendricks, has called for a sense of proportion when debating the future of German lignite and hard coal-fired power generation. "I do not want to get stuck in a debate on whether the last lignite-fired power plant will close down in 2045 or 2050 — although the last one would really need to close down in 2050," Hendricks told the annual Handelsblatt energy congress in Berlin today. Germany needs to reach a "coal consensus" that must include the affected regions, she said, echoing the concern over massive job losses voiced by federal economy and energy minister Sigmar Gabriel at the same conference yesterday. Hendricks rejected criticism of Germany's plans to end nuclear and coal-fired power generation at the same time, endangering security of supply. Germany generates a large surplus of power and is a strong exporter, she said. The last German nuclear power plant will close down in 2022 and coal-fired plants will be needed as a bridge technology towards a new renewables era. "But every bridge has an end," Hendricks said.

Last German lignite plant to close by 2050

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Poland air pollution: Why Krakow's domestic coal ban is a big deal

Last week the Polish city of Krakow passed a law banning coal-fired stoves and domestic wood burning — to take effect in 2019. The decision, which was mooted way back in October, came just a month after the EU commission said it would take Poland to court over its longstanding air pollution issues. It's estimated that Poland's high pollution levels cause over 40,000 premature deaths a year, with toxic dust from home coal furnaces, along with industrial and transport emissions, killing ten times as many people as road accidents.

The Krakow ban could have profound implications on the country's already troubled coal sector — especially if other cities follow Krakow's lead. Poland adopted an anti-smog law in the run-up to its parliamentary election in October, but the law — which places the responsibility to act (and pay) on local authorities — was deemed insufficient by the Commission. Only Krakow, one of the dirtiest cities in Europe, has so far announced its intention to ban household coal burning. The recently elected Law and Justice party initially opposed the law and threatened to amend it if the impacts were too disruptive for the coal industry.

Europe's Gas Plants Spark to Life With Fuel at Lowest Since 2010

Natural gas-fired power plants in Europe's two biggest electricity users are earning utilities money again.

German gas-fired plant profitability at times of peak demand turned positive on Dec. 7, rising to the highest since February 2012 on Thursday, while gas units that generate around the clock in France have been profitable for seven weeks, the longest stretch in four years, according to data compiled by Bloomberg. That came after benchmark European gas prices fell 12 percent in 2016, extending last year's 31% drop. "More gas plants are in the money at current power and gas prices," said Omar Ramdani, head of analysis at RheinEnergie Trading GmbH in Cologne. "If it pays off for a gas plant to produce several hours and not a whole day, it is looking positive right now." While gas produces about half the emissions of coal when used to generate electricity, making it a greener option to back up intermittent wind and solar output, the fuel has struggled to compete against more profitable coal, forcing utilities from EON SE to Statkraft AS to close gas units. The price of the cleaner fuel in Europe will probably fall further as cold weather ends and oil's slump feeds into long-term contracts, Societe Generale SA said last week.

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Nuclear and Gas Competition in Europe

Engie SA doubled the output of four of its French gas-fired plants in 2015 from a year earlier, including a unit in Fos-sur-Mer brought back after being idled, Le Figaro reported Jan. 21. Gas prices are low enough that stations in France will compete with nuclear to provide the lowest cost generation, according to Bruno Brunetti, senior director of electricity at Pira Energy. France gets about 75 percent of its power from reactors. "It is starting to be ugly as we head towards nuclear reactors ramping down in the short term" as gas gets cheaper, he said by phone from New York. So far this winter, Europe's gas consumption has been about 6 percent below normal, said Meredith Annex, an analyst for Bloomberg New Energy Finance in London. Rising spark spreads may change that, she said. "If there's a driver for gas demand in Europe, it will come from the power market," Klaus Schaefer, CEO of EON SE's Uniper unit, said Jan. 20.

Indonesia: State-owned Enterprise Ministry Targets Mining Royalty at Rp1.4tn

State-owned Enterprises (BUMN) Ministry has set a target that the royalty to the state from the mining sector could reach Rp1.4 trillion. The figure increased from the previous year at Rp1.2 trillion. Deputy to the State-owned Enterprises Minister for Mining, Strategic Industries and Media Affairs Fajar Harry Sampurno said that the prices of commodities have now dropped, including the price of global crude oil. He also said that the drop in the price of global crude oil has also affected the price of coal. "This month alone, the price global crude oil is at around US\$ 29 per barrel," Fajar said in Jakarta. In addition, Fajar said that the prices of nickel and tin have also slumped. Nevertheless, Fajar was upbeat that the prices of commodities would bounce because a number of power plants in Indonesia that uses coal as fuel would operate. "Once they operate, the price of coal will increase," he said, adding that the price of nickel will also increase accordingly. Fajar also said that the price nickel dropped last year following the ban to export crude mining commodities. "Smelters will operate so we can export nickel and the royalty will increase again," he added.

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Indonesia: State miners to be integrated into parent company

The State-Owned Enterprises Ministry has established a special committee to act as a virtual holding company for four state-run mining companies with combined assets of around US\$4.8 billion before a parent company is set up later this year. The ministry's assistant for mining, strategic industry and media, Fajar Harry Sampurno, said on Friday that a consolidation committee was established last year, and included directors of the four companies to be integrated under the planned holding company. The four companies are diversified miner PT Aneka Tambang (Antam), coal miner PT Tambang Batubara Bukit Asam, tin miner PT Timah and aluminum producer PT Indonesia Asahan Aluminium (Inalum). All but Inalum are listed on the Indonesia Stock Exchange (IDX). "The holding company does not yet exist, but the committee will act as a virtual holding company for the firms and will determine their course. We will begin hearing feedback from the committee within three months, probably," Fajar told reporters at a press conference.

Indonesia: PLN to shed light on remote areas with mobile power plants

As part of efforts to boost electricity supply in remote areas, state-owned electricity firm PLN has rolled out its plans to procure small-scale mobile gas engine power plants, according to an executive. "These power plants will have capacity between 10 and 20 megawatts [MW]," said PLN's regional business director for Papua and Maluku, Haryanto. Most of the mobile power plants will be placed in the eastern parts of Indonesia, including Maluku and Papua. "They will be dedicated to areas with a lack of supply but where the demand is too low for mobile vessels," Haryanto added. Previously, PLN procured mobile power plant vessels to provide supply to remote areas. Gas-fired mobile power plants have less capacity than mobile vessels. Mobile power plants with a total 200 MW in capacity are expected to be stationed in at least six areas in Maluku, including Ternate, Tual and Saumlaki, and up to four locations in Papua, including in Manokwari and Fakfak, according to Haryanto.

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Tesla shifts production to its Gigafactory to accommodate Powerwall demand

As it begins delivering its stationary batteries, strong demand prompts Tesla to shift production to its Gigafactory.

Nevada PUC denies request to stay solar net metering reforms

The Public Utilities Commission of Nevada denied requests to delay implementing the new net metering remuneration rates and fixed fee rate hikes on rooftop solar users.

Austin Energy poised to launch new distributed energy management system

Austin Energy is preparing to introduce a new distributed energy management system "Austin Shines," with a formal launch in February.

Solar and wind comprise 61% of 2015 capacity additions, gas contributes 35%

A combination of wind, gas and solar generation made up 96% of new capacity added last year, according to SNL

Solar moves ahead of wind, hydro in California fuel mix, toward 10% of state's power

Huge growth in the sector, along with a hydro-hampering drought, means that solar now accounts for more generation than any other renewable resource in California.

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EIA forecasts that the United States will be a net exporter of natural gas in mid 2017

Driven by new liquefied natural gas (LNG) export capacity, the United States is forecast to be a net exporter of natural gas by mid-2017, according to EIA's January Short-Term Energy Outlook. Forecasts for continuing declines of U.S. pipeline imports from Canada and increasing U.S. pipeline exports to Mexico also contribute to the United States becoming a net exporter.

Crude oil prices will remain relatively low through 2016 and 2017

The Short-Term Energy Outlook (STEO) released on January 12 forecasts that Brent crude oil prices will average \$40 per barrel (b) in 2016 and \$50/b in 2017. This is the first STEO to include forecasts for 2017. Forecast West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude oil prices average \$2/b lower than Brent in 2016 and \$3/b lower in 2017. However, the current values of futures and options contracts continue to suggest high uncertainty in the price outlook (Figure 1). For example, EIA's forecast for the average WTI price in April 2016 of \$37/b should be considered in the context of recent contract values for April 2016 delivery (Market Prices and Uncertainty Report), suggesting that the market expects WTI prices to range from \$25/b to \$56/b (at the 95% confidence interval).

Maize plantings down by half

The planting window for maize in the summer production areas has expired, with only about 50% of the four million hectares earmarked for maize production planted.

London staff at Credit Suisse face grim news

London workers at Credit Suisse are set to become the latest casualties of the rout that has left analysts poised for another round of poor results from top investment banks in the US and Europe. The Swiss bank will this week tell up to 1,800 London staff their jobs are at risk, following through on a cost-cutting commitment made in October, bank insiders said. The pressures forcing Credit Suisse into action were evident in last week's fourth-quarter results from JPMorgan Chase and Citigroup, where revenues from the core fixed income, currencies and commodities businesses were a weak spot among broadly positive numbers. At JPMorgan, FICC revenues slipped 3% to \$2.57bn. Citi's FICC revenues rose 7% from a strikingly weak period a year earlier, but still capped a nine-month run of consecutive falls from a volatility-boosted first quarter. Morgan Stanley and Goldman Sachs report their numbers this week. "Fixed income continues to be a hard-hat area," said Huw van Steenis, analyst at Morgan Stanley.

US, EU lift sanctions on Iran

The US and EU today waived sanctions targeting Iran's oil and petrochemical sectors after UN nuclear watchdog the IAEA confirmed Tehran has completed nuclear disarmament commitments agreed under the July 2015 deal with global powers. The IAEA today confirmed Iran's compliance with the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, setting in motion the process of waiving US and EU sanctions imposed in 2012 that crippled Iran's crude exports and cost Iran an estimated \$150bn in sales revenue. Iranian president Hassan Rohani congratulated the negotiators, tweeting "I thank God for this blessing and bow to the greatness of the patient nation of Iran." IAEA director general Yukiya Amano released the report after US secretary of state John Kerry, EU high representative for foreign affairs Federica Mogherini and Iranian foreign minister Mohammad Javad Zarif met in Vienna to discuss the final steps ahead of sanctions relief. The EU and the US will lift their sanctions on Iran immediately, Mogherini and Kerry said following the release of the IAEA report. After the IAEA announcement, the White House issued an executive order lifting the US' nuclear-related sanctions.

Thousands of Mozambicans flee to Malawi as troops, rebels clash - UNHCR

More than 2,000 Mozambicans have fled to Malawi to escape fighting between government forces and rebels in the coal mining province of Tete in the last three weeks, the United Nations refugee agency said. UNHCR spokeswoman Karin de Grujil said refugees had told of soldiers attacking villages they believed were harbouring opposition party members and had burned down houses, in one case killing an elderly woman trapped inside her home. "Some parents also stated they have been separated from their children during flight and they have not been able to find them," de Grujil said. Two thirds of the 1,297 registered refugees were women and children, UNHCR said. A further 900 were waiting to register. Mozambique's main opposition party, Renamo started out as a guerrilla force backed by neighbouring then-Rhodesia's white-minority govt and later apartheid South Africa, on its southern border, to counter the communist Frelimo movement. The two sides fought a civil war from 1976 to 1992 in which a million people died. Frelimo has dominated politics since the end of the fighting but Renamo never completely disarmed and launched a low-level guerrilla campaign in late 2012 that analysts said was designed to extract political concessions before 2014 elections. Since then, there have been few reported outbreaks of violence in former Renamo strongholds in the southern African nation's central belt or around Tete, a major coal mining centre.. -- Reuters

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Glencore mine sale said to draw interest from ex-Barrick CEO

Regent competing against Chile-focused operators that have offered close to \$1 billion. Former Barrick Gold Corporation chief executive officer Aaron Regent is among the remaining bidders for Glencore's Lomas Bayas copper mine in the Chilean desert of Atacama, according to people familiar with the sale. Regent, who runs Magris Resources, is competing against a small number of Chile-focused operators that have offered Glencore close to \$1 billion for the mine, said two people who asked not to be identified as the sale is confidential. While the offering is at an advanced stage, Glencore may still decide to retain the asset, the people said.

A sale at such a price would be a boon for cash-strapped Glencore, which is seeking to trim its \$30 billion debt load to \$18 billion by the end of this year to appease investors concerned about waning commodity prices.

The Swiss firm said in October it was in talks to sell Lomas Bayas and the Cobar copper mine in Australia after approaches from potential buyers. Together, the operations produce about 125 000 metric tons of copper a year, and Citigroup and UBS Group said at the time they may fetch as much as a combined \$1 billion while Investec valued them both as \$400 million.

Union at BHP Billiton's Chile-based Cerro Colorado mine ends strike

Unionized workers at global miner BHP Billiton's Cerro Colorado copper mine in Chile have ended a four-day strike after accepting the company's latest contract offer, the union said in a statement on Friday. "On Thursday evening and after four days of legal strike, the workers of Cerro Colorado accepted the latest offer made by the company, ending four days of striking that started during the first shift on Monday, Jan. 11," said the union. The relatively small Cerro Colorado mine produced 55,600 tonnes of copper from January to September 2015, according to Chilean state copper commission Cochilco.

Fire partially suspends operations at Brazil port

Operations at Brazil's bustling Santos port have been partially suspended because of toxic smoke caused by a chemical fire that erupted yesterday afternoon. The fire is still blazing at containers holding chemicals at the Localfrio terminal in Guaruja. The incident was caused by leakage of chlorine chemicals stored in a container.

Santos Brasil, operator of Latin America's largest container terminal Tecon, suspended operations and sent staff home to avoid exposure to the fumes with no immediate schedule for resumption of activities. Four other terminals located on the port also suspended activities, according to a shipping agent. About 20 reefer containers were affected by fire, according to the agent. Terminals and roads within 100m (328ft) of the fire were also shut down by port administrator Codesp. Santos, which handles a quarter of Brazil's trade, was otherwise operating normally, Codesp said. Loading and unloading of other commodities including ethanol, petrochemicals and fuel were not affected by the Localfrio fire, Codesp said. Fire fighters said the flames were contained and expected to have the blaze under control by the afternoon.

Coal generates 76% of Aussie electricity

AUSTRALIA's total coal share of electricity generation (excluding rooftop solar) in the year to December 2015 was 75.9%, according to a report by Pitt & Sherry for the Australia Institute. Pitt & Sherry consultant Hugh Saddler said continuing rise in national electricity emissions was largely due to Australia's ongoing use of coal-fired power stations. "The Australian government has made a commitment to reduce the country's emissions by 26 to 28 per cent by 2030 from 2005 levels, but without significant policy change, it is difficult to see how this will come about," he said. "Australia is still largely dependent on coal for its electricity supply and assuming electricity demand continues to rise, Australia's carbon emissions will continue to rise, given that electricity emissions make up around one third of the country's total emissions. "While some changes may occur in the market such as new renewable energy development and improved hydro generation, it is likely the current scenario will continue for at least the next six months, and Australia will continue to rely increasingly on coal-fired power stations for its electricity supply." -- International Coal News

SPANISH COAL-FIRED OUTPUT TO DROP UP TO 32%

Spanish coal-fired generation will decrease between 23% and 32% in 2016 compared to last year as the country's generators will have to comply with European environmental legislation, competition regulator CNMC said this week. In a gas market outlook report released on Tuesday, but prepared in October 2015, the regulator said coal-fired plants, which produced 54.4 TWh in 2015, would reduce output in 2016 to between 37 TWh and 42 TWh, especially to meet NOx limits set out in EU's Industrial Emissions Directive (IED). The extent of the drop in coal-fired output will depend on the measures plant operators implement at their facilities throughout the year. So far, companies have delayed their decisions, with all but one small coal-fired power plant in the Balearic Islands signing on last year to Spain's transitional plan to gradually cut emissions by 2020. As power demand increases and companies carry out necessary upgrades, gas-fired generation and increased interconnection capacity with France will make up for much of the lost coal-fired generation, the CNMC said. Ultimately, switching to gas plants will depend on cross-border availability and fuel prices, but the regulator expects an almost 13% increase in gas-fired generation in 2016. Spain still needs to approve the rules that would set the emission caps for each individual plant, but political turmoil will delay any significant measure until a new government can be sworn in. A general election on 20 December resulted in no clear majority for the sitting government or the opposition.

Low prices may force Vattenfall reactor closures – analysts

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Swedish utility Vattenfall's warnings that poor profitability may force it to close more nuclear reactors should be taken seriously, analysts told Montel on Wednesday. "No matter how you add up the numbers it is impossible to make money from nuclear generation with a power price of EUR 20/MWh," said Christian Holtz, analyst at consultants Sweco. He expects the state-run company will make an announcement this year given that there are no major changes in factors affecting profitability. Since Vattenfall and Uniper-controlled OKG announced last year they were to close down four reactors (2,857 MW) by 2020, power prices at the long end of the forward curve have fallen by EUR 8/MWh or more. More closures? "It's more likely that more reactors will be decommissioned than not," said John Brottemsmo, analyst at Bergen Energi. "Removing the [two] remaining [Ringhals] units would lift the power price to EUR 30.26/MWh in 2022," he said. In comparison the 2022 forward contract was last seen at EUR 22.84/MWh on Nasdaq Commodities. Nena analyst Sigbjørn Seland agrees. "If Vattenfall made the right decision last year [to close two reactors], then it is clearly possible they may choose to shut down further units," he said. Last month Vattenfall senior executive vice president Torbjørn Wahlborg told Montel that the company's five remaining reactors (5,451 MW) faced closure by the mid-2020s due to the low electricity prices and Sweden's capacity tax of SEK 14,770/MW (EUR 1,597) on nuclear generation. The company will have to decide this year whether to make costly investments in safety upgrades.

Moody's places 55 mining companies on review for downgrade

Reflecting an effort by the ratings agency to recalibrate mining portfolio ratings to align with the fundamental shift in the credit conditions of the global mining sector, Moody's has placed 55 mining companies on review for downgrade. This included 12 mining companies from the Europe, Middle East and Africa region, 11 US companies, 12 Canadian companies, nine Latin American companies and four Australian companies. Print Send to Friend 0 0 The list included Anglo American, BHP Billiton, South32, Rio Tinto, Vale, Alcoa, Barrick Gold, Newmont Mining, Gold Fields, Petra Diamonds, AngloGold Ashanti, Metalloinvest, Nord Gold, Alrosa and Uranium One. As part of an ongoing assessment of mining companies, Moody's sharply reduced its price sensitivity assumptions in December, after which credit conditions in the mining industry weakened further, with prices continuing to decline. The company said the likelihood had increased that prices for base metals, precious metals, iron-ore and metallurgical coal would approach levels closer to Moody's 'stressed sensitivity' scenario. In addition, the strong dollar was a further factor contributing to weakening demand and driving prices lower, as most metals are traded in dollars.

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Shell to axe 10,000 jobs during 2016 to cut costs

Royal Dutch Shell has announced plans to cut 10,000 jobs and direct contractor positions by the end of 2016 in a bid to cut costs amid a fall in oil prices. The job cuts will occur across Royal Dutch Shell as well as BG Group, following an acquisition as part of a streamlining and integration of the two companies. In April 2015, Shell announced plans to buy BG Group in a \$70bn deal to become a dominant entity in the LNG market. Royal Dutch Shell CEO Ben van Beurden said: "Bold, strategic moves shape our industry. The completion of BG transaction, which we are expecting in a matter of weeks, will mark the start of a new chapter in Shell, to rejuvenate the company, and improve shareholder returns." "Shell's drive to improve competitive performance is delivering at the bottom line. Operating costs have reduced by \$4bn, or around 10% in 2015, and the company expects Shell's costs to fall again in 2016, by a further \$3bn." Synergies from the BG combination will be in addition to that. Together, these actions will include a reduction of some 10,000 staff and direct contractor positions in 2015-16 across both companies, as streamlining and integration of the two companies continue.

Private power stations coming to South African soon

South Africa is in line to receive privately-owned coal power stations, which would add capacity to the country's energy grid. January 2016 is the month in which South Africa's first privately-owned coal-fired power stations are expected to be announced. According to a report by the Sunday Times, several companies are vying for approval from the Dept of Energy to build the independent power stations. South Africa has suffered from severe electricity shortages since 2008, which has resulted in load shedding across the country and cost us millions in lost business and investment. The department aims to approve an additional 2,500MW of coal-fuelled electricity during its first round of approvals, stated the report, for which companies submitted their bids in November 2015. "It's really a mix of the good, the bad, and the ugly," said coal industry expert Xavier Prevost. The energy department has set several minimum requirements for the power projects, including the need for them to be 51% South African-owned, and 30% black-owned. Groundwork SA director Bobby Peek said he was concerned that the projects were being pushed through in terms of environmental approvals. This could lead to residents in nearby areas suffering from respiratory diseases, he said. He said South Africa was already exceeding its greenhouse gas emissions targets, and more coal power stations would add to emissions. South Africa's two latest power stations, Medupi and Kusile, are currently under construction and years behind schedule – with Eskom extending completion dates several times over recent years. Medupi and Kusile are expected to be completed by 2021.

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LOW WATER LEVELS FORCE ESKOM TO TURN OFF A HYDRO STATION

The utility has decided to stop using the hydroelectric station due to low water levels in the Gariep Dam.

Eskom says it's stopped using one of its hydro-electric power stations in the Eastern Cape due to low water levels but, in general, the drought has not had an impact on electricity supply. The country is facing the worst drought in 23 years, with infrastructure and food security already under threat. At the same time, South Africans have been living with an unreliable electricity system. While load shedding has been avoided for some time, there's still a shortage of generating capacity. Eskom uses four hydro-electric stations to generate electricity in the country and it also buys power from the Cahora Bassa hydro station in Mozambique.

The local power stations produce an estimate 2,000 megawatts in total, and the power utility says it's decided not to use electricity generated at the Gariep dam due to low water levels. Eskom's Khulu Phasiwe says even if all four stations were not used, supply wouldn't immediately be affected. "Technically we will still be okay with the contribution we are getting from our nuclear power station and the coal fire stations." South Africa buys about 1,500 megawatts from Cahora Bassa per day. Mozambique has not issued a warning about its water levels at this stage

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Chevron looks to dispose of 75% of South African business Back

US oil major Chevron said on Thursday it plans to sell 75% of its South African business unit which includes a 110 000 bbl/d refinery in Cape Town. Chevron is a leading refiner and marketer of petroleum products in South Africa, the most industrialised economy in Africa, where it has had a presence for more than a century. Print Send to Friend 4 0 Chevron said its call for expression of interest was in line with a three-year asset sales programme it announced in 2014. "This demonstrates Chevron's continuing focus on balancing our global portfolio with our long-term business priorities, and it is aligned with our previously announced \$15-billion divestment program," said Mark Nelson, the company's president for international products, in a statement. MORE INSIGHT Western Cape independent fuel storage and distribution project, South Africa Chevron Refinery in Milnerton opened its doors to the community Besides the Cape Town refinery, Chevron also has interests in a lubricants plant in Durban on the east coast. Its network of Caltex service stations makes it one of South Africa's top five petroleum brands, according to its website. Chevron has already disposed of several assets in Africa's top crude exporter Nigeria, as oil majors globally looked to cut costs and streamline business models in an over-supplied oil market and plunging prices.

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Universal Coal advises shareholders to accept CoAL takeover offer

The independent directors of ASX-listed coal miner and takeover target Universal Coal have recommended that its shareholders accept the takeover offer as proposed by Coal of Africa Limited (CoAL). The Independent Directors intend to do so in respect of all of their own Universal shares, which comprise in aggregate, 3.25% of Universal's total issued share capital. This follows CoAL's announcement on 26 November 2015 that it had offered A\$126.4 million to acquire the entire issued and to be issued share capital of Universal Coal. In order to accept the offer, Universal shareholders who hold their Universal shares in certificated form must complete and return their form of acceptance along with valid share certificates and/ or any other relevant documents of title to be received no later than 1:00pm (London time) on 3 March 2016. Meanwhile, Universal CDI holders who hold Universal CDIs through Universal's issuer sponsored subregister must complete and return the CDI acceptance form to be received no later than 7.00pm (Sydney time) on 26 February 2016.

HCCL workers petition High Court

HWANGE Colliery Company Limited (HCCL) workers have petitioned the High Court to save the coalminer from imminent collapse by placing the company under judicial management, the Zimbabwe Independent can reveal.

According to court papers filed by Bulawayo-based lawyer, Dumisani Dube of Mathonsi, Ncube Law Chambers, the company is saddled with current liabilities of US\$209 786 705, with chances of recovery seemingly very slim owing to what the workers claim is poor management at the company. The application, filed under case HC154/16, if granted, is likely to have far reaching implications on the coalminer whose tentacles and footprints can be traced to the London, Johannesburg, and the Zimbabwe Stock Exchanges. In an affidavit filed by four workers, Casper Kombana Ndlovu, Luka Katakoto, Simeon Tembo, and Charles Ncube, representing other hundreds of workers at Hwange Colliery, the applicants argue that judicial management is the only way to save the ailing coal miner from further collapse.

Anti-mining protesters occupy downtown Cusco

Thousands of protesters demonstrated in Cusco's town plaza to demand the repeal of dozens of mining licenses in a sacred region of the Quispicanchi province. Protest leaders say that gold-mining licenses granted in 2013 infringe on part of the sacred grounds of the Lord of Qoyllur Riti sanctuary. The religious festival observed by residents from throughout Cusco state sees thousands make the pilgrimage to the area for celebrations including indigenous dances which were recognized by the national government as cultural heritage in 2004. "If they do not void the mining licenses granted in the area of the Lord of Qoyllur Riti sanctuary, we are going to hold an indefinite strike," Lord of Qoyllur Riti celebrations board secretary Norberto Vega told El Comercio.

Petrobras Rescue Could Cost Brazil \$21 Billion, Citigroup Says

Bailing-out state-controlled oil producer Petroleo Brasileiro SA could cost the government as much as \$21 billion, according to research from Citigroup Inc. That would be the amount necessary to plug the company's cash hole and fix the capital structure on a sustainable basis were oil to fall to \$20 for 12 months, Citigroup credit analysts including Eric Ollom wrote in a report Friday. The company, with \$127 billion of bonds and loans, could see its ratio of net debt to earnings before items rise to what Citi called an "unsustainable level" of 6.5 times. Petrobras, as the company is known, slashed its 2015-2019 investment plan by 24 percent last week to cope with the collapse of oil prices amid a sprawling corruption probe at the state-owned oil producer that's spread to some of the country's biggest businesses and highest-ranking politicians. The Rio de Janeiro-based company is rated junk by the three major credit rating companies. "The market is correct to be concerned regarding the potential drain on sovereign credit metrics if nations are required to support their oil and gas quasi-sovereigns under a \$20 scenario," the analysts wrote. "Our analysis shows most of the direct impact of such support is mainly limited to Latin America, specifically Brazil, Colombia, and Mexico, but only in Brazil is the amount significant."

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Germany imports 54 mln tons of hard coal in 2015

Germany imported 54 million tonnes of hard coal in 2015, 4 percent less than in the previous year, coal importers' lobby VDKI said on Thursday. The figure was close to earlier forecasts from VDKI, which has cited weaker demand from power generators and the steel industry as reasons for the decline. Some 41 million tonnes of the import total were steam coal for power stations, 11 million were coking coal mostly for steelmaking, and 2 million coke, a related product, the lobby group said. While losing some market share in 2015, coal-to-power generation is still the backbone of German electricity supply in a country set on moving away from nuclear power and favouring renewable energy over fossil fuels. Coal accounted for 42.2 percent of the power generation total last year, data from industry group BDEW showed.

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Last German lignite plant to close by 2050

Germany's environment minister, Barbara Hendricks, has called for a sense of proportion when debating the future of German lignite and hard coal-fired power generation. "I do not want to get stuck in a debate on whether the last lignite-fired power plant will close down in 2045 or 2050 — although the last one would really need to close down in 2050," Hendricks told the annual Handelsblatt energy congress in Berlin today. Germany needs to reach a "coal consensus" that must include the affected regions, she said, echoing the concern over massive job losses voiced by federal economy and energy minister Sigmar Gabriel at the same conference yesterday. Hendricks rejected criticism of Germany's plans to end nuclear and coal-fired power generation at the same time, endangering security of supply. Germany generates a large surplus of power and is a strong exporter, she said. The last German nuclear power plant will close down in 2022 and coal-fired plants will be needed as a bridge technology towards a new renewables era. "But every bridge has an end," Hendricks said.

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Poland air pollution: Why Krakow's domestic coal ban is a big deal

Last week the Polish city of Krakow passed a law banning coal-fired stoves and domestic wood burning — to take effect in 2019. The decision, which was mooted way back in October, came just a month after the EU commission said it would take Poland to court over its longstanding air pollution issues. It's estimated that Poland's high pollution levels cause over 40,000 premature deaths a year, with toxic dust from home coal furnaces, along with industrial and transport emissions, killing ten times as many people as road accidents.

The Krakow ban could have profound implications on the country's already troubled coal sector — especially if other cities follow Krakow's lead. Poland adopted an anti-smog law in the run-up to its parliamentary election in October, but the law — which places the responsibility to act (and pay) on local authorities — was deemed insufficient by the Commission. Only Krakow, one of the dirtiest cities in Europe, has so far announced its intention to ban household coal burning. The recently elected Law and Justice party initially opposed the law and threatened to amend it if the impacts were too disruptive for the coal industry.

Europe's Gas Plants Spark to Life With Fuel at Lowest Since 2010

Natural gas-fired power plants in Europe's two biggest electricity users are earning utilities money again.

German gas-fired plant profitability at times of peak demand turned positive on Dec. 7, rising to the highest since February 2012 on Thursday, while gas units that generate around the clock in France have been profitable for seven weeks, the longest stretch in four years, according to data compiled by Bloomberg. That came after benchmark European gas prices fell 12 percent in 2016, extending last year's 31% drop. "More gas plants are in the money at current power and gas prices," said Omar Ramdani, head of analysis at RheinEnergie Trading GmbH in Cologne. "If it pays off for a gas plant to produce several hours and not a whole day, it is looking positive right now." While gas produces about half the emissions of coal when used to generate electricity, making it a greener option to back up intermittent wind and solar output, the fuel has struggled to compete against more profitable coal, forcing utilities from EON SE to Statkraft AS to close gas units. The price of the cleaner fuel in Europe will probably fall further as cold weather ends and oil's slump feeds into long-term contracts, Societe Generale SA said last week.

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Nuclear and Gas Competition in Europe

Engie SA doubled the output of four of its French gas-fired plants in 2015 from a year earlier, including a unit in Fos-sur-Mer brought back after being idled, Le Figaro reported Jan. 21. Gas prices are low enough that stations in France will compete with nuclear to provide the lowest cost generation, according to Bruno Brunetti, senior director of electricity at Pira Energy. France gets about 75 percent of its power from reactors. "It is starting to be ugly as we head towards nuclear reactors ramping down in the short term" as gas gets cheaper, he said by phone from New York. So far this winter, Europe's gas consumption has been about 6 percent below normal, said Meredith Annex, an analyst for Bloomberg New Energy Finance in London. Rising spark spreads may change that, she said. "If there's a driver for gas demand in Europe, it will come from the power market," Klaus Schaefer, CEO of EON SE's Uniper unit, said Jan. 20.

Indonesia: State-owned Enterprise Ministry Targets Mining Royalty at Rp1.4tn

State-owned Enterprises (BUMN) Ministry has set a target that the royalty to the state from the mining sector could reach Rp1.4 trillion. The figure increased from the previous year at Rp1.2 trillion. Deputy to the State-owned Enterprises Minister for Mining, Strategic Industries and Media Affairs Fajar Harry Sampurno said that the prices of commodities have now dropped, including the price of global crude oil. He also said that the drop in the price of global crude oil has also affected the price of coal. "This month alone, the price global crude oil is at around US\$ 29 per barrel," Fajar said in Jakarta. In addition, Fajar said that the prices of nickel and tin have also slumped. Nevertheless, Fajar was upbeat that the prices of commodities would bounce because a number of power plants in Indonesia that uses coal as fuel would operate. "Once they operate, the price of coal will increase," he said, adding that the price of nickel will also increase accordingly. Fajar also said that the price nickel dropped last year following the ban to export crude mining commodities. "Smelters will operate so we can export nickel and the royalty will increase again," he added.

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Indonesia: State miners to be integrated into parent company

The State-Owned Enterprises Ministry has established a special committee to act as a virtual holding company for four state-run mining companies with combined assets of around US\$4.8 billion before a parent company is set up later this year. The ministry's assistant for mining, strategic industry and media, Fajar Harry Sampurno, said on Friday that a consolidation committee was established last year, and included directors of the four companies to be integrated under the planned holding company. The four companies are diversified miner PT Aneka Tambang (Antam), coal miner PT Tambang Batubara Bukit Asam, tin miner PT Timah and aluminum producer PT Indonesia Asahan Aluminium (Inalum). All but Inalum are listed on the Indonesia Stock Exchange (IDX). "The holding company does not yet exist, but the committee will act as a virtual holding company for the firms and will determine their course. We will begin hearing feedback from the committee within three months, probably," Fajar told reporters at a press conference.

Indonesia: PLN to shed light on remote areas with mobile power plants

As part of efforts to boost electricity supply in remote areas, state-owned electricity firm PLN has rolled out its plans to procure small-scale mobile gas engine power plants, according to an executive. "These power plants will have capacity between 10 and 20 megawatts [MW]," said PLN's regional business director for Papua and Maluku, Haryanto. Most of the mobile power plants will be placed in the eastern parts of Indonesia, including Maluku and Papua. "They will be dedicated to areas with a lack of supply but where the demand is too low for mobile vessels," Haryanto added. Previously, PLN procured mobile power plant vessels to provide supply to remote areas. Gas-fired mobile power plants have less capacity than mobile vessels. Mobile power plants with a total 200 MW in capacity are expected to be stationed in at least six areas in Maluku, including Ternate, Tual and Saumlaki, and up to four locations in Papua, including in Manokwari and Fakfak, according to Haryanto.

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Necsa now embroiled in nuclear waste row

THE Nuclear Energy Corporation of SA (Necsa) is in a protracted battle with the auditor-general over who is responsible for the cost of decommissioning and decontaminating used nuclear material.

Necsa is arguing that it cannot be expected to take on the full burden.

Calculating the cost of decommissioning and funding it is a critical issue in the management of nuclear energy and one over which there is much contention internationally between operators, regulators and governments.

It will be a major issue for SA's forthcoming nuclear build programme.

Decommissioning and decontamination costs are expected to be Necsa's major expense in the future and should be reflected as a contingent liability on its balance sheet. These relate in large part to SA's old weapons programme during apartheid days, but also to the current activities at Necsa.

The matter is one of several holding up the finalisation of Necsa's annual financial statements for 2015, which are now four months overdue.

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Moyane set for showdown with Gordhan

SOUTH African Revenue Service (SARS) internal memo sent out on Wednesday showed Commissioner Tom Moyane was forging ahead with a restructuring plan, even after Finance Minister Pravin Gordhan had asked that it be put on hold.

The new appointments are part of the changes to the operating model at the tax agency.

Soon after he was reappointed finance minister last month, Mr Gordhan asked for the far-reaching changes to be halted until he had assessed their effect.

Mr Moyane's pursuit of the plan is likely to lead to a showdown with Mr Gordhan.

At the meeting last month, Mr Gordhan and Mr Moyane agreed on three matters: that the restructuring be put on hold; there should be no leaks of information from SARS; and that SARS make announcements on routine operational matters only.

Mr Moyane's team is seen to have breached the first two. The internal ructions at SARS came to a head after a number of suspensions and resignations by senior executives and officials after Mr Moyane took over in September 2014.

Allegations of a "rogue unit" at the agency prompted the disputes.

ANC to take action on growth, says Mantashe

National Congress (ANC) secretary general Gwede Mantashe on Wednesday.

After a three-day national executive committee lekgotla, he told journalists that SA must do "everything it can" to avoid slipping into recession, amidst a gloomy economic outlook.

The economy was in sharp focus at the gathering, which received a report on the local situation from the National Treasury and one on global factors from the Department of Trade and Industry. The lekgotla said "bold action" was required from the government to grow the economy inclusively and emerged with six key priorities going forward in a bid to create jobs.

First among these is to "engender consensus" among all players to stabilise the economy, save jobs and "restore fiscal sustainability and credibility".

Mr Mantashe said when there were contradictory messages from business and the government, "the country pays the price". He said the social compacts signed between business, the government and labour in the aftermath of the 2008 global meltdown were effective, despite criticism, as they had ensured that the country did not again slip into negative growth for more than a single quarter since then.

"That intervention took us out of recession," he said.

Now, the priority is to ensure that another recession is avoided at all costs.

"If there is negative growth, even in one quarter, it will be bad. We will do everything we can to avoid a situation of drifting into negative growth," he said.

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Bill targets accountability at universities

PROPOSED changes to laws governing tertiary institutions should not be seen as a "blank cheque" giving Higher Education Minister Blade Nzimande unrestricted powers, Parliament heard on Wednesday.

This was stated in a briefing by the Department of Higher Education and Training on the controversial draft Higher Education Amendment Bill, which was sneaked into Parliament at the end of last year. The proposed amendments have prompted fears in the sector that the autonomy of universities is at risk. This comes amid increased militancy among university students that began with the #FeesMustFall protests.

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MPS revert to race in debate on farm evictions report	<p>A BRIEFING by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) to the parliamentary portfolio committee on rural development and land reform turned on Wednesday into a spat on race in the agricultural sector.</p> <p>The ILO's research into structural problems in the agriculture sector had its roots in a call in 2011 by former committee chairman Stone Sizani for a probe into the cause of farm evictions.</p> <p>However, on Wednesday the ILO presented research that was scanty on details of evictions, and researchers told MPs there was not sufficient data to suggest that they were increasing.</p> <p>The research found that farming units, along with the number of farm workers, had declined by 30% in the past two decades. Farm solvency had declined to its worst levels in 30 years on average.</p> <p>ILO researcher Margareet Visser said the research was the outcome of interviews with 90 industry organisations, 208 farm workers, as well as union representatives, 48 producers and nongovernment organisations.</p> <p>The sector was going through casualisation — shifting from largely permanent employees to mostly seasonal employees — and most small farms were either consolidating into larger bodies or going bust, she said.</p>
Stanbic gets court relief in Nigeria	<p>TANDARD Bank subsidiary Stanbic IBTC has obtained injunctions barring the Financial Reporting Council (FRC) of Nigeria from taking action against it, including exacting a \$5m fine, for alleged accounting breaches. It is also appealing against a court ruling that failed to overturn a council decision.</p>
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Beyond AGOA: What next for the South African and American trade relationship	<p>The US-South African trade relationship has garnered significant attention over the past couple of months, following US President Barack Obama's notice to South Africa that the country's benefits under the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) will be suspended if it continues to impose...</p>
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Updated: Supreme Court upholds FERC Order 745, affirming federal role in demand response What to expect from California utilities' new aggregated demand response offerings Addressing DR Duality: Providers seek uniform policies in new strategy report	<p>The nation's highest judicial body affirmed the agency's authority to regulate demand response programs in wholesale markets in its decision.</p> <p>Under a new auction, California utilities will meet grid demand with traditional demand response, stationary batteries and electric vehicles.</p> <p>Just days before the Supreme Court weighed in FERC Order 745, a broad stakeholder group issued a report calling for a better understanding of the load management strategy and a broader integration alongside other distributed resources.</p>
Addressing DR Duality: Providers seek uniform policies in new strategy report	<p>Just days before the Supreme Court weighed in FERC Order 745, a broad stakeholder group issued a report calling for a better understanding of the load management strategy and a broader integration alongside other distributed resources.</p>
Nevada debates efficiency rebates as it looks to lower NV Energy's budget	<p>Nevada regulators cut the energy efficiency budget of NV Energy in an effort to lower the utility's bottom line, but critics say the targeted programs were helping to save consumers money.</p>
Solar-storage system helps Hawaii aquaculture facility operate off grid	<p>A lithium ion battery and solar panel system has enabled a Hawaii nursery to operate independently of high grid-connected utility rates.</p>
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How MISO is reforming market rules to spur storage deployment	<p>Developers are eager to develop MISO's storage market, but it has a long way to go to catch up with other RTOs</p>
How utilities and regulators differ in their approaches to distributed energy	<p>Meeting customer demand for distributed generation will require more coordination between utilities and regulators, a recent survey found.</p>
New York regulators propose nuclear power mandate in new clean energy plan	<p>Utilities will need to procure almost 16% of their power from nuclear sources in New York by 2020 under a proposal to save the state's carbon-free generators.</p>
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<p>Xcel proposes overhaul of its Colorado grid to include more renewables, smart meters</p>	<p>Xcel Energy this week is making a series of filings with the Colorado Public Utilities Commission, describing an extensive overhaul of how the utility plans to serve 1.4 million customers</p>
<p>Xcel proposes overhaul of its Colorado grid to include more renewables, smart meters Report: SPP transmission upgrades yield \$240M in annual fuel savings</p>	<p>Xcel Energy this week is making a series of filings with the Colorado Public Utilities Commission, describing an extensive overhaul of how the utility plans to serve 1.4 million customers</p>
<p>Wind growth leaves Oklahoma paying millions more than anticipated in incentives</p>	<p>The \$3.4 billion the Southwest Power Pool spent on transmission upgrades from 2012 to 2014 are expected to yield more than \$16 billion in benefits over four decades. A controversial tax incentive designed to entice wind farms to Oklahoma has the state paying out millions more than expected at a time when it faces a \$900 million budget shortfall.</p>
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<p>New pipeline projects increase Northeast natural gas takeaway capacity</p>	<p>A number of recently completed and upcoming natural gas infrastructure projects are expected to increase the reach of natural gas produced in the Marcellus and Utica regions of the Northeastern United States. These projects are intended to transport natural gas from production centers to consuming markets or export terminals.</p>
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<p>Net electricity generation decreased 5.2% compared to November 2014 as the country experienced a very warm November 2015, leading to a decreased demand for electricity generation used for residential heating.</p>	<p>Electricity system daily peak demand remained well on the low end of the annual range for almost every region as above-average temperatures caused November to resemble more of a mild shoulder month than the beginning of winter.</p>
<p>Chilean-designed battery could take homes off grid</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Electricity retail sales volumes declined by a significant amount in nearly every state in the eastern half of the country where abnormally mild weather lowered heating demand.
<p>Chilean-designed battery could take homes off grid</p>	<p>A new battery made in Chile could allow households to take themselves off the power grid and store excess energy. Reuters' Roselle Chen reports.</p>
<p>Australian bushfires may accelerate push to solar + storage for homes</p>	<p>A new battery made in Chile could allow households to take themselves off the power grid and store excess energy. Reuters' Roselle Chen reports.</p>
<p>368 Misamis Oriental students get solar lamps from DepEd</p>	<p>The Victorian authorities also considered putting whole communities off grid, with solar and storage, or of cutting off power on high risk days. But these ... MANILA — Close to 400 students in off-grid communities in Misamis Oriental need not spend their nights studying under the flickering light of their gas ..</p>

Powerhive raises \$20 million for off-grid development in emerging markets

proprietary technology and supply affordable and reliable electricity to off-grid communities in emerging markets.

Powerhive in Africa

Powerhive will continue to expand its activities in Kenya, where it has operated rural microgrids since 2012.

Powerhive

California-based Powerhive, a microgrid solutions provider and developer focusing on emerging markets, has raised \$20 million after closing a Series A financing round aimed to support its expansion into new markets in Africa and Asia Pacific.

Prelude Ventures led the round, which also includes participation from Caterpillar Ventures, Total Energy Ventures, Tao Capital Partners, Pi Investments and select other private investors.

"Each investor brings unique expertise and experience, which will prove invaluable as we advance our mission to provide clean energy access to millions of people around the globe," said Powerhive CEO Christopher Hornor.

Powerhive uses its proprietary technology platform to develop and operate portfolios of renewable microgrids that supply affordable and reliable electricity to off-grid communities in emerging markets. Powerhive will continue to increase its activities in Kenya, where it has operated rural microgrids since 2012, while also looking to expand its operations in new regions.

Maharashtra Announces \$400 Million Off-grid Solar Power Programme

One of India's largest states has announced a comprehensive off-grid solar power policy with a target to add 200 MW capacity over the next five years.

The state government of Maharashtra recently announced that it finalised a policy to spend Rs 2,682 crore (US\$400 million) to develop off-grid solar power projects. The policy calls upon several government departments to set up rooftop solar power projects. Several government departments are expected to set up solar power systems atop their buildings.

The policy is looking to reduce burden on the transmission grid which remains susceptible to breakdown and failures. The state government will provide incentives to those looking to develop off-grid solar power projects. Project owners will receive 20% of the cost invested in procuring equipment from the project. Through this financial incentive the government hopes to encourage small and medium entrepreneurs to invest in renewable energy sector.

Price protests may not bring down Azerbaijani regime

Protests against rising prices have broken out despite Aliyev's assurances that the manat's plunge has bottomed out

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High house prices may be global systemic risk

Global house prices have returned to their pre-crisis level

Safety will outweigh speed in China's nuclear buildout

China has halted construction of two nuclear reactors and admitted its nuclear disaster response system is "inadequate"

Turkmenistan may need Russian military help

Officials will sound out Russian foreign minister on future security assistance

Bank lending will not attract debt-takers in Brazil

Attempting to boost lending from state banks will not bolster growth, as consumers and businesses remain wary

Road works will help stimulate Colombia's economy

The first wave of 4G investments is getting underway

EU gas demand faces long-term constraints

The rise of renewables and storage technologies challenges natural gas's role in the EU's low-carbon energy transition

Jaitapur agreement due by year-end

A deal between France and India for the construction of six EPR nuclear power reactors at Jaitapur in India's Maharashtra state is now set to be finalized by the end of this year, the countries' leaders have said.

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Romania expresses support for China's role at Cernavoda

The Romanian government has written to China General Nuclear Power expressing its support for the Cernavoda nuclear power plant project. CGN announced its receipt of the letter - which was presented by energy minister Victor Vlad Grigorescu and signed by prime minister Dacian Julien Cioloş - on its website.

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China, Saudi Arabia agree to build HTR

China and Saudi Arabia have signed a memorandum of understanding on the construction of a high-temperature gas-cooled reactor. It was one of 14 agreements and memoranda of understanding signed during a meeting in Riyadh of Chinese president Xi Jinping and Saudi's Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz.

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Mabuza laughs off talk about a premier league

Comrades paranoid as they know Zuma's doing his last term, says Mpumalanga premier and ANC provincial chairman David Mabuza

Schools furnished with a victory

Eastern Cape education department ordered to set up a task team to deal with schools infrastructure backlog

Gautrain agency takes the hedging route

Agency looks to curb costs related to spiralling rand in purchase of 48 new coaches

SA may face costly sorghum imports

Country poised to import significant amount of the grain with hefty price tag due to sharp depreciation of rand

SA stabilises in Transparency International corruption index

Unchanged score and improved ranking are good news — but the bad news is SA is still ranked 'perilously close' to endemically corrupt countries, says Corruption Watch
DA leader Mmusi Maimane says 'our freedom will only be complete when more and more people are able to find work'

DA supporters march through downtown Joburg

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A quarter less maize than last year likely to be reaped in SA in 2016

The forecast harvest, which the Crop Estimates Committee says will be the smallest crop since 2007, is 8.5% above market expectations of 6.86-million tonnes

Drought-stricken Zimbabwe has probably not seen the worst

A struggling economy and strained relations with donors mean Zimbabwe does not have the resources to help a starving populace through the worst drought since 1992

0.5% Interest Rate Increase

Reserve Bank, the Bank decided to increase the repo rate by 0.5% at its meeting ending yesterday. Many analysts, including ourselves, had expected this, but there were quite a lot also who thought that the Bank would go ahead with a smaller increase of 0.25%.

- The reasons given by the Reserve Bank for hiking rates in this fashion were very much in line with the views we have been expressing for two months now, viz. the inflationary impact of the steep depreciation of the Rand from November onwards and the potentially sharp increase in food inflation as a result of drought conditions. Furthermore, the Bank is attempting to quell the buildup of inflationary expectations and second-round price increases, as well as preventing an increase in capital outflows in the face of a tightening of US monetary policy.

- Although many analysts were surprised at the extent to which the Reserve Bank raised its inflation forecasts for 2016, they were in fact well within our own model forecast. What we have unfortunately taken note of is the fact that the Bank's 2017 forecast is significantly higher even than what we had been predicting. The message is that the inflation rate is likely to remain outside of the 3% to 6% inflation target for virtually the full duration of the next two years. Under such circumstances, interest rates can be expected to rise quite a bit further and our own model forecast for a 2% cumulative interest rate increase (including today's 0.5% hike), is well-nigh plausible if not even slightly conservative.

- Encouragingly, the Reserve Bank has enhanced its stature and credibility by having the courage to do the right thing to quell longer term inflationary pressures notwithstanding the unpopularity of the move amidst very weak economic activity. Failure to have acted the way it did would have jeopardised the longer term growth scenario still further. In part this is why the Rand has reacted favourably to the move. With regard to credible macroeconomic policies and actions, it contrasts the Reserve Bank's stance with the seemingly irresponsibility of President Zuma's decision to sack respected for by Finance Minister Nhlanhla Nene in December. To a substantial extent we need to thank President Zuma for creating an environment in which the Reserve Bank had no option but to raise. Although it will make your debt more expensive.

The repo rate hike will do little to curb inflation
'Supertax on wealthy earners could be reintroduced'
ANC accuses DA of paying marchers R100 to take to the streets

Brexit would trigger disintegration of the EU not the UK

Virus Is 'Spreading Explosively,' WHO Officials Warn

There is a global fire sale of copper and coal mines

The DA stunt as an insult to democracy when they use unemployed black faces to mask their racist agenda". – The Citizen

Barclays say vote on EU membership is one of "the most significant global risk events of the year" but has been underestimated by markets –

Concerned about the disease's rapid spread in the Americas, officials from the World Health Organization said they would meet on Monday to decide whether to declare a public health emergency.

There's a mining fire sale going on around the world. America's largest mining company, Freeport-McMoRan, said Tuesday it plans to sell some of its coveted mines -- likely at bargain basement prices. It joins other global mining giants Glencore and Anglo American, which last year began a mad scramble to raise cash to pay down debt. Glencore and Anglo American have already started selling copper and coal mines located in Australia, Chile and South Africa. Freeport hasn't named the mines it could sell. But how the tables have turned. Just two years ago, business was booming and things were so good that the coal and gold miner Freeport shelled out nearly \$9 billion, mostly in debt, to purchase two oil and natural gas companies. The timing couldn't have been worse. Copper and oil prices have since cratered to crisis levels and Freeport is trying to quiet bankruptcy fears even as it drowns in \$20 billion of debt. "If they don't undertake asset sales to reduce debt ... the company could end up owned by its creditors," said Daniel Rohr. Glencore, the mining and trading conglomerate, had to do the same thing last fall. And giant Anglo American, which owns diamond company De Beers, announced plans in Dec to shed about 85,000 jobs and sell off 60% of its assets over the next few years.

Environmental tax could make appearance in budget speech

Finance Minister Pravin Gordhan is likely to raise the issue of imposing an environmental tax on the mining sector in his 2016/17 budget speech on Jan 24, predicts Deloitte business tax director Alex Gwala. The introduction of these taxes was mentioned in last year's budget speech, though nothing had come to fruition since. The tax was aimed at complementing the govt's current efforts to quell continuing acid mine drainage expenses, while ensuring that the mining sector would also make a fair contribution to the issue. Speaking to Mining Weekly, Gwala noted current bill for treating AMD stood at R3.6-bn a year and, if implemented, the environmental tax would not make a significant dent in mining industry's bottom line. Davis Tax Committee, which assessed South Africa's tax policy framework under auspices of Judge Dennis Davis, was also in favour of environmental taxes on South Africa's mining industry, owing to the seriousness of AMD and the importance of an appropriate joint governmental strategy to deal comprehensively with the problem. "In light of current scarcity of water, it is likely that Minister Gordhan may pick up on this matter in his upcoming budget speech."

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Zimbabwe, Zambia mines ramp up output on Eskom deal

Eskom's provision of excess electricity to Zimbabwe and Zambia and slowly replenishing water levels in the Kariba dam have helped stabilise power supplies in South Africa's neighbouring countries, allowing mining operations across the region to intensify production. The power utility has agreed to supply excess electricity amounting to 300MW to both Zimbabwe and Zambia. It also has other various agreements with regional countries such as Botswana and Namibia to supply electricity under protocol for the Southern African Power Pool. The region is facing acute power shortages, while Eskom has also urged Lesotho and Swaziland to use power sparingly to help SA avoid load shedding. The power shortages caused companies to scale back production and incur extra expenses running generators during power cuts. "First Quantum's Zambian operations, the Kansanshi mine, smelter and the Sentinel project, are being consistently provided a total of approximately 285MW. "This allows for normal operations at the Kansanshi mine and smelter complex and for Sentinel to achieve above nameplate capacity throughput for periods," First Quantum Minerals president Clive Newall said. The Chamber of Mines Zimbabwe are resisting gov't's move to raise electricity tariffs by as much as 49%.

BHP Billiton cutting 2.4 pct of workforce at Chile-based Escondida

Chile's Escondida, the world's biggest copper mine, will implement a new round of personnel cuts equal to 2.4 percent of its current workforce as prices for the red metal linger near multi-year lows. "Escondida is putting in place a plan to reduce the number of employees by 2.4 percent, which is equivalent to around 90 roles," a spokesman for Escondida's controller, global miner BHP Billiton, said on Wednesday. "That was in response to the continued deterioration of the copper market, which has seen prices drop more than 30 percent over the last 12 months," the spokesman added. In response to the layoffs, workers have blocked the access road to Escondida, located at high-altitude in Chile's arid north. "We've been blocking the access road since the early hours of the morning ... at 3 p.m. (local time) we're going to meet with company representatives," said union head Patricio Tapia. Due to the blocked roads, the mine is operating at 50 percent though the plant is functioning normally, he added. The Escondida spokesman said he would not comment on the actions taken by protesting workers. "Escondida is taking advantage of this situation with copper prices to layoff workers that have become a headache for the company because they have professional illnesses or have been hurt in accidents on the job," said Tapia. In February 2015, Escondida said it had begun a voluntary redundancy program for its workforce as part of an ongoing plan to improve productivity and cut costs.

MEXICO LAUNCHES DAY-AHEAD POWER MARKET IN BAJA

Mexico on Tuesday began the partial roll-out of its day-ahead wholesale power market with prices for the northern Baja peninsula ranging from about \$15.20/MWh to about \$24/MWh, depending on the location and the time of day. Centro Nacional de Control de Energia published day-ahead numbers for the Baja California region, which covers only the northern end of the Baja Peninsula on Mexico's West Coast, at about 10:30 pm CST Tuesday for power to be delivered on Thursday. The average price was 354.69 pesos/MWh, which at the Banco de Mexico exchange rate of 18.47 pesos to the dollar equals \$19.20/MWh. The hours from 7 am to 10 pm, which in the US would be considered peak time, averaged 341.32 pesos/MWh, or \$18.48/MWh, while the remaining hours averaged 376.97 pesos/MWh, or \$20.41/MWh. CENACE has not designated on-peak and off-peak times. The Baja California region was slated to begin real-time trading on Wednesday, but CENACE's website had not yet issued notice that the real-time market had been launched as of 3 pm CST.

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Implications of another delay to Hinkley nuclear reactor project

The UK plan is uneconomic for owners and consumers, writes Nick Butler. A planned new nuclear power plant at Hinkley Point is to be built alongside EDF's existing facilities. The latest postponement of the Hinkley Point nuclear reactor project is the most serious delay of many because it shows that the plan is fundamentally uneconomic for the owners as well as for consumers. Readers may recall being told at the time of the visit of Xi Jinping, the Chinese premier, in October that the Hinkley deal was done. Everything was ready to go. Unfortunately, this was the worst sort of PR spin. The Chinese have not formally signed up to the financing agreement and now it has become clear that the EDF board is unwilling to go ahead with a decision that would add to its financial problems by adding debt and risk to its already shaky balance sheet. EDF shares have more than halved in the past year. The merger with Areva forced on EDF by the French government also adds to the company's burden because of the unfinished and perhaps unfinishable reactor construction project at Olkiluoto in Finland.

INDONESIA'S HBA THERMAL COAL PRICE AT NEW RECORD LOW IN JANUARY

Indonesia's Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources set its January thermal coal reference price, also known as Harga Batubara Acuan, at a record low for the ninth consecutive month at \$53.20/mt FOB, the lowest ever recorded since its inception in January 2009. January's HBA price represents a drop of 0.6% from the December price, which was set at \$53.51/mt, representing an all-time low at that time. On a year-on-year basis, the HBA fell 16.7%. The HBA is a monthly average price based 25% on the Platts Kalimantan 5,900 kcal/kg gross as received assessment; 25% on the Argus-Indonesia Coal Index 1 (6,500 kcal/kg GAR); 25% on the Newcastle Export Index -- formerly the Barlow-Jonker index (6,322 kcal/kg GAR) of Energy Publishing -- and 25% on the global COAL Newcastle (6,000 kcal/kg NAR) index. In December, the daily FOB Platts Kalimantan 5,900 kcal/kg GAR coal assessment averaged \$47.66/mt, while the daily 90-day Platts Newcastle FOB price for coal with a calorific value of 6,300 kcal/kg GAR averaged \$52.10/mt. The HBA for thermal coal is the basis for determining the prices of 75 Indonesian coal products and for calculating the royalties Indonesian producers have to pay for each metric ton of coal they sell locally or overseas. It is based on 6,322 kcal/kg GAR coal, with 8% total moisture content, 15% ash as received and 0.8% sulfur as received.

Indonesia: Higher royalties sought from state miners

The State-Owned Enterprises Ministry is looking to book higher royalty incomes from state-run miners this year, despite unfavorable commodity prices that put pressure on the financial performance of mining firms last year. The ministry wants mining royalties paid to the government to increase by about 16 percent from Rp 1.23 trillion (US\$885.6 million) last year to Rp 1.45 trillion this year, according to Fajar Harry Sampurno, the ministry's assistant for mining, strategic industry and media. There are three mining firms under his division, namely diversified miner Aneka Tambang (Antam), coal miner Bukit Asam and tin producer Timah. Fajar said recently that while he acknowledged that government-owned miners were struggling to mitigate impacts from slumping commodity prices, he was upbeat that the companies could meet the government's royalty targets thanks to a number of downstream projects expected to bolster the industry amid a sluggish global market. "Oil prices have continued their downward trend, pushing down coal prices.

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Coal India faces third labour strike

Would hit production by at least five mt; BMS might stay away
All major central trade unions, except the Bharatiya Janata Party-backed Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS), have decided to go on strike on March 29, which would hit Coal India's production by at least five million tonnes (mt). The strike threat comes as Coal Minister Piyush Goyal sticks to the government's decision to offload an additional 10 per cent stake in Coal India, thereby bringing down the government's share in the state-owned miner from 79.65 per cent. The INTUC, CITU, AITUC and HMS — representing about 90 per cent of the miner's workforce of 0.33 million — have consented to a series of action plan to protest the disinvestment move and force the government to address key issues related to contractual workers. The BMS has differed over the strike call. "The government is already negotiating with the workers," P K Dutta, general secretary of the BMS-supported Akhil Bharatiya Khadan Majdoor Sangh, told Business Standard.

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In coal-powered China, electric car surge fuels fear of worsening smog

Automakers' latest projections for rapid growth of China's green car market have added to concerns of worsening smog as the uptake of electric vehicles powered by coal-fired grids races ahead of a switch to cleaner energy. Volkswagen AG plans 15 new-energy models over 3-5 years, its China chief told a green car conference in Beijing on Saturday, predicting - like the government - that Chinese production of electric and plug-in hybrid vehicles would grow almost six times to 2 million annually by 2020. At the same event, BYD Co Ltd's chairman told media that the Chinese automaker's electric vehicle sales would double in each of the next three years. The government has been promoting electric vehicles to cut the smog that frequently envelops Chinese cities, helping sales quadruple last year and making China the biggest market, the finance minister said at the conference. Less than 1 percent of passenger cars are now new energy, but the pace of growth raises their potential to worsen smog.

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Coal plant no quick fix for Davao City's power woes

The new coal plant near here proved to be no quick fix to the lack of electricity that is plaguing this city and other places in Mindanao. The city is again suffering from three-to-four hour brownouts daily blamed on two factors—the drought that is commonly associated with the El Niño phenomenon and maintenance work on a unit of a coal plant that had become one of the city's main sources of power. "The power shortage is really beyond our control," said Ross Luga, assistant vice president of the Davao Light and Power Co. (DLPC), the city's main supplier of power. "But we're doing our best to minimize, if not to avoid, implementing these service disruptions," said Luga at a press forum here Monday, apologizing to customers for the inconvenience. The drought that has reduced the capacity of hydroelectric power sources was compounded by maintenance work on a unit of a coal plant under the Therma South Inc. (TSI), which is owned by the Aboitizes.

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Kumba to slash jobs as changes fail to take off

CEO Norman Mbazima says the 'extremely difficult decision', which affects staff and contract workers, comes as the iron ore miner battles falling prices and rising costs Democratic Alliance unimpressed by pat-on-the-back attitude, saying city still using 'basic extortion' in billing

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WHO warns of 'explosive' spread of Zika virus

World Health Organisation estimates 4-million in danger of contracting mosquito-borne disease linked to birth defects

Anglo American and Lonmin heap pain on South African mining with 9,000 job cuts

Embattled miners have cut jobs in the face of plunging commodity prices, putting pressure on the South African government. The South African mining industry has suffered a double blow after under-pressure miners Anglo American and Lonmin unveiled 9,000 job cuts between them. Around 4,000 roles are to go in Anglo's iron ore division while platinum producer Lonmin has shed 5,077 workers since the end of last year. Crashing commodity prices have forced miners to cut costs across the world. In December Anglo American unveiled plans to shrink its workforce from 135,000 to 50,000 by 2017, as it looks to sell off or close around 60pc of its assets. The cuts will heap pressure on the South African government, which is battling an unemployment rate of 25pc. Around 440,000 people are employed in the country's mining industry.

First Tesla Powerwall installed in SA

The 7 kilowatt hour (kWh) daily cycle Powerwall system available in South Africa, harnesses and stores energy generated from solar panels during the day for use at night and during power outages. According to Tesla, the lithium ion Powerwall, which operates at a 92% efficiency rate, can provide 3.3kW of continuous power, the same as its peak output. It said lights per room in a typical house consume 0.1kWh of energy per hour while a refrigerator consumes 1.6kWh per day.

Dalglish said a fully operational system including 12 solar panels and a 5kwh inverter, which converts direct current from solar panels into alternating current for residential use, taxes and installation in the region of R200 000 depending on the ZAR/USD exchange rate. Rubicon, another local reseller, has priced different Powerwall packages from R116 000 to R272 000 excluding VAT and installation, businesstech reports.

National Gambling Policy Approved By Cabinet

The final National Gambling Policy that is applicable to casinos, among others, has been approved by Cabinet, Minister in the Presidency for Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Jeff Radebe said.

Briefing reporters on Thursday following Cabinet's meeting, Minister Radebe said the policy addresses challenges hampering the effectiveness of the National Gambling Act, 2004 (Act 7 of 2004).

"The policy proposes amendments to the regulatory structural framework of the gambling boards and strengthens the control mechanisms to minimise the abuse of gambling," said the Minister.

Brazil, South Africa Begin Military Drills off Indian Coast

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cost of Transnet pipeline surges

THE near tripling of the cost of Transnet's new multiproduct pipeline, which transports liquid fuel from Durban to Gauteng, will burden the public with additional increases in the price of fuel in Gauteng, analysts say.

The cost of the new pipeline, which has started operating, jumped to R29.5bn from an initial estimate of R11bn.

Gordhan to target offshore funds

FINANCE Minister Pravin Gordhan is widely expected to announce a new foreign exchange control and tax amnesty in his budget on Wednesday in a bid to encourage taxpayers who have not disclosed billions of rand worth of offshore assets to declare them and pay the due tax.

Junk status beckons for these 14 miners

These include some big names like Anglo Gold Ashanti, Newmont, Vale, Kazatomprom, Grupo Mexico, Fresnillo, Barrick Gold and Goldcorp

VATTENFALL TO CLOSE AMSTERDAM TRADING DESK, CENTRALIZE IN HAMBURG

European utility Vattenfall plans to close its trading desk in Amsterdam and centralize its trading activities in Hamburg by the first quarter of 2018, increasing its focus on renewable energy and customers while reducing the trading of coal and oil. In a statement Thursday it said it will merge the Amsterdam and Hamburg offices over the next two years to one location to reduce costs, adding that its Stockholm trading office would continue as is. The company said its Amsterdam trading floor employed 200 people and it aimed to move a considerable number of staff to Hamburg, although it said it would maintain a small department in Amsterdam to support customers and business in the Netherlands. Vattenfall said it had submitted a request for advice from the Netherlands' Central Works Council (CWC) and had informed the unions. "We understand that the proposed decision will lead to a large uncertain phase for the employees concerned. Vattenfall will give maximum support to its employees in finding a new job inside or outside Vattenfall," head of the trade floor Stefan Dohler said in the statement. He added that centralization of trading activities in one location would help Vattenfall achieve significant cost savings. Vattenfall acquired Dutch energy company Nuon in 2009, which became a subsidiary of the group, and later in the same year centralized its physical and financial coal and freight trading in Amsterdam as part of the reorganization following the takeover.

Miner's water bill battle tests jurisdiction

MERAFONG Local Municipality squared off against AngloGold Ashanti in the Constitutional Court on Thursday in a case that will test the boundaries of authority between the local and national spheres of government.

The municipality wants to overturn last year's Supreme Court of Appeal judgment in which it was ordered to comply with a 2005 national government directive that it renegotiate a surcharge with AngloGold Ashanti.

The court found Merafong had failed to take, upon legal review, a decision taken in 2005 by the then minister of water affairs and forestry that its surcharge was excessive and that it should renegotiate the terms of its industrial water with AngloGold Ashanti. It held that even if the minister's directive was invalid it had to be legally considered after the municipality said the instruction went beyond the jurisdiction of national government. In 2007 Merafong, on Gauteng's West Rand, started charging AngloGold Ashanti mines extra fees for water even after the company had lodged complaints, and the Department of Water Affairs said in 2005 the municipality could not institute the "excessive" extra charge. However, the department said the municipality could levy the company for domestic water use. Merafong had reportedly added levies of up to R500,000 a month despite not providing extra services. Both parties are seeking the cost of legal counsel, with Merafong arguing that "to sanction a recovery of many millions of rand otherwise properly due on the grounds of this procedural deficiency would ... be unconscionable". Chief Justice Mogoeng Mogoeng questioned both legal counsel on the possible implications of the court upholding their arguments. Both parties maintain the amount that may be recovered by AngloGold Ashanti was "substantial" but not immediately quantifiable. "We do accept the practicalities, but I can't distance my client from any rights they may have," said Noel Graves SC on behalf of AngloGold Ashanti. The court reserved judgment.

Gigawatt Mozambique opens 120MW gas-fired power station

power station in the border town of Ressano Garcia on Friday. That will replace about 100MW of power currently being supplied to Mozambique by Eskom's Arnot power station near Witbank. A shortage of power is constraining economic development in Southern African countries, which for decades have relied on buying power from Eskom to supplement their own small-scale generation. Eskom's capacity constraints are also affecting its neighbours.

The discovery of gas offshore Tanzania and northern Mozambique has increased interest in using gas for power in the region. South African energy giant Sasol already supplies gas to its own power station at Secunda, and to commercial customers, through an 865km pipeline from the Pande and Temane onshore gas fields in Southern Mozambique. Sasol has also built a 175MW power station, with Mozambican power utility Electricidade de Moçambique (EDM) as its partner, at Ressano Garcia, to supply Mozambique. The new Gigawatt power station will supply to EDM on a long-term power purchase agreement, for distribution to the Mozambican market, and to sell any surplus to the Southern African Power Pool.

Gigawatt is in discussions with EDM about adding another 40MW of capacity. Gigawatt Mozambique is owned by various Mozambican shareholders and Centurion-based Gigajoule, whose shareholders include WBHO, Old Mutual and management. They contributed the equity for the new power station, and the debt facility was provided by Standard Bank. Gigajoule also has 49.6% of the Matola Gas Company, which sells gas through a pipeline to customers in Maputo. Gigajoule CEO Johan de Vos said Gigajoule was evaluating its options for submitting a project under SA's recently issued request for interest in independent gas-fired power. One option might be to add another 200MW of capacity to the existing site at Ressano Garcia, which has a concession for 350MW, or Gigajoule could build a new power plant at Matola. Liquefied natural gas for the power plant could be imported using Gigajoule's existing infrastructure at Matola. Gigajoule has completed a feasibility study into building a 2,400km pipeline from the new Rovuma gas

Vietnam, South Africa to double bilateral trade value

The Governments of Vietnam and South Africa have set to double bilateral trade value through increasing the sale of staples of their strength. Accordingly, South Africa will boost shipments of coal, beef and fruits to Vietnam, while the Southeast Asian nation will step up the export of rice, seafood, electronic products, computers and construction materials to the country. To realise the goal, Vietnam's designated trade office in South Africa will lend a helping hand to domestic businesses in market research, especially knowledge about retail groups in South Africa and its neighbouring countries. At the same time, it will assist Vietnamese businesses to engage in the value chain in South Africa and directly set up links with local retailers. In 2015, the office assisted domestic businesses' participation in the South African International Trade Exhibition (SAITEX) in 2015 and organised a meeting for the two countries' businesses in Cape Town during Deputy Prime Minister Hoang Trung Hai's visit. It also coordinated with overseas Vietnamese businesses to put Vietnamese tra fish on menu of Sai Gon Cape Town Restaurant based in the host country. In the first six months of 2015, bilateral trade between Vietnam and South Africa reached nearly US\$700 million. Vietnam expects to earn US\$1.2 billion worth of goods sold to South Africa this year.

Mines welcome changes to the 2015 mining tax regime

THE Zambia Chamber of Mines has commended Government for the changes to the 2015 mining tax regime announced by Cabinet on Monday. Cabinet redesigned the mining taxation regime in a bid to enhance mine operations, reduce job cuts and increase revenue from the sector when copper prices rise. Communications manager Talent Ng'andwe said the move indicates commitment to collecting tax revenue without discouraging mines from investing in new mining projects and employment. In a statement issued in Lusaka, Mr Ng'andwe said Government's decision marks a significant shift in outlook towards the mining sector and can only be beneficial to the industry in the long term. "We believe the prevailing low price environment continues to present significant challenges for the mining sector over the short to medium term, but the gesture by Government is a good lifeline that will provide much needed relief," he said. Mr Ng'andwe commended Government for the new spirit of dialogue and co-operation, adding that the mines look forward to continuing working with Government to solve challenges faced in the industry. "We look forward to seeing the details of the proposed changes so that we can comment fully on what the tax regime means," he said.

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IMF cuts SA's economic growth outlook to lowest on record

International Monetary Fund revises down growth projection, says lower commodity prices and higher borrowing costs are likely to have negative effect on SA

Zuma shows no understanding of the markets, says Mashaba

The president's removal of Nhlanhla Nene as finance minister was the last straw that pushed the entrepreneur to enter politics

Minimum wage part of inequality cure, says Oxfam

Government's tax policies favour rich and distribute wealth wrongly while minimum wage, an income grant, women-centred land reform will curb growing inequality, says Oxfam

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The bank is to cut its 62% stake in Barclays Africa as CEO Jes Staley narrows its focus amid emerging market turmoil and instability in SA, its main African market

EU to consider new sanctions on Iran

Washington earlier imposed sanctions on eleven companies and individuals for supplying Iran's ballistic missile programme

Drones part of leap in agriculture technology

Drones are just one way in which agricultural production can be taken to new heights

Treasury will ensure SAA's creditors do not let it go under

Regular engagement with lenders has been taking place since 2014 and will continue until SAA is stabilised, the Treasury says

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Consumer inflation accelerates at fastest pace in a year

Consumer prices rose 5.2% in December from a year earlier, as a weak rand erodes the inflation outlook and bolsters the case for another increase in interest rates

University protests 'have cost R150m so far'

Higher Education Minister Blade Nzimande says SA can not afford any more damage to property at universities

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Vaccine alliance signs advance deal for Merck's Ebola shot	Agreement will help the US drugmaker take the experimental vaccine through late-stage clinical trials to licensing and prequalification by the WHO
SA's November retail trade sales up 3.9% year on year	Higher retail sales mean the sector will have supported economic growth in the fourth quarter of last year
SA's professionals believe official inflation statistics are mistakenly low	Prof Jannie Rossouw of Wits says almost three-quarters of respondents in his study think prices rise faster than the CPI rate, and expect inflation to accelerate this year
New arrival Spruce ups game for 'trusted energy advisor' role	A new company offering both DER and efficiency financing can be a partner or a competitor to incumbent utilities looking to bolster their customer relationships.
New arrival Spruce ups game for 'trusted energy advisor' role	A new company offering both DER and efficiency financing can be a partner or a competitor to incumbent utilities looking to bolster their customer relationships.
California regulators approve SCE pilot to build 1,500 EV charging stations	The pilot program calls for the installation of 1,500 stations and could lead to a \$333 million, 30,000 station buildout by 2020.
US DOE proposes \$220M for multi-year grid modernization effort	The \$220 million spread over three years will focus on grid edge research, including advanced storage systems and clean energy integration.
US DOE proposes \$220M for multi-year grid modernization effort	The \$220 million spread over three years will focus on grid edge research, including advanced storage systems and clean energy integration.
DOE taps two new nuclear reactor designs for development funding	The federal government tapped X-energy and Southern Company Services to develop new types of nuclear reactors as a way to meet aggressive carbon reduction goals.
Sumitomo begins operation of 6 MW, 2 MWh battery for PJM frequency regulation	The new project in Ohio is the first to come online operated by the Japanese corporation.
Chicago expands large building energy benchmarking program five-fold	The scope of Chicago's Energy Benchmarking ordinance may be more important than the results at this point: More than 1,800 buildings — 20% of the city's building energy demand — are now included in the usage survey.
US invests in advanced reactor development	The US Department of Energy has selected projects to develop a pebble bed reactor and a molten chloride fast reactor to receive multi-year cost-share funding worth up to a total of \$80 million.
CNNC to construct prototype floating plant	A demonstration floating nuclear power plant based on China National Nuclear Corporation's ACP100S small reactor will be built by 2019, the company announced. The move came just days after China General Nuclear said it will build a prototype offshore plant by 2020.
CGN to build floating reactor	China General Nuclear expects to complete construction of a demonstration small modular offshore multi-purpose reactor by 2020, the company announced.
Bill seeks to stimulate US nuclear innovation	A US House of Representatives committee has approved a bipartisan bill to support federal research and development and stimulate private investment in advanced nuclear reactor technologies. The approval came as President Barack Obama said the country must move away from "dirty energy"
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UAE trains nuclear regulators	A group of nine engineering graduates from Emirati universities has joined the United Arab Emirates' Federal Authority for Nuclear Regulation under the regulator's scheme to develop the country's base of nuclear experts.
DOE proposes \$18M in funding for solar-plus-storage	The announcement builds on the Department of Energy's grid modernization effort announced last week
SunEdison buys 33% stake in Dominion solar portfolio, moves assets to yieldco	SunEdison completed the acquisition of a third of the 231 MW portfolio, and then dropped the assets into Terra Nova Renewable Partners, a partnership managed by SunEdison and J.P. Morgan Asset Management.
Southern California Edison signs 500 MW of utility-scale solar PPAs with First Solar	The California utility renews its push for renewables in response to state's new mandate requiring 50% renewables by 2030.
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REV in 2016: The year that could transform utility business models in New York	While utilities probably won't shift to new revenue and business models under REV this year, just how they plan to meet the goals of the groundbreaking reform initiative could become much clearer in the coming months.

World Hard Coal Production and Consumption Decline in 2015 For the First Time in Over a Decade

Seaborne hard coal trade and the changes in this area were decisively affected by China and India - VDKi. China bears the greatest responsibility for the decline; it reduced its coal imports by 73 million tonnes (over 30%) in support of its own coal mining industry. When the import duty of 6% on steam coal comes to an end in February 2016 because of the entry into force of the trade treaty with China, however, the export situation might brighten, at least for Australia, said German Coal Importers Association (VDKi) in its latest press release. According to German Coal Importer Association (VDKi), the production of hard coal (coking coal and steam coal), reported as steady for more than a decade, has presumably not only come to a standstill, but is in fact declining for the first time. The VDKi estimates that worldwide production decreased by about 150 million to 200 million tonnes to 7 billion tonnes and that the seaborne hard coal trade fell by 50 million tonnes to 1.12 billion tonnes. Output fell by 110 million tonnes in China and by 70 million tonnes in the USA. Australia and India were able to maintain respectively even increase significantly the level of production of steam coal. Indonesia was unable, for many different reasons, to continue the increase in the production of steam coal of previous years; instead, the output of hard coal and lignite was reduced by 11% to 408 million tonnes. VDKi further noted that, a significant shifts are also becoming apparent within the exporting countries: - Australia was able to maintain its exports of 386 million tonnes at a level comparable to the previous year while South Africa stayed at 76 million tonnes in exports.

BRAZIL'S TUBARAO TERMINAL RESTART IS RELIEF TO IRON ORE, COAL MARKETS

Brazilian miner Vale said the Praia Mole coal terminal at Tubarao, in Vitoria, as well as iron ore loadings through Pier II had restarted activity after a four-day suspension. The news will have come as a relief to coal and iron ore markets. A mining source had expected minimal disruption to the iron ore market as a result of the suspension at Pier II, which loads Valemax vessels stated at 405,000 dwt. "Vale received a favorable decision by the Tribunal Regional Federal, which warrants the re-establishment of its activities at the Pier II and at the Terminal de Praia Mole," the Rio de Janeiro group said. Vale declined to comment further, and it was unclear whether the court had left open the possibility of future shutdowns at Tubarao facilities on environmental grounds. A report had said Vale has to file a report within 60 days to the court, outlining steps to mitigate environmental issues at the facility. A market source familiar with the port heard Monday of delays to coal ship movements in the area as a result of curbs accessing the berth.

World Bank lowers 2016 outlook on 37 of the 46 commodities it tracks

The World Bank has lowered its 2016 price forecast for 37 of the 46 commodities it monitors and has warned that low prices for oil and other commodities are "likely to be with us for some time". The bank's latest 'Commodity Markets Outlook' cut its price outlook for oil this year to \$37/bl, from a forecast of \$51/bl in October. For non-energy commodities, the largest decline is expected in iron-ore prices, with the report forecasting a 25% decline in 2016, owing to reduced imports from China's steel producers and new capacity in Australia and Brazil. Iron-ore prices fell from an average of \$96.9/t in 2014 to \$55.8/t last year, with prices plunging 15% in the fourth quarter to average \$47/t. The price of the ferrous mineral fell to \$41/t in December and bank is forecasting an average price of \$42/t for 2016. It is also only projecting a modest recovery to \$51/t by 2020. Iron-ore prices had fallen for eight consecutive quarters and were currently barely one-fourth of the high reached in 2011, owing to continued oversupply, weak demand and destocking at Chinese mills. "Global seaborne iron-ore demand may be nearing a peak due to China's transition to a less-metal intensive economy and as a result of rising scrap metal availability.

Cost-plus mines under scrutiny as Eskom rolls out new coal procurement strategy

Eskom group executive for generation Matshela Koko reports that the utility has taken an in principle decision to migrate from investing in cost-plus coal mines, which are increasingly underperforming, to fixed-price coal contracts. Speaking exclusively to Engineering News Online, Koko also insisted the group no longer faced a so-called "coal cliff", reporting that it had secured 80% of its needs for the next five years, as well as all of its requirements for 2015/16 and 2016/17. This included 11-million tons in the form of short-term contracts. He acknowledged that the main reason for the reduction in coal-supply risks related to lower-than-forecast electricity demand and, therefore, coal burn. Eskom's coal burn fell from well above 120-million tons in previous years to 119-million tons last year and consumption was expected to fall further during the 2015/16 financial year, which ended in March. The move away from the cost-plus model – which had hitherto helped bolster supply security and stimulated the development of a large coal export industry, had been driven primarily by Eskom's weakened financial position. The utility still had major balance-sheet constraints notwithstanding a near quadrupling of tariffs over the past ten years and several support packages from govt. In that context, a potential R39-billion recapitalisation bill for its six cost-plus mines was viewed as unsustainable.

DISRUPTION ON SOUTH AFRICAN RAIL LINE FAIL TO SUPPORT COAL PRICES

Disruption to South African thermal coal supply following a derailment on the main freight line over the weekend have failed to stir a marked response in the market, with prices for FOB Richards Bay 6,000 NAR coal still under pressure during Tuesday morning trading. State-owned logistics Transnet's freight division, Transnet Freight Rail, which operates the line confirmed that four locomotives and two wagons had been derailed near Ermelo -- around 420 km (260 miles) from the Richards Bay Coal Terminal port -- on Sunday at 6:35 pm local time (1635 GMT). The railway -- which is the main freight line running between ports in Richards Bay and Witbank, where the bulk of mines are located -- had been blocked since the incident but is expected to reopen at 6:00 pm local time Tuesday. A spokesman for the rail company outlined that as scheduled maintenance on both the line and mines takes place on Mondays, only one day's full production had been lost following the incident. The coal line has a hauling capacity of around 71 million mt/year. The response to the outage from market participants was muted, however, with trader Glencore reported to have sold a multi-origin 50,000 mt March-delivery DES Amsterdam-Rotterdam shipment at \$44.30/mt, which traded around 0900 GMT through the global COAL electronic platform. At \$44.30/mt, the deal was 20 cents below bids seen for the same period Monday, highlighting the more bearish tone in the market.

Mining sector to reform worker compensation system

The mining industry yesterday kick-started discussions that will pave the way for a reform of the compensation system and hopefully improve the lives of thousands of current and ex-mineworkers who were exposed to occupational hazards. The two-day workshop, held in Johannesburg and led by Mineral Resources deputy minister Godfrey Oliphant, was the latest attempt to review the country's fragmented compensation policies and came two days after an underground fire claimed the lives of four Impala Platinum employees at its Rustenburg 14 shaft. Previous attempts to address the problem had failed and the focus was on the Dept of Health and the Labour Department to develop a uniform compensation system for occupational disease for current and ex-workers. "We are trying to solve a big problem. The ball was dropped before and a process led by (former) labour minister Membathisi Mdladlana stopped," Oliphant said. "I hope the reform leads to a credible compensation process that will improve the lives of thousands of ex-miners," Oliphant added.

FG to revoke 500 mining licences

No fewer than 500 mining licences of the 1,400 issued in 2015 are to be revoked, Director General, Mining Cadastre Office, NMCO, Mohammed Amate, has said. According to him, the revocation of the licences is based on non-compliance with the provision of the 2007 mining laws of the Ministry of Solid Minerals Development. He said the licence owners committed offences that warranted the office to come up with a revocation plan, adding that some of the offences range from illegal operations to not using the document for the actual purposes they were granted. According to Amate: "Some of them got mining licences for mineral exploration but not for extracting or mining minerals; some acquired licences but refused to mine due to economic circumstances." He said the office had written to them late 2015 and gave them 30 days to comply with the provision of the law or lose their licences. He said NMCO had five categories of licences that mining companies could apply, such as Miners Reconnaissance Permit, which gives companies the power to sample minerals anywhere in the country without mining.

Cheap Gas Pinches Power Generators

The lowest electricity prices in more than a decade are testing the whole business model of independent power-generation companies. While most companies are thrilled when their fuel costs drop, plunging natural-gas prices have pushed wholesale electricity prices down to rock-bottom levels. That trend is pressuring the sales and stock prices of some of the biggest power-plant owners in the U.S. Shares in Dynegy Inc., Calpine Corp. and NRG Energy Inc. slid more than 55% last year. So far this year, they are down between 4% and 19%. Last month NRG's board of directors replaced longtime chief executive David Crane, hoping change at the top would reverse the company's slippage, but there is no relief in sight. A U.S. Supreme Court decision this week put additional pressure on generators' stocks with a ruling that allows big consumers to receive payments for cutting their electricity use that are equivalent to what generators are paid to make electricity. "It's a tough time for merchant power companies," said SunTrust energy analyst Ali Agha. Independent power companies came to the fore in the 1990s when many states deregulated their electricity markets.

Supreme Court Asked to Put Brakes on Obama Power Plan

More than two dozen American states asked the U.S. Supreme Court to put on hold President Barack Obama's carbon dioxide-cutting Clean Power Plan after their request for a similar pause was rejected by a lower court.

Led by West Virginia and Texas, the 26-state coalition filed its bid for relief with the nation's highest court on Tuesday. Last week, a federal appeals court declined to put the rules on hold pending the outcome of legal challenges. Enacted in October by the EPA, the Clean Power Plan aims to reduce U.S. carbon dioxide emissions by 2030 to 32 percent below where they were in 2005. The plan would compel states to use less coal and more renewable resources including solar and wind power. Opponents of the initiative, including utility companies, manufacturers and the coal industry, have decried the measure as a federal power grab. The first lawsuits were filed in Washington on Oct. 23, the day the final regulations were published. States must submit at least initial drafts of their emission reduction plans by Sept. 6. Final plans are due a maximum of two years later.

Paxton Statement: "The Obama administration has exceeded its authority in imposing a plan that will kill jobs and significantly raise electric bills for all Americans," Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton said in a statement announcing the Supreme Court filing. States fighting the regulations include coal-rich Kentucky and Wyoming, as well as Utah, Oklahoma, Ohio, Indiana, Michigan and New Jersey. At least 18 states, including New York and California, have filed papers at the lower court supporting the regulations. The case is State of West Virginia v. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 15A773, U.S. Supreme Court (Washington).

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ALPHA NATURAL RESOURCES TO CLOSE EIGHT WEST VIRGINIA COAL MINES

Alpha Natural Resources, currently reorganizing through Chapter 11 bankruptcy, will soon close eight West Virginia coal mines and their respective processing plants, the company said. In Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification Act notices sent Monday, Alpha announced plans to idle Marfork Coal's Brushy Eagle, Slip Ridge Cedar Grove, Horse Creek Eagle, Allen Powellton and Coon Cedar Grove mines along with the Marfork processing plant and Elk Run Coal's Roundbottom Powellton Deep, Hunter Peerless and Seng Creek Powellton mines, as well as the Chess processing plant. The company said Tuesday there are no plans at this time to re-open the underground mines once they are shuttered. A total of 886 workers will be laid off because of the closings, which are expected to occur March 25 or within a two-week period after that date. The coal mined at the to-be-closed facilities is primarily metallurgical grade, but some can be sold in the thermal market, Alpha said. Coal production in 2015 was up 2.4%, or 80,238 st, combined year on year at the mines to about 3.4 million st, according to Mine Safety and Health Administration data. Hunter Peerless saw the greatest gain in production, jumping 18.2% in 2015 to 840,641 st, while Slip Ridge Cedar Grove saw the largest loss in production, falling 19.5% from 2014 to 445,931 st.

B.C. mulls letting mining companies defer power costs until prices rebound

British Columbia's premier has good news for the province's mining industry, as the sector flounders amid ailing global commodity prices. Christy Clark announced her government will extend two tax-credit programs while delivering the keynote address at the annual conference into B.C. mineral exploration. The mining-exploration tax credit is a 20 per cent refundable credit, which increases to 30 per cent for exploration happening in regions affected by the destructive mountain pine beetle. Also being extended is the mining flow-through tax credit, which is a non-refundable credit of 20 per cent. Both announcements were met with applause by the several-hundred industry representatives attending the event in Vancouver. Clark also announced the government was working on a policy to allow mining companies to defer electricity costs until mineral prices rebound.

ARGENTINA EYES RAISING NATURAL GAS PRICES TO BOOST OUTPUT: GOVERNOR

Argentina is considering raising natural gas prices to boost production so that producers can sustain employment levels even as low global oil prices raise the threat of layoffs, a provincial governor said Tuesday. Omar Gutierrez, governor of the gas-rich Neuquen province, said he is working on the plan for higher prices with Guillermo Pereyra, a national senator who also runs the Union of Private Oil and Gas Workers in the southwestern provinces of La Pampa, Neuquen and Rio Negro. Gutierrez said they have taken the proposal to national Energy Minister Juan Jose Aranguren, and will meet with him again. "Neuquen has a very significant opportunity to provide the larger gas supplies that the country needs," Gutierrez said in a statement. "We are working to achieve a higher average price." The price for gas supplies from new developments, mostly of shale and tight gas production, is now at \$7.50/MMBtu, while it runs between \$2.70/MMBtu and \$3.00/MMBtu for supplies from older, conventional gas wells.

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Salim snaps up Rio Tinto's stake in NSW coal mine

Indonesia's powerful Salim group has extended its reach into Australia, this time with the purchase of one of the largest coal mines in NSW from Rio Tinto. For Rio, the sale of its second coal mine in NSW in a matter of months extends its retreat from the coal industry amid the extended slump in coal prices. The group has sold the Mount Pleasant thermal coal mine to the privately owned MACH Energy Australia Pty Ltd for \$US224 million (\$320 million). Rio is to also continue to receive royalties from the sale of coal from the mine. March Energy is controlled by Droxford International, which is an entity associated with Indonesia's Salim group, which also has an interest in the Goodman Fielder, the food group. The sale by Rio raises to more than \$US830 million (\$1.18 billion) the miner has raised from the sale of Australian coal mines, since it follows the recent sale of its 40 per cent interest in the neighbouring Bengalla coal joint venture for \$US606 million.

Coal Will Struggle To Survive Australian Solar Surge

Anyone looking for evidence that solar power is more than just a passing fad need only look at Australia's newest solar plants. Recently, the country saw two new solar plants officially open in the sunny state of New South Wales. The mammoth projects cover nearly 1,000 acres and are owned and operated by AGL Energy. Between them, the two plants will generate roughly 360,000 megawatt hours of electricity - enough power for more than 50,000 homes. Australia is uniquely positioned to capitalize on solar energy and it is entirely possible that the country will be mostly reliant on solar power rather than coal within a decade or two. Australia is much like the American west - vast, sunny, and with a relatively small population compared to its size. Australia actually receives more solar radiation per square foot than anywhere else on the planet. Between that fact, and the reality that much of the Australian outback is simply desolate uninhabited desert, Australia has a natural confluence of advantages that align with solar.

GE signs with Polish utility to modernize power plant

GE's Power Services business secured orders valued at about \$43 million with PGE Gornictwo i Energetyka Konwencjonalna S.A., the largest utility in Poland, to upgrade generator and steam turbine assets at the Turow Power Plant. The upgrades will result in a combined 45 MW output increase, which is the equivalent of powering about 130,000 Polish households. Under the terms of the agreement with PGE GiEK S.A., GE will upgrade three 50WT20H-100 generators and three 13CK230 steam turbines to extend equipment lifetime by at least 150,000 hours—about 20 years—and increase the availability of the turbosets to 97 percent in the first year of operation and above 98 percent in the next year. The upgrade is expected to increase power output by 45 MW and improve power plant efficiency by about 1.4 percent. The upgrade of the generator rotors and the manufacturing of new rods will take place in GE's generator factory in Wroclaw, Poland. The steam turbine upgrade includes the delivery of new HP, IP and LP turbine inner modules, which will be manufactured in GE's turbine factory in Elblag, Poland. The upgrade is scheduled to begin with the shutdown of the first unit in April 2017, and the commissioning of the last unit is scheduled for January 2020.

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Blackmailing the EU with gas transit rate hike, Kiev walks on thin ice

The Ukrainian authorities conduct a risky policy, trying to blackmail the European partners with an advance in price for transit of the Russian gas. Such an opinion was expressed by the deputy of the People's Council of the DPR, the Chairman of the Committee on Budget, Finance and Economic Policy Marina Zheynova. Increase of tariff rates is another proof of inefficiency and untrustworthiness of the Ukrainian politicum. Trying to find at least any tool of pressure upon Russia and the European partners with a view to receive the next tranche by means of blackmail threat, the leadership of Ukraine walks on thin ice. According to Zheynova, the moment for gas blackmail was chosen not incidentally: in winter nobody is likely to renew contacts especially since at the moment there existed no alternatives to the transit across the territory of Ukraine. Actions of Ukraine create a probability of interruptions in supply of the Russian gas to the territory of the European countries as the transit rate was increased more than by half. The Kiev authorities repeatedly stated that Europe was the strategic partner of Ukraine and insisted on the fastest granting a visa-free regime to it, trying to appeal to the leading EU countries – France and Germany – within 'the Norman format'. Before the New Year it was reported about the radically increased rate for transit of the Russian gas by Kiev across the Ukrainian territory to the countries of the European Union. According to the Minister of Energy and Coal Industry of Ukraine Vladimir Demchishin, the new rate for transit of the Russian gas came into force since January 1, 2016.

RWE Supply & Trading has sold Lynemouth Power station to Czech utility company Energetický a průmyslový holding (EPH)

RWE Supply & Trading GmbH is pleased to confirm that agreement has been reached on the sale of Lynemouth Power Limited (Lynemouth Power), which is operating Lynemouth power station, to EP UK Investments Limited (EP UK), a subsidiary of Energetický a průmyslový holding (EPH), a leading Central European energy group. The acquisition of Lynemouth Power Limited in 2012 was part of the Principal Investments business of RWE Supply & Trading GmbH. Lynemouth Power Background: Lynemouth Power owns and operates a 420 MW (gross capacity) coal fired station in the north east of the UK and has been working with contractors to design a technical solution for a full conversion of the power plant to run on biomass. Lynemouth Power received clearance from the European Commission on 1st December 2015 for its supporting Investment Contract (Contract for Difference) from the UK government.

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Homegrown Energy Security for Europe

The European Union is highly dependent on foreign oil. For every 100 liters consumed within the EU, 90 are imported. Meanwhile, domestic oil production is plummeting, down more than 50% over the last decade. Unless the EU changes course and increases its production of alternative energy – including biofuels, an option the EU has long neglected – some 95% of its oil will come from foreign sources by 2030, according to the IEA. The current state of affairs remains the EU's Achilles' heel, because it implies dependence on imports from unstable, authoritarian regimes. In 2014, EU member states spent a staggering €271 billion on foreign crude oil – more than the combined GDP of Bulgaria, Hungary, Slovakia, and Slovenia. Roughly half of this money went to Russia, the Middle East, and North Africa. Thus, not only is the EU exposed to global supply disruptions; it is also helping to prop up authoritarian govts and empower hostile regimes, which limits its own ability to provide effective, coordinated responses to threats and provocations.

India overtakes China as Indonesia's top coal export destination

The landscape of Indonesia's coal exports market appears to have changed. China which has been in the past become the largest coal export market of Indonesia has been replaced by Indonesia, after China decided to reduce the use of coal to generate its power plants and increases the use of other energy sources, in particular renewable energy. Last year, out of total coal exports of this year, 37 percent were delivered to the Indian market, the largest coal export destination market, while China only absorbed 20 percent of Indonesia's coal exports. Director for Coal Business at the Energy and Mineral Resources (ESDM) Adhi Wibowo said the coal exports were contributed by state owned coal producer PT Tambang atubara Bukit Asam (Tbk) and the holders of Work agreement on Coal Mining Exploitation (PKP2B) contract. This has changed the changing of landscape of Indonesian coal exports market, he said during a hearing with the Commission VII of the House of Representative (DPR) last week.

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Govt. to Cut Export Tax on Palm Kernel Shell by 70%

Jakarta. Government sources have announced plans to cut the export tax on palm kernel shells for the next two years, responding to palm oil producers demand for quick cash amid a global decline in prices, putting plans for power plant development using the biomass on the back burner. Under the plan, the export tax will be cut from \$10 a ton this year to \$3, Industry Minister Saleh Husin told reporters. The tariff would increase to \$5 next year and return to its original level in 2018. Palm kernel shells are the solid leftover after palm fruits are milled for oil. The shell contains a high calorific value and is ideal for producing steam to turn turbine and electricity generators at common power plants. Palm oil producers believe exporting the kernel shell could alleviate pressures from the weakened global palm oil price, which has declined 17% in the last 12 months.

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Reliance Power seeks to exit stalled power project, writes to AP govt

Reliance Power has said the Krishnapatnam UMPP, which was awarded to it in 2007, could not be taken forward due to escalated coal cost from Indonesia. Looking to exit the stalled 4,000 MW Krishnapatnam power project, Reliance Power has written to Andhra Pradesh government suggesting that it could be done on similar lines to that of Tilaiya UMPP, which was acquired by procurers from the company. The Anil Ambani group firm Reliance Power has said the Krishnapatnam UMPP, which was awarded to it in 2007, could not be taken forward due to escalated coal cost from Indonesia, among other factors. The Krishnapatnam Ultra Mega Power Project is located in Andhra Pradesh while Tilaiya plant was in Jharkhand. Reliance Power has informed the Andhra Pradesh government the procurers of Tilaiya UMPP -- which was stalled for over five years -- have accepted the termination of power purchase agreement and decided to purchase the entire shareholding in the project Special Purpose Vehicle from the company by way of mutual discussion with the developers.

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Finally, Goindwal Sahib thermal plant to get going

A Swiss company, IMR Metallurgical Resources, has agreed to supply coal from South Africa to the project in Tarn Taran district. The first unit of the 540-megawatt (MW) Goindwal Sahib thermal plant, owned by GVK Power Limited, is set to start operating by January 31. A Swiss company, IMR Metallurgical Resources, has agreed to supply coal from South Africa to the project in Tarn Taran district. The company also has been allotted 12 lakh tonnes of unused coal by Coal India Limited (CIL), to be procured at a higher rate than the prevailing prices, till the imported coal arrives. The amount of unused coal allocated to GVK will help the project run for about six months. The project is running 20 months behind schedule as the commissioning, as per the power purchase agreement signed with the Punjab State Power Corporation Limited (PSPCL), was to take place in May 2014. However, the coal block owned by GVK in Tokisud (Jharkhand), which was to supply coal for the Goindwal plant, was cancelled as the Centre decided to go for fresh allotment of all coal blocks in the wake of the coal scam.

Chinese coal plants get help from Denmark to reduce CO2 emissions

Danish expertise to pave the way for more wind power in China's energy system
China burns more coal than any other country in the world, and using the fossil fuel to generate energy has left the country with environmental concerns. A planned collaboration between Denmark and China will streamline the operation of the Asian country's ageing coal plants, reducing coal consumption, lowering the country's huge amounts of CO2 emissions and improving air quality in Chinese cities.

Danish know-how: Lars Christian Lilleholt, the climate and energy minister, signed a co-operation agreement on Monday in the Chinese capital of Beijing. If a pilot project proves successful, the deal will eventually be extended to all coal power plants in the country. "We will provide Danish expertise about how to improve the operating efficiency of Chinese coal power plants, including how to bring renewable energy online as part of the energy supply," Lilleholt said in a statement.

Blowing in the wind: The inability of the Chinese system to always incorporate available wind power means that Chinese wind turbines are at a standstill 15 percent of the time. "In Denmark, we dial the power plants down when it's windy," said Lilleholt. "They haven't quite got the hang of that yet in China, so a lot of energy is being wasted." The goal of incorporating Danish technology and expertise is to reduce China's CO2 emissions by 30 million tonnes – the equivalent of about three quarters of Denmark's energy-related greenhouse gas emissions.

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Anti-coal groups protest against latest NCPO order

Groups from south and northeast angry at move allow power plants. ANTI-COAL groups from around the country are rising up against the National Council for Peace and Order's move to allow power plants to be constructed in defiance of a city's master plan. Last Wednesday, the NCPO used power under Article 44 of the interim constitution to order an exemption to the city plan law for power plants, gas plants, water treatment facilities, garbage incinerators, landfills and recycling plants, which had been restricted to areas zoned for them on the city plan. The Protect Andaman from Coal Network rallied yesterday in front of the Natural Resources and Environment Ministry against the order and urged the ministry to renew the Krabi Environment Protection Zone without any legal gap that would permit the building of a coal-fired plant in Krabi. The Krabi plant is one of the Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand (Egat)'s key projects in the South. It is expected to be located in Nua Klong district, which is part of the Krabi Environment Protection Zone.

China-Russia Project Stalls as Energy Prices Plunge

Russia's biggest energy deal with China faces delays as economic pressures mount in both countries, raising risks for the plan to link Siberian gas fields with China's industrial northeast. On Dec. 29, Russia's monopoly Gazprom said it had cancelled a tender for a major portion of its mammoth Power of Siberia pipeline project after regulators objected to anti-competitive terms. Gazprom's record tender for an 822-kilometer (510-mile) section of the pipeline was set to award 156 billion rubles (12.8 billion yuan) to "a single contractor for the entire set of works required for gas transportation" in order to "optimize costs," Interfax reported. But on Dec. 7, Russia's Federal Antimonopoly Service cited faulty documentation and "bidding criteria that were not measurable," the news agency said. The regulatory roadblock came one week after Gazprom awarded 197.7 billion rubles (16.3 billion yuan) in pipeline contracts without competition to a construction firm owned by Arkady Rotenberg, a friend of President Vladimir Putin and a target of Western sanctions over Russia's conflict with Ukraine. It was unclear whether the FAS action was meant solely to head off higher costs from limited competitive bidding. But cost is one of several problems for the gas deal that was valued at U.S. \$400 billion (2.6 trillion yuan) when it was signed with China National Petroleum Corp. in 2014 after a decade of talks.

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No joy for miners as more mills close

Australian iron ore producers are set to come under more pressure as Vale returns to shipping from a Brazilian port and China looks to close more steel mills. The benchmark price for iron ore grading 62 per cent drifted south again last night, falling \$US49c to \$US41.08. Iron ore prices lifted briefly last week on uncertainty around Brazilian supply, after Vale said it may be forced to stop shipping about 200,000 tonnes of iron ore a day from its Tubarao port on the order of a court after claims of environmental breaches. But the exporter won a reprieve in Brazil's Federal Court on Monday, getting the right to resume shipping and a 60-day window to address the concerns, meaning the short interruption is likely to have a negligible impact on exports to China. Vale's return to its full export rate comes as China's State Council announced on Sunday it will close 100 million to 150 million tonnes a year of steel production capacity, according to Bloomberg reports. No time frame was given for the steel mill closures. The figure represents about half of analysts' estimates of China's excess capacity. And while Chinese construction activity, and therefore steel demand, is expected to lift after the Chinese New Year holiday starting February 8, an ANZ research note released on Monday said iron ore stockpiles at Chinese ports were still at elevated levels of about 95.4 million tonnes at the end of last week, suggesting no near-term price bump is likely after the holidays.

Freeport-McMoRan extends list of assets for sale

Freeport-McMoRan is extending the list of assets it is willing to sell as the deepening commodities rout makes it more difficult for the US copper and oil producer to deal with its \$20bn of debt. The world's largest listed copper miner admitted that it was facing "serious challenges" and was looking to make between \$5bn and \$10bn of debt cuts through possible mine sales as well as an evaluation of options for its oil and gas business. "Our clear and immediate objective is to restore [the company's] balance sheet," said Richard Adkerson, chief executive. Freeport said it was "actively engaged" in talks over possible deals, which could be sales or joint-venture arrangements. The US group on Tuesday announced a \$12.2bn annual loss for 2015, almost all stemming from writedowns to the value of its oil and gas assets. Freeport placed a big bet on oil and gas in 2012 with two controversial energy deals worth \$20bn, which pushed up its debt just ahead of the commodities downturn.

Gauteng reveals potential bidders for R3.5bn Gautrain rolling stock contract

Pointing to a sustained increase in ridership figures that continues to place strain on the Gautrain's limited capacity, Gauteng MEC for Roads and Transport Dr Ismail Vadi has outlined the business case behind the decision to embark on a R3.5-billion acquisition of additional rolling stock for...

Fuel levy not for Gauteng freeways – Parliament

Using the fuel levy to replace Gauteng's e-toll system will cause services to the poor to suffer, Parliament's transport committee said on Tuesday. Acting committee chairperson Leonard Ramatlakane said the levy was not collected for road maintenance, but was part of how government raised funds to..

Tech giants reject OTT regulation for S Africa

Facebook, Microsoft and Google have voiced their opposition to possible regulation of over-the-top (OTT) services such as WhatsApp and Skype in South Africa. Representatives of these companies addressed their concerns at a meeting on OTT regulation at Parliament in Cape Town on Tuesday.

Distressed mining assets may drive 2016 M&A activity

Boardroom confidence is expected to continue this year, after record high mergers and acquisition (M&A) activity in 2015; however, the downward spiral of commodity prices may force distressed mining assets onto the market. Unpacking expectations for the year ahead, international law firm Allen &

Drought to impact WC agriculture production by 10% – report

The ongoing drought conditions in the Western Cape will reduce animal, crop and horticultural production by as much as 10%, which will have a significant impact on the price of consumer goods, Western Cape Economic Opportunities Minister Alan Winde warns. At a Minister and Members of Executive.

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S Africa’s economy to remain weak – S&P’s	Ratings agency Standard & Poor’s (S&P’s) expects a tough year for the South African economy. In its sub-Saharan Africa Rating Trends 2016 report, the agency noted that slow economic growth was at the core of the country’s problems, exacerbated by weak European demand for local goods; weak Chinese
S African citrus farmers’ investment paying off as EU exports rise	Three years of intense collaboration between the European Union (EU) and the Citrus Growers Association of Southern Africa (CGA) resulted in record South African citrus exports in 2015. Given that the EU is the biggest export market for South African citrus, the domestic industry continues to
Small business dept to hold stakeholder engagement over review of legislation	The Department of Small Business Development (DSBD) is embarking on a nationwide consultation process to solicit inputs from stakeholders on the review of the National Small Business Act and the National Small Business Amendment Act, as well as engage stakeholders on the proposed national minimum..
Qatar can ride out gas price collapse	The world's largest LNG exporter is reducing prices to secure long-term relationships The government has recommitted to achieving fiscal balance by 2020 -- even as its own estimates show this goal receding Reuters has triggered speculation that Modi is about to reshuffle his cabinet
Contradictions bedevil Japan's economic plans	The world's largest LNG exporter is reducing prices to secure long-term relationships The government has recommitted to achieving fiscal balance by 2020 -- even as its own estimates show this goal receding Reuters has triggered speculation that Modi is about to reshuffle his cabinet
India cabinet rejig would not unblock land, tax reform Policy tweaks will have modest impact in Brazil	Reuters has triggered speculation that Modi is about to reshuffle his cabinet
Lithium industry could take off in Mexico	The balance between austerity and pro-growth policies will be difficult to strike Mexico's lithium production potential is enormous but the industry's success is far from guaranteed
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Negotiations set to begin over new Colombia mine deal Tour may strengthen Mexican ties with the Gulf FDI inflows to Africa to remain under pressure	Drummond will drive a hard bargain over new La Loma mining contract Pena Nieto's Gulf tour is as important symbolically as practically Weak foreign investment flows are likely to continue as long as commodity prices remain low
EU telecoms regulation poses competitiveness dilemmas	As major deals face scrutiny, the EU is gearing up for another attempt to overhaul its regulatory framework for telecoms
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Carbon Pricing is Only Way to Replace Coal -- Total CEO	Carbon pricing is the only way to wean the world off coal and switch to cleaner sources of energy and limit global warming to agreed targets, said Patrick Pouyanne, chief executive of French oil major Total SA (TOT), Thursday. "If we don't do anything about carbon pricing, we will have a lot of coal," Mr. Pouyanne said during a panel discussion at the World Economic Forum held in Davos. Executives from many European oil majors have called for effective carbon pricing to allow natural gas to take market share from coal. Already, the largest oil companies are producing more natural gas from their overall hydrocarbon production. A carbon price as low as \$32 to \$40 a ton would additionally foster innovation that would make other sources of energy more competitive in the future, Mr. Pouyanne said.
Bloodbath as panic engulfs markets	A SELLOFF on Wednesday gave global equity markets the worst start to a year on record, as oil again tumbled to 13-year lows. Emerging market assets were especially hard-hit, as the slide in oil made traders and investors increasingly sceptical that governments and central banks could shore up currencies and stimulate their economies. Developing-country stocks extended their worst start to a year ever, currencies slumped to a record low and the risk premium on emerging-market debt climbed to the highest in more than six years. Concern that an oil-supply glut will worsen sent Brent crude towards the lowest close since 2003, while the slowest growth in China in a quarter of a century damped the outlook for the global economy. Brent slipped \$1.12, or 3.9%, to \$27.64 a barrel on the ICE Futures Europe exchange."It's Black Wednesday for emerging markets, as a whole range of bad news whips out billions of dollars from stocks and currencies," said Bernd Berg, an emerging-markets strategist in London at Société Générale. "The rout in emerging markets could continue for some time, especially as the major global central banks have exhausted their ammunition in recent years, making it unlikely that they will rescue global markets this time around."

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Eskom lays charge against 'rowdy' protesting DA

Eskom has laid a criminal charge against the DA for contravening the Regulation of Gatherings Act 205 of 1993 and it plans to lay another one against the party for fraud, claiming some signatories of a petition it presented to the electricity supplier are not "authentic". This follows a protest on Wednesday at Eskom's Megawatt Park head office in Sunninghill led by the DA's spokesman on public enterprises, Natasha Mazzone. Mazzone handed over a petition calling on Eskom's executives to repay R73-million in bonuses they had received since load-shedding commenced in 2008. "DA members ... arrived at Eskom's head office on Wednesday without prior approval and proceeded to occupy the reception area in a rowdy manner, demanding to see CEO Brian Molefe," Eskom said. Mazzone said the handover of the petition "was a pre-arranged meeting and took place in an orderly fashion". Eskom said its mandate was powering South Africa and all its employees were committed to discharging their duties. "We have not implemented load-shedding for close to five months and we continue to do maintenance on our plants to ensure long-term sustainability. "Eskom will lay another charge of fraud following a brief investigation that revealed the information of some of the signatories of the 'petition' is not authentic," it said.

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Minergy to boost Southern Africa energy deficit with Botswana coal project

Coal exploration company Minergy is looking to assist in Southern Africa's energy deficit crisis with its large, shallow, low cost Masama coal project in Botswana. "Minergy's Masama project is a unique coal asset, with high quality coal at opencast mining depths. Situated within Botswana's premier Mmamabula Coalfield, Masama's location is low risk with excellent existing infrastructure nearby. It presents a range of scalable development opportunities at low capital intensity," says Claude de Bruin, Executive Director of Minergy. Minergy's flagship asset comprises a reported 2.8 Bt export-quality coal deposit and covers about 700 square kilometres. "We have a diversified value extraction strategy for the asset, consisting of a three-pronged approach that includes supplying the roughly 16 Mtpa regional merchant coal trading market. South Africa is a sizeable proportion of this market and coal from Masama would be delivered to customers on existing infrastructure in very close proximity to open-castable portions of the coal deposit," says de Bruin. The electricity supply situation in Southern Africa has changed significantly over the past few years, with national power generators finding it increasingly difficult to meet domestic electricity requirements.

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Coal exploration company Minergy is looking to assist in Southern Africa's energy deficit crisis with its large, shallow, low cost Masama coal project in Botswana. "Minergy's Masama project is a unique coal asset, with high quality coal at opencast mining depths. Situated within Botswana's premier Mmamabula Coalfield, Masama's location is low risk with excellent existing infrastructure nearby. It presents a range of scalable development opportunities at low capital intensity," says Claude de Bruin, Executive Director of Minergy. Minergy's flagship asset comprises a reported 2.8 Bt export-quality coal deposit and covers about 700 square kilometres. "We have a diversified value extraction strategy for the asset, consisting of a three-pronged approach that includes supplying the roughly 16 Mtpa regional merchant coal trading market. South Africa is a sizeable proportion of this market and coal from Masama would be delivered to customers on existing infrastructure in very close proximity to open-castable portions of the coal deposit," says de Bruin. The electricity supply situation in Southern Africa has changed significantly over the past few years, with national power generators finding it increasingly difficult to meet domestic electricity requirements.

British, Chinese companies to develop Moz coal mine, power station project

AIM-listed company Ncondezi Energy has entered into a binding joint development agreement (JDA) with China's Shanghai Electric Power Company (SEP) to develop the Ncondezi coal mine and thermal power station project in Mozambique, in the province of Tete. The deal results in SEP becoming a strategic investor in the Mozambique project. As a result of the agreement, a holding company will be set up which will hold 100% of the project; this will be the Ncondezi Power Company (NPC – currently, Ncondezi Energy directly owns 100% of the project). SEP will own 60% of the NPC. In return, SEP is investing up to \$25.5-million in the development of the project up to the point of financial close. This will be paid, in agreed instalments, between January 1 and financial close. The first instalment will be paid when the JDA becomes effective and certain SEP conditions are met. Following the financial close of the project, the NPC will pay Ncondezi Energy another \$35-million. The Ncondezi project involves the development of a thermal coal mine in the coal-rich Mozambican province. This will be used to feed a thermal power station that will generate electricity for the country's domestic market.

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Phetoe joins Cosatu leadership

Solly Phetoe has been named Deputy General Secretary of Cosatu, the only executive position that was contested at the 12th National Congress at the Gallagher Estate in Midrand on 26 November. Phetoe was Cosatu's North West Provincial Secretary. He contested the position against the Deputy General Secretary of the Democratic Nursing Organisation of South Africa (Denosa), Oscar Phaka.

FACED with drinking water from wells and boreholes that are unsuitable for human consumption, communities in Lagos, especially in Orile-ignamu, Igando, Ajegunle, Amukoko and FESTAC have lamented the non- supply of water by the Lagos state water corporation (LSWC) and continued exploitation by water vendors in their domain.

Lifting water from 2 rivers banned

The poor rainfall for two consecutive years has forced the administration to ban lifting of water for irrigation purposes from Panchganga and Bhogavati rivers. The administration has already banned lifting of water from two other rivers, Chitri and Hiranyakeshi, last month.

Vegetable prices almost double as water scarcity becomes severe

Prices of vegetables in Pune over the last few weeks have witnessed a steady rise with some being almost doubled compared to last year. Further increase in prices is expected as water scarcity takes a toll on cultivation.

After tomato, it's the turn of coriander, fenugreek (methi), radish and lime to pinch the pockets with prices almost doubling. Records show that on December 30, 2014, the average price of a bundle of coriander at Pune APMC was Rs 3, while on December 30, 2015, it had shot up to Rs 12 per bundle.

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Cosatu angered after 3,000 farmworkers dismissed in MP	The Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) says it's angered by the dismissal of more than 3,000 striking farmworkers in Mpumalanga. The large group went on strike in November demanding the recognition of the union of their choice. The employer has since dismissed them.
Water shortage for world's wettest place in India	While flooding hit the south, an increasing lack of water in Cherrapunji, a northeastern town which was once the world's wettest place, is causing growing concern among residents.
Water scarcity looms large over villages in Gujarat	Not just agriculture but even the villages in the remote areas are facing shortage of water as they are not only getting water once in three days but are even forced to buy water from private players.
Chamundeshwari Electricity Supply Corporation (CESC) urged to ensure power supply to water projects	<p>.S. Puttaraju, MP, has criticised the Chamundeshwari Electricity Supply Corporation (CESC) for not supplying uninterrupted power to drinking water projects in the district. According to him, residents of several villages in the district were facing drinking water scarcity owing to frequent power shutdown.</p> <p>Expressing his dissatisfaction over CESC for allegedly disconnecting power supply to water projects in the district, Mr. Puttaraju directed the officials concerned to initiate measures to ensure that the people did not suffer during ensuing summer owing to scarcity of drinking water. The Union government had been releasing grants for various schemes and it was up to the officials to utilise the funds properly, he said.</p>
7,000 South Sudan Refugees Flee to DR Congo	The refugees are fleeing violence in the country following a civil war which broke out in December 2013. The war precipitated from a dispute between President Salva Kiir and his former deputy Riek Machar whom he accused of planning a coup, leading to a cycle of retaliatory massacres that have split the country along ethnic lines.
Teachers in Gabon begin one month strike	The decision to strike has been observed in primary, secondary and high schools in the country. The decision to strike started in 2015 when 20 public sector unions left many schools closed for about three months causing a difficult academic year for students. The integration of primary school teachers who have been working for many years without salaries is another priority of the strike organisers. The intervention of President Ali Bongo Ondimba was considered a glimmer of hope when he announced the introduction of a new remuneration system based on performance.
Court remands former defence minister on corruption charges	A federal High court in Nigeria has remanded the former defence minister on charges of corruption. Haliru Bello Mohammed, acting leader of the Popular Democratic Party (PDP) was charged along with his son Abba Mohammed Bello, for embezzlement and money laundering in Abuja. In an amended charge dated December 30, 2015, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, EFCC, said the former minister and his son would have received 300 million naira (1.4 million euros) under the previous administration. Bello and his son, Abba, are alleged to have conspired by using the firms, BAM Projects and Properties Limited, to withdraw the 300 million naira from an account of the Office of the National Security Adviser (ONSA) operated with the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN).
Women get key ministerial positions in new cabinet	The new Prime Minister, Mamady Youla officially formed his new cabinet on Monday handing key positions to women. The 31-strong cabinet has seven women who have taken key ministerial dockets of finance, foreign affairs and mining. Among the fresh faces of the cabinet is the 44-year-old Malado Kaba, the new Minister of Finance, who spent most of her professional career at the European Commission. Joining her are Makale Camara, Foreign Minister and Abdoulaye Magassouba, Minister of Mines and Geology. Kanny Dialo, an economist, is the new Minister of Planning and International Cooperation.
South Sudan food scarcity gets serious	Close to a million people in South Sudan now rely on wild plants, water scarcity and swampfish as a result of two years of fighting caused by a political row. Farmers were prevented from planting crops as the fighting displaced millions and increased famine. The displaced persons now live at Rumbeck located in Central South Sudan. Food delivery has been made difficult by heavy rains and groups of displaced civilians are benefiting from the benevolence of well wishers.
WHO declares Guinea Ebola-free	Two years after the Ebola epidemic began in Guinea, the country has been declared free of the virus. More than 2,500 people died from the virus in the West African nation. The declaration by the World Health Organisation (WHO) comes 42 days after the last person confirmed with Ebola tested negative.

Zambia to hold presidential election in August

Zambia will hold presidential and parliamentary elections on August 11 under a new constitution, a government spokesman said. The elections are expected to be a tight contest between President Edgar Lungu's ruling Patriotic Front (PF) party and Hakainde Hichilema's opposition United Party for National Development (UPND). Lungu is expected to assent to the constitutional amendments on Tuesday, ratifying the election date, his spokesman Amos Chanda said.

More than a dozen to vie for presidential elections

More than a dozen candidates are expected to challenge Niger's President Mahamadou Issoufou in February's election. Among the candidates include the country's first democratically elected President Mahamane Ousmane who was ousted in a coup in 1996 and Hama Amadou, a former prime minister and parliament speaker

Benin Elections: Battle of the businessmen

The head of Benin's Business Leaders Organisation has joined the presidential race to succeed President Yayi Boni. Sebestien Ajavon announced his intention to contest for the presidency on Sunday at a rally in a 35,000 capacity stadium which was almost full to capacity. The election is scheduled for February 28, 2015.

Angry protests in London following Saudi executions

Angry protesters gathered outside the Saudi Embassy in London to condemn the recent executions in Saudi Arabia, and especially that of Shiite leader, Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr. Al-Nimr was executed along with 47 men on terrorism-related charges, drawing condemnation and protests from Iran and its allies in the region. Saudi officials said the mass execution, one of the largest in the kingdom in decades, was aimed at deterring violence against the state.

Zimbabwe civil servants threaten to down their tools over pay disputes

Civil servants in Zimbabwe have vowed to go on strike on January 1, 2016 owing to pay disputes with the government. The workers sent a strong message to the government on Tuesday, that they would take industrial action as they wait for January 5 to receive their December salaries and bonuses which they claim haven't been paid on time, reports the country's newspaper The Herald. The paper further reports that the country's Economic Development Minister Patrick Chinamasa last week had unced that the December salary payment date for all other civil servants, health workers included, had been moved from December 29 to January 5.

Nigeria to Recruit 500,000 Teachers

Currently, there are 570,000 teachers in public primary schools. UNICEF estimates indicate that about 40% of school going children are out of school. The public primary school system has suffered neglect over the years forcing many parents to send their children to private schools which are often run by unqualified personnel. The Deputy Chairman of Lagos Wing of the Nigerian Union of Teachers, Adesina Adedoyin, has urged the government to involve teachers in the recruitment drive to ensure it is devoid of politics.

Brazil exports corn to S Africa as El Niño disrupts trade

Brazil exported 321 662 tonnes of corn to South Africa in 2015, up from none the previous year, data from the Trade Ministry showed on Wednesday. Print Send to Friend Tweet 0 0 Three more cargoes are on the way or likely to leave Brazilian ports soon, according to shipping data as well as a South African trade source. The exports are an indication of Brazil's growing influence as a corn producer with two annual crops and ample room to plant new fields. The figures are also indicative of the global trade disruption caused by the El Niño climate phenomenon. South Africa may need to import as much as 5-million tonnes of maize this year, roughly half of its requirements, due to its worst drought in three decades, the country's largest producer group said.

Wine and citrus could be victims in game of chicken

There is extreme concern that the wine and citrus industries in the Western Cape will be collateral damage if the Agoa issue surrounding imported chicken from the US is not resolved immediately, according to Wesgro CEO Tim Harris. The wine industry in the Western Cape employs almost 170 000 workers, while the Western Cape citrus industry employs about 6 000 people directly on citrus farms plus another 4 000 jobs in related sectors. Print Send to Friend Tweet 0 0 Wesgro is the official trade and investment promotion agency of the province.

South African maize prices maintained their record run into 2016, scaling historic highs amid growing drought concerns and rand weakness.

The March contract for white maize added almost 2.6% to a new record of 4,781 rand (\$307) a tonne while the same contract for the yellow variety climbed 1.8% to R3 677/t. Print Send to Friend Tweet 0 0 Prices for white maize, the staple crop that provides much of the caloric intake for South Africa's lower-income households, more than doubled in 2015 while those for yellow maize, used for animal feed, rose around 70% last year.

Botswana needs \$123m more to cope with drought, power shortages

Botswana's Finance Ministry has presented a supplementary budget to parliament, saying it needed an additional 1.34-billion pula (\$123.28-million) for the 2015/16 financial year to fund measures to mitigate against water and power shortages. The bulk of the money - 821-million pula - will be allocated to the state power utility to fund electricity imports and coal purchases, according to the supplementary budget estimates put before lawmakers on Tuesday. Print Send to Friend Tweet 2 0 A total of 192 million pula will be provided to the Water Utilities Corporation (WUC) to replace leaking pipes, which have been blamed for shortages in financial hub and capital Gaborone. The Ministry of Education will be allocated an additional 325 million pula for building schools and purchasing equipment.

SA labour minister must investigate Cuban engineers' employment conditions

The DA claimed that the Cuban engineers had not engaged in any work since they were brought to South Africa in May last year by the Free State provincial government. Print Send to Friend Tweet 0 0 At the time of their arrival, Free State Premier Ace Magashule said the 38 engineers had many skills from civil to mechanical. The engineers, who were expected to build houses, help with water provision, infrastructure development and project management, were employed on three-year contracts.

The 2015 matric exam national pass rate has dropped to 70.7%, down from 75.8% in 2014.

The Western Cape was the best performing province in the 2015 National Senior Certificate exams with an 84.7% pass rate. Gauteng was close on its heels with an 84.2% pass rate. The Free State was the third-best performing province with an 81.6% pass rate, followed by North West with 81.5%. Next was Mpumalanga with 78.6%, the Northern Cape with 69.4%, Limpopo with 65.9%, and KwaZulu-Natal with 60.7%. The worst performing province was the Eastern Cape with a pass rate of 56.8%.

The Department of Basic Education Plan to shake up basic education

The department of basic education hopes a planned new three-tiered school system will eventually see about 60% of pupils completing technical qualifications. According to the department's plan, expected to be implemented in 58 schools in 2017, schooling would be divided into three streams: academic, technical vocational and technical occupations. Pupils would be channelled into a particular stream according to their individual strengths and weaknesses.

Teachers' unions unite to highlight 'national crisis' in profession

Six unions call for pay increases above proposed 1% annual level, and warn more pupils are being taught by unqualified staff. In an unusual joint submission to the School Teachers' Review Body (STRB) – the pay review body for England and Wales – six unions, including the National Union of Teachers, have combined to call for pay increases above the 1% annual level the Department for Education (DfE) is seeking to offer over the next four years. The letter highlights widespread concern within education over looming problems with recruitment, as schools report difficulties in attracting and retaining staff along with the squeeze on school budgets, which remain frozen in England despite being expected to fund pay increases.

Members of the tri-partite alliance should close ranks and work together instead of fighting each other, Congress of SA Trade Unions (Cosatu) president Sdumo Dlamini said
civic gardens to get water from alternate sources

SA Communist Party general secretary Blade Nzimande also called for unity while delivering the SACP's message of support

The garden department has managed to arrange alternate water supply for five big civic gardens. The water department has discontinued 24x7 supply to civic gardens due to an ongoing water scarcity. This prompted the administration to work out an alternate solution to water the gardens.

The five gardens, which are currently equipped with alternate water supply, are located in Belapur, Nerul and Sanpada nodes.

In Belapur and Nerul, there are two gardens each and in Sanpada there is one equipped with borewell.

The engineers were instructed to identify alternate source and last month, 27 gardens having existing bore wells and wells have been located. The civic body is already using sewage treatment plant (STP) supply via five tankers to take care of the foliage on dividers.

Water levels at Kariba dam, the world's largest, are at "extremely dangerous" lows that could force a shutdown of its hydro power plants, said Zambian Energy Minister Dora Siliya.

Poor rainfall and overuse of water by Zambia and Zimbabwe, the southern African countries that share the reservoir, have caused its levels to drop, with electricity generation already reduced by more than half. As of Dec. 28, Kariba was 14 percent full, compared with 51 percent a year earlier, according to the dam's regulator. Mining companies in Africa's second-biggest copper producer have had to reduce their electricity use and buy expensive imports at a time when plunging metal prices have triggered the mothballing of some mines and more than 10,000 job cuts. Households and businesses endure power cuts as long as 14 hours a day. The cost of importing power and emergency generation could threaten the government's 3.8 percent budget deficit target for 2016. Harvesting safe drinking water when it rains is hard to realise in Karamoja. This is due to the fact that most of the houses are grass-thatched which makes it hard for the occupants to collect rain water. Thus, the residents of Karamoja have had to find alternative ways to tap rainwater:

Uganda is Struggling to Find Water in Semi-Arid Karamoja

The fenced rock: In Losimit village in Remot parish, Nakapiripiriti District, the residents have a water collecting rock. In some places, it is hard to have boreholes due to limited technology because the area is rocky and, therefore, hard to drill through. People are forced to move closer to the places where there are boreholes and an initiative for every school to have a borehole was started in the area

Namibia's central cities to run out of water by September 2016

because the three dams (Von Bach dam, Swakoppoort dam and Omatako dam) did not get adequate inflow during the last rain season and as a result there is not enough water to take us forward for two consecutive rainy seasons as per our planning norms. Elsewhere in the country, the bulk water supply sources are under pressure because whenever there is a drought, local sources such as hand dug wells as well as some boreholes dry up. People will then have to rely on bulk water supply sources and this increases demand on those sources. For example, the boreholes that supply Karasburg are yielding less water because of the drought and as a result, water supply to Karasburg is being rationed. The town does not receive its normal volume of water supply. In the Cuvelai, quite a number of hand dug wells are not in a position to supply as usual and both people and livestock are more depended on the bulk and rural pipeline network that is in place.

At the central coastal area, the Omdel aquifer is not supplying the volumes that it used to supply in the past and as a result, there is more reliance on the AREVA desalination plant at Wlotskasbaken. NamWater used to abstract up to 10 million cubic meters of water per annum from the Omdel aquifer. But now it is only allowed to abstract 4.5 million cubic meters per annum by the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry (MAWF) because the Omdel aquifer in the Omaruru river near Hentiesbay has not been recharged for a number of years resulting in the aquifer not being able to supply the normal volume of water. In order to supply water from any aquifer, NamWater or for that matter any other entity that wishes to do so must get a water abstraction permit from the MAWF. As a result, the towns of Hentiesbay, Swakopmund and Arandis have been getting water from the Omdel aquifer and the mines, i.e. Rössing Uranium mine, Langerheinrich Uranium mine and the Husab mine have all been receiving water from the AREVA desalination plant.

Walvisbay has been receiving water from the Kuiseb aquifer in the Kuiseb River. Since the water from the Omdel aquifer is not adequate for the towns of Hentiesbay, Swakopmund

The Congress of South African Trade Union in Rustenburg was surprised and disappointed at the suspension of municipal manager Advocate Bheki Khenisa, Cosatu chairman Maleho Gaonakala said

He said they suspect Khenisa was suspended to make room for the municipality to be looted. Khenisa was suspended at a special council meeting on December 21, on charges relating to unspent conditional grants. Opposition parties did not attend the special council meeting. The municipality had not spent its conditional grants and applied for the money to be rolled over, but national treasury rejected the application

For nearly 8,000 workers and their children, who are reeling under acute water scarcity, the government has provided for just two water tankers

To aggravate their condition, the families say that they haven't received a single drop of drinking water from water tankers since a fortnight. The two water tankers cater to families spread across 500sqkm area of the Little Rann. What's more. The salt pan workers, one of the poorest communities in the state, are shelling out the highest to get water. Some of them are paying as much as Rs 500 to Rs 800 for a 1,000 litre tanker. Shockingly, the reason for such petty supply is being attributed to the inter-departmental squabble over water bill dues. Sources at Gujarat Water Supply and Sewerage Board (GWSSB) said that the industries department has not paid Rs 2 crore water bill charges to GWSSB for the last three years.

Dwindling water level in Wyra a cause for concern

The fast-dwindling water level in Wyra reservoir is a cause of concern for the ayacutdars of the medium irrigation project, which is also a prime source of livelihood for scores of fishermen of Wyra and its neighbouring mandals. The water level in the reservoir continued to hover below seven feet as against its full reservoir level of 18 feet in the middle of rabi season. The fast depleting level in the reservoir is gradually pushing up the demand for replenishing the water body, which is also the major drinking water source for several villages in Wyra and its adjoining mandals.

Cosatu urge Employers must protect high-risk workers during heatwave

The Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) has urged employers in high-risk industries to take extra measures to protect their workers from exposure to the heatwave that is expected this week. On Tuesday, the South African Weather Services issued a heatwave warning for Thursday, saying that the mercury is expected to soar and temperatures will break through 40 degrees in some parts of the country. Cosatu issued a statement on Tuesday saying it was "deeply worried" by the level of risk that workers in certain sectors of the economy face.

Water Scarcity Rises to Top Global Concern

After a year of deep droughts, worsening pollution, rising sea levels, and floods, water was finally recognized as perilous to nations and the international economy. Water is the central character and metaphor in that narrative. Mounting turmoil in the world's water supply is largely the result of the Earth's powerful response to industrial degradation of the past 150 years. In 2015, for example, Texas experienced both its worst drought and most dangerous flooding in memory. The biggest lakes in the world are either drying up or harmed by mounting pollution. São Paulo, Brazil's largest city, is running out of water because of a drought in the normally wet Amazon River basin. Droughts in Zambia and Zimbabwe crippled hydropower production, prompting massive electricity cuts and hindering mining operations

Student registration at Wits University has been suspended for the day following the return of fees protests at the institution.

Student registration at Wits University has been suspended for the day following protests at the institution. Wits Student Representative Council President Nompandolo Mkatshwa spearheaded student protests at the university's Hall 29, where on site registration was meant to take place. She told parents and students that the SRC would not permit any students to register until their demands were met by university management. Mkatshwa said there was a concern among students around an extension of the 0% fee increase

China pledges \$60 billion investment in Africa

China has announced the general outline of its commitments indicating that \$35 billion will go towards preferential loans, export credits, and concessional loans. Another \$5 billion will go to the China-Africa Development Fund, a private equity and venture capital investment arm of the China Development Bank.

Dozens of Ethiopian and Somali migrants die at sea.

Dozens of Ethiopian and Somali migrants have died in the waters of Somaliland, after the vessel in which they were travelling failed mechanically in the course of the voyage and drifted in the sea.

Ahmed Abdi Falay, Governor of Sanag region, said the boat, which had started its journey from the port of Bossaso two weeks ago and was heading to an unidentified port in the Arabian Peninsula, was discovered by the Somaliland Coast Guard.

"They climbed into the boat and were shocked to find the dead bodies of 10 people and 72 others who were in different stages of suffering, some of them in serious condition," he said from the port city of Maydh on Friday.

Germany: Anti- migrant protest turns violent

Demonstrations against Germany's open door policy turned violent in Cologne on Saturday. Police say about 1,300 people attended the rival left-wing protest. They took to the streets after it emerged that perpetrators of the New Year's eve sexual attack on revelers were asylum seekers.

Violent protests erupt in Brazil over transport fares

The new fare which is just under a dollar comes as Brazil's economy is in recession and people struggle with prices that already rose more than 10 percent in 2015. The scenes were reminiscent of protests that rocked Brazil in 2013 sparked by anger over a hike in bus fare.

Kenya: Cholera outbreak kills 10 in world's largest refugee camp

According to the UN High Commissioner for refugees, Osman Yussuf Ahmed, the incident broke out in November in the camp which hosts more than 350,000 people mostly Somalis. Health authorities believe the outbreak was probably caused by a heavy downpour.

Lassa fever kills 40 in Nigeria

The number of deaths recorded from the new outbreak of Lassa fever in Nigeria has risen to 40 with 86 suspected cases, the Ministry of Health announced on Friday

Northern Cape legislature sheds 28 jobs

Out of 187 staffers, 151 will remain in their positions. The general secretary of the legislature, Patrick Moopelwa, said members were consulted and given options. He indicated: "Everyone was approached and there was collective consultation and in the end, staffers settled for severance packages." He also said the employees were put through a skills-audit process, where it was discovered that some positions were redundant and some skills did not meet the criteria.

Trainee Teachers Protest in Morocco

Trainee teachers in Morocco took to the streets to protest two decrees declared by the government.

According to a source, the first decree states the intention to reduce the amount of teachers' scholarship aid by half.

While the second one stipulates that training of teachers should be separated from recruitment, and that at the end of a one-year training program, the trainees will have to sit for an exam in order to be officially hired.

Ugandan journalists and rights activists are facing intimidation from authorities ahead of presidential polls next month.

The government and ruling party officials are threatening the two groups in an effort to limit criticism of the government. Radio journalists, especially those working in local languages, whose listeners are mostly based in the rural areas are the most affected. According to the report, journalists have been suspended under government pressure, and radio stations threatened for hosting opposition members or government critics. Journalists in the country have said that the government's response to political reporting is having a "chilling effect" on their coverage and analysis of political news and is preventing voters from receiving information. Organisations working on human rights, including voter education, have faced visits from police and closure of their public meetings.

outsourced workers are planning to shut down all Pretoria universities and colleges as well as the Tshwane municipality on Monday to protest against outsourcing. Protesters shut down two Unisa campuses over outsourcing and registration fees

BDLive reports that a student and staff protest forced the University of SA (Unisa) to shut two Pretoria campuses on Wednesday due to security fears. Students aligned to the Economic Freedom Fighters and campus workers have accused Unisa management of not being committed to ending outsourcing and of refusing to register students who have no funds. The students want registration to be free and for the university to employ workers directly.

ASA Metals layoffs mean 2 000 jobs at risk at Dilokong chrome mine

2,000 mineworkers and contractors stand to lose their jobs as ASA Metals halts operations at its Dilokong chrome mine near Burgersfort in Limpopo. These latest jobs cuts come amidst thousands of job losses in the sector due to the fall in commodity prices. If ASA's retrenchment plan goes ahead unchanged, only 317 workers would be retained while there will be potential for additional job losses with regards to contractors. ASA has blamed work stoppages in the form of illegal strikes, community protests and section 54 (stoppage) notices under the mine health and safety act for its unsustainable position.

Ethiopia drought prompts global appeals for aid

the UN says the worst drought in 30 years in Ethiopia means 400 000 children are suffering from acute malnutrition and more than 10 million people need food aid. It has appealed for a \$50m cash injection to help the country deal with its worst drought in decades. Save the Children, the international non-governmental organisation, says the drought in Ethiopia represents as big a potential threat to children's lives as the war in Syria.

Globalization allows big companies, like Apple, GE, and AT&T, to build factories in countries with the lowest labour costs, and China used to be their top choice. However, China is losing its dominant position because labour costs in China are not as cheap as before.

Since 2010, manufacturing costs in China have increased about 16% per year, faster than any country in the world. A rapidly aging population and more productive workers are factors in the increase.

A group of Granite State engineers has begun working on a project to bring clean water to a village in Uganda

This will be the first project for the newly formed Engineers Without Borders New Hampshire USA Professionals Chapter. The nonprofit humanitarian organization partners with communities to design and build sustainable engineering projects involving water supply, water treatment, construction, sanitation, energy, agriculture and other needs.

Water scarcity driven by limited rainfall and intense heat have forced desperate residents to buy water from their neighbours in order to survive

Last year Limpopo was classified a disaster area as water resources including rivers, dams and boreholes continued to dry up, driving the province into crisis mode.

The Opposition to Urban Tolling Alliance will expand its fight against e-tolls to include government's alleged misuse of taxpayers' funds

The group that has stood up against e-tolls is widening its scope to challenge poor governance, maladministration and corruption around South Africa. The Opposition to Urban Tolling Alliance (Outa) will expand its fight against e-tolls to include campaigns that will focus on government's alleged misuse of taxpayers' funds, such as the nuclear energy procurement plan, Eskom's tariff hikes and the constant taxpayer bailout at South African Airways (SAA)

More unions have joined the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) in expressing their displeasure with - and possible strike action against - the new tax law amendments signed into law by President Jacob Zuma.

This means all retirement reforms related to tax harmonisation on retirement contributions and benefits will come into effect on March 1 2016. Cosatu regards the legislation as an offence against all working people, who have their deferred wages to look forward to after retirement.

Implication for the head count strategy
implications for what pension funds will be investing in
South Africa approves nuclear power procurement process
implications for head count strategies

South Africa has started a process that could lead to it adding up to 9,600 megawatts of nuclear power to its national grid. The country's department of energy said Sunday that the cabinet had earlier this month given the green light to issue a request for proposals from the nuclear industry, which would be put to the cabinet for approval before a request was issued for formal bids. It gave no time frame for the process but the broader plan to boost nuclear power extends over the coming 15 years.

South Africa's worst drought on record, a plunging currency and debt-burdened consumers are weighing on the country's biggest food producers, who may sacrifice profits in order to keep prices affordable and preserve market share.

The shares of food producers including Pioneer Food Group and RCL Foods have this month fallen to the lowest in more than a year as local prices of key staples such as white corn doubled over the same period while wheat rose 25%. As the worst drought since records started in 1904 decimates food crops, import costs are surging, with the rand losing 30% against the dollar since the start of last year, the worst performer among 16 major currencies tracked by Bloomberg after Brazil's real.

The number of people fleeing Mozambique and seeking asylum in Malawi has increased significantly following clashes between government forces and the opposition
implication on gas projects

Clashes between Mozambique Government forces and the opposition Mozambican National Resistance, or RENAMO, have forced an increasing number of people to flee Mozambique and seek asylum in Malawi over the last few weeks, the United Nations refugee agency cautioned today.

In the village of Kapise, Mwanza district, some 100 kilometres south of Malawi's capital, Lilongwe, registration teams from the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) recorded the arrival of 1,297 people - two thirds of them women and children - with over 900 people awaiting registration. Another 400 new arrivals have been reported in 16 villages located further south in the district of Chikwa

Some eighty Ethiopian migrants have been arrested by Tanzanian authorities in a major crackdown South of the country

The incident happened on the border with Malawi, officials said. Most of the migrants were dehydrated and in a bad condition when they were rounded up, local Police said. Tanzania and Malawi have become key vehicles or dumping grounds for staging posts for people fleeing drought and conflict in countries such as Ethiopia and Somalia, a good number of which may also be trying to enter into South Africa. Last year, some 100 illegal Ethiopian migrants were arrested in a similar exercise. In 2012, forty illegal migrants from Ethiopia were also found dead after they suffocated inside a truck transporting them. A union of teachers and education workers in Ghana has pulled through its threat of striking to express displeasure with government to meet their demand of increasing salaries of public university staff.

Teachers' union in Ghana strike over salary discrepancies

The Teachers' and Education Workers' Union (TEWU) stopped work on Monday, January 18, 2016, as a follow up to Ghana's Fair Wages and Salaries Commission's reluctance to honour its promise of a fair distribution of salaries between junior staff and senior staff of public universities.

UN and Niger have reinstated 99 of the 166 schools closed for more than a year in the southeast of Niger as a result of attacks of Boko Haram,

According to UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Niamey, the program of relocation launched in November allowed "5,913 students, 2,784 boys and 3,129 girls" to resume classes.

However, the execution of the project is handicapped by "persistence insecurity" and "the continuous migration" of people in the region, said the UN agency.

Sierra Leone quarantines more than 100 people after new Ebola case

At the beginning of November, Niger government and Unicef had announced that more than 150 schools with 12,600 pupils were closed because of the attacks of the Islamic group Boko Haram in the Diffa region close to Nigeria.

More than 100 people have been quarantined in Sierra Leone after a new case of Ebola was confirmed in the country. Report claims that the woman who died last week of the disease may have exposed at least 27 others, raising the risk of more cases just as the epidemic appeared to be ending.

Thousands of public sector workers across Ghana joined a nationwide demonstration to protest recent hikes in fuel and utility prices.

Organised Labour, made up of the Trades Union Congress and eight other labour groups and associations had been pushing for a 50 percent increase in salary to help cushion the effects of the recent increase in utility tariff and taxes.

But government in a series of meetings with organised labour justified the increases saying that the tariff is to help fix the erratic power supply situation bedeviling the country.

Leader of the main South African opposition party, Democratic Alliance (DA), Mmusi Maimane, on Tuesday disclosed that he would not tolerate racism in his administration.

THE University of Witwatersrand (Wits) and its student representative council (SRC) have reached agreement on several issues aimed at ending the standoff with management and allowing the academic year to begin.

The university said no student would be financially excluded during the academic year because they were unable to make their first payment. There would also be no interest on the first fee payment for those who indicated that they could not afford the first payment. Students would have to sign an acknowledgement of debt.

The university said it had also agreed to more frequent reporting on progress on in-sourcing services. In addition, the children of those working at the university who qualify would receive free tuition and accommodation. With regard to a minimum wage demand, the university agreed that it was of the "utmost urgency for council to make a decision between the proposed R4,500 and R5,000". Students who owed the university between R1 and R1,000 from last year would have the debt rolled over, a move that affects 3,607 students. Wits and the SRC would work towards clearing the debt of 1,284 students owing up to R5,000. They would approach the provincial government on behalf of 1,418 students owing up to R20,000

a new report warns against a proportionately high number of fraudulent CVs in the job market in South Africa.

Background screening company EMPS said that, for a second consecutive year, the results of its report show that 11.8% of applicants checked have a confirmed criminal record. Further to this, 21% of those with a criminal record have a theft related conviction; over 35% have more than one criminal record; and over 16% have three or more records. A fraction (1%) of applicants checked in 2015 were listed on the SA Fraud Prevention Service Database. Of all the qualifications that were submitted for verification in 2015, 15.7% could not be verified. Of these unverified qualifications, 3.48% were confirmed to be fraudulent.

Nedbank's group economic unit, said on Thursday that the labour market was the greatest cause for concern in the South African economy for 2016.

Barclays to cut 1200 securities jobs

BARCLAYS CEO Jes Staley unleashed a fresh round of cuts at the investment bank that will eliminate 1,200 jobs worldwide and shut securities operations across Asia, people with knowledge of the matter said. The biggest cuts will fall in the Asia-Pacific region including winding up the cash equities business, said the people, who asked not to be identified because the decision is not public.

While Barclays will exit operations in countries including Australia, Taiwan, South Korea and Malaysia, it planned to keep its prime brokerage and derivatives business in Asia, the people said. The bank was also shutting its Russian office and cutting jobs in London and New York, they said.

PEARSON plans to cut 4,000 jobs — 10% of the workforce

PEARSON plans to cut 4,000 jobs, starting a new programme to tackle a decline in earnings caused by slowing demand for textbooks and dwindling college enrolment.

The cuts were equivalent to 10% of the workforce and a majority would be completed by the middle of the year, the London-based firm said yesterday.

Earnings, excluding some items, would drop to 50p-55p a share this year, Pearson said, the second time in three months that its forecast has disappointed investors.

Student finance body to raise budget

THE National Students Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) says it is working on solutions to the higher education funding crisis that led to the #FeesMustFall protests. However, the scheme's efforts have been met with criticism by some who think it could be better run. This comes as mostly Gauteng universities have had to rely on students registering online for the 2016 academic year, following disruptive protests. SFAS chairman Sizwe Nxasana said the body's budget would increase from R9.5bn to R10bn for the 2016-17 financial year.

The eThekweni municipality says it won't be able to sustain itself if Eskom is granted the 16 percent tariff hike it seeks.
University libraries hard-hit by depreciating rand

Subscriptions to international journals run into the millions and the plummeting rand is "crippling" libraries and holding academics back.

10 000 protest new government in Moldova

Lawmakers of the impoverished former Soviet republic on Wednesday approved a new government amid political turmoil, with protesters storming the parliament building and opposition legislators attempting to block the vote.

Durban residents protest against Eskom application

The swearing-in of the new cabinet has exacerbated tensions over alleged high-level corruption in the country of 3.5 million wedged between Ukraine and Romania. a group of about 20 people raised their placards calling Eskom crooks and demanding Nersa reject the power utility's application.

Tunisia protest over youth employment

Demonstrations began in the northern Kasserine region after a man was electrocuted while protesting at being rejected for a government job.

Workers protest over planned Wales estate closure

Scores of sugar workers yesterday demonstrated in front of Public Buildings, protesting the planned closure of the Wales Sugar Estate while expressing skepticism at government's statements that plans are in the pipeline to cushion the impact of the shuttering of the operations. Over 250 persons stood outside, some holding placards opposing the closure. Some of the slogans on the placards included "No study yet Wales closure", "Estate closure lies and more lies", "Who will get the land?" and "Keep Wales, save sugar."

Basic Education Minister Angie Motshekga has called South Africa's education system a "national catastrophe" and a "crisis".

Her spokesperson Elijah Mhlanga says the minister will take harsh steps against under performing officials.

Thousands of demonstrators in Morocco have defied a government ban to march in a tense protest over planned cuts to Morocco's education system.

the Ugandan government has engaged in three new financing treaties with the French embassy in Uganda and the French Development Agency (AFD), totalling €51.7 million.

Two of the financing contracts will be implemented by the Rural Electrification Agency, targeting to accelerate the extension of rural electrification from the national grid to local communities. The villages which stand to benefit from the implementation of the project are in regions of the north-western part in Uganda, Rwenzori areas, the mid-west and southwest.

More than 300 million people in India have no access to grid electricity, and the problem is especially acute in rural communities, which can be difficult and expensive to reach with grid power. At MIT's Tata Center for Technology and Design, researchers are exploring ways to extend electricity access to such communities using microgrids—independent electricity generation and distribution systems that service one village or even just a few houses

Read more at: <http://phys.org/news/2016-01-grid-tackle-rural-electrification.html#jCp>

IRENA & ADFD collaborate in \$46m renewable energy loan

IRENA in collaboration with Abu Dhabi Fund for Development (ADFD) have agreed to provide \$46 million in concessional loans for development of three renewable energy projects in West Africa. The loans will fund a solar project in Burkina Faso, a solar and wind project in Cabo Verde, and a solar project in Senegal - as well as a wind and solar project in the island nation Antigua and Barbuda in the Caribbean.

Nigeria Needs Investment to Increase Its Renewable Energy Output

Energy remains one of the main constraints for economic growth in Nigeria. The lack of reliable access and irregular power supply is a persistent problem affecting businesses across the country. It also discourages foreign investors.

Nigeria sits at the bottom of the table when it comes to delivering power. It ranks 187 out of 189 countries in the world, according to a World Bank business report.

The current output of renewable energy as a percentage of the overall energy mix in the country is very low. The energy mix is largely dominated by oil which makes up 57% and natural gas 36%. Solar power and hydropower represent 13% and 7%, respectively

World Bank endorses financial aid for Liberian energy projects

the World Bank announced that it has endorsed a new funding contract that is worth a total of \$27 million, which will be aimed at fast-tracking access to affordable and reliable electricity in Liberia. The World Bank further stated that the funds are to support the Liberia Renewable Energy Access Project (LIRENAP) in realising its goal of establishing a mini hydropower plant. This project is set to benefit about 50,000 people, small businesses, associations and public institutions in Lofa County through connections to the mini-hydro electric grid. The LIRENAP will be implemented by the Rural and Renewable Energy Agency of Liberia and it would liaise with the Ministry of Lands, Mines and Energy to ensure consistency between the activities financed under this project and the sector policies for decentralised electrification," the World Bank explained

The UK government and government of Sweden have signed an agreement to raise \$67 million to support rural electrification in Tanzania.

The \$67 million to be received by Tanzania has been raised by the Swedish International Development Agency (Sida) and the UK government through its Department for International Development (DFID).

Ethiopia set to build 105 small power dams in five years

The two countries also recently engaged in an understanding in which they would provide Tanzania with a total of Tsh.241 billion (\$11, 107 billion) for the development of energy in the country's villages.

Project implementation sites have already been identified in Oromia, Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples', Gambella, Amhara and Benishangual-Gumuz regional states of the country.

Ethiopia set to build 105 small power dams in five years

The latest rural electrification plan takes into consideration the country's topography which is well suited for hydropower projects on small rivers, Bizuneh Tolcha, Public Relations Director at the Ministry said, adding that the projects target off-grid areas throughout the country.

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The Department of Higher Education's latest list of occupations in high demand lists hundreds of positions ranging from engineers in all fields to educators at all levels and judges.

There are also the usual high number of medical or health professionals in high demand.

Information and communication technology (ICT) continues to remain popular where professionals are in demand, as does the business world.

Managers and technically-skilled people are also keenly sought in almost every field.

Some of the more unusual occupations in high demand in this category include archivists, astronomers and air pollution analysts.

The Solidarity Center and other migrant labor organisations have called on the South African government to urgently intervene and stop severe labor rights abuses faced by thousands of migrants working on farms.

If you're a skilled artisan like a bricklayer, plumber, toolmaker, painter, electrician or fitter and turner, then you're also in big demand

It is said that thousands of Zimbabweans who fled economic meltdown in their country are being mistreated on farms in northern SA. Solidarity Center Country Programs Director Peter Hardie has called on the Department of Labor to do more in protecting undocumented migrants and to ensure that farm owners pay the wages stipulated by the law.

A decision by Uthukela in KwaZulu -Natal municipality in South African, to offer university scholarships to "virgins" has been denounced by feminists and human rights activists as a violation of rights.

People Opposing Women Abuse (POWA) said they were shocked because the move was unconstitutional. Moreover tax payers money was being used to violate the rights of girls.

Zimbabwe has received \$200m from the African Export-Import Bank (Afreximbank) to import much needed grain as the southern African nation grapples with food shortages following a prolonged drought.

Global chief executives and chairs of multinational corporations raised the issue of the change of finance ministers with President Jacob Zuma at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. Issues relating to policy and the need to see them implemented were also raised.

executives, investors and policy makers fretted about the lack of leadership

The week began with WEF founder Klaus Schwab warning that the slump in commodities could multiply the number of refugees seeking asylum in Europe. It ended with Salesforce.com Inc. CEO Marc Benioff lamenting "a leadership crisis" in the face of rapid technological innovations that may worsen the economic prospects of the middle class. More emphasis was put on getting strong leadership with stronger visions

Japan's economy minister has issued a plea for companies to raise wages this spring to smash the "deflationary mindset" that still grips the nation

At Davos forum Russia promises to eliminate its dependence on oil

Low oil prices are helping the Russian government carry out large-scale reforms despite the drastic reduction of foreign investment, said Russian Deputy Prime Minister Yuri Trutnev, the head of the Russian delegation at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland.

“One of the consequences of the crisis in Russia is the devaluation of the national currency, which is not good for the citizens, but is positive for investors,” said Trutnev.

According to the deputy prime minister, Russia currently has the right conditions for attracting investment, it has significantly improved its positions in the World Bank's “Doing Business” ranking and the cost of production in the country is at record lows.

Botswana has maintained its top rating as the least corrupt African country, followed by Seychelles, Rwanda, Mauritius and Namibia which made it into the top 50 least corrupt countries in the world.

South Africa is positioned at 61, on par with Senegal and Lesotho, but behind Ghana, while Egypt, Algeria and Morocco are some of the few African countries ranked as suffering from middle level corruption, although visible efforts are being made to uproot the scourge.

mining companies advise mineral resources department of 32,000 possible job cuts
NUM to engage to try and avoid calamitous Kumba retrenchments
2600 employees

The National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) on Thursday described the impending retrenchment of more than 2,600 workers at Kumba Iron Ore's Sishen mine “a calamity”, which it will “try to avoid”.

The union was reacting to Kumba's announcement that the mining house has commenced with a consultation process in terms of Section 189 of the Labour Relations Act, in terms of which it could lay-off approximately 2,633 employees at the Sishen mine in Northern Cape and also affect 1,300 contractors.

Workers at Free State University demanding insourcing and R10,000 wage

The organisation said it would march from the main campus to the university's council offices to hand over a memorandum to vice-chancellor Professor Jonathan Jansen. It indicated in a statement: “They (workers) will be demanding the implementation of the agreement made late last year after the workers threatened to strike against outsourcing during protests at the university. At the time, the management of the university promised to double the wages of workers from R2,500 to R5,000 with effect from 1st December 2015. But the university has reneged on the agreement to double wages and the task team that has been established to look into 'insourcing' and report back by the end of January has acted unilaterally by extending the time frames and not consulting with workers' representatives.”

Gautrain expansion expected to sustain 9,000 jobs in Gauteng

Gauteng government will boost the capacity of the Gautrain system by purchasing 12 electrical trains at a cost of R3.5 billion to cope with increasing public demand for the service.

Gauteng roads and transport MEC Ismail Vadi said in Sandton on Tuesday: “The capital expenditure of approximately R3.5 billion for additional rolling stock and supporting infrastructure is expected to sustain 9,000 jobs in Gauteng. The total government revenue is expected to increase by an estimated R450 million [as a result of the rolling stock and supporting infrastructure].” Bombela Concession Company has invited suppliers to qualify as short-listed bidders by submitting a compliant document for qualification. Vadi said this was for the design, manufacturing, supply and the maintenance of 48 coaches as well as the design and construction of additional depot infrastructure for the Gautrain system. The maintenance project would be for a minimum of 15 years, although bidders would be able to offer alternative proposals for up to a 35-year contract.

platinum producer Lonmin will continue to review its services and reduce costs, mainly through cutting jobs, as the slide in the price of its main commodity bites further.

The company said labour costs fell R194 million in the last three months of 2015 after it shed 5,077 jobs, or 84.6% of its planned reduction in head count. “Progress continues with the restructuring programme due to the new benchmarked operating model and removal of high cost production to ensure the business remains viable,” Lonmin said in a statement. It is targeting savings of R700 million in 2016.

job losses of more than 1,000 posts at three iron ore mines in the Kathu area of Northern Cape are foreseen as three mining companies announced that they were going to undertake restructuring.

Deon Reyneke, trade union Solidarity's deputy general secretary for energy, said on Wednesday that the union was worried about the wave of retrenchments that has hit the Northern Cape. The mines concerned are Aveng Moolmans as well as the Tau and Khumani iron ore mines, which this week notified trade unions of planned restructuring. The restructuring exercises are expected to affect around 600 employees at Aveng Moolmans, 175 workers at Tau and 250 workers at the Khumani Mine. Reyneke commented: Northern Cape mines are under tremendous pressure and those three mines are not the only ones facing possible retrenchments. The retrenchments will have a tremendous impact on the socio-economic wellbeing of employees in the Northern Cape. Solidarity will therefore do everything in its power to stand by the workers through thick and thin.”

Kumba Iron Ore has embarked on restructuring its flagship Sishen mine, affecting 2,633 of its staff and 1,300 contractor employees. In a bid to address the critical shortage of skills, the Gauteng department of infrastructure and development has committed to a R4.5-million budget for its bursary project.

The project has seen 200 graduates join the department since 2009. "We offer these bursaries in full appreciation of the magnitude of the critical skills shortage we face as a province and country," said Gauteng infrastructure and development MEC Nandi Mayathula-Khoza. The department is looking for students in electrical, civil and mechanical engineering, quantity surveying, and the built environment.

Cosatu calls for total rejection of Eskom's tariff hike application

Nersa is holding public hearings into Eskom's request for increased tariffs. Cosatu said it felt strongly that any tariff hike would further burden an already overwhelmed working class. "Cosatu reiterates its previously expressed views that high electricity tariffs destroys prospects for SMEs, and forces low-income consumers to substitute electricity with dirty energy," spokesperson Sizwe Pamla said in a statement.

Twenty-four migrants have drowned off the Greek island of Samos near Turkey after their boat capsized.

A search is continuing for 11 missing people and 10 others were rescued, the Greek coastguard says.

Sweden expects to expel up to 80,000 asylum-seekers

Children were among the victims, and it was the second migrant boat to sink in as many days. Seven people drowned off the island of Kos on Wednesday. Sweden said it expects to expel up to 80,000 migrants whose asylum requests will likely be rejected, as another dozen people including children drowned off Greece Thursday in a desperate bid to reach Europe.

No Improvement in Corruption Index for Nigeria, South Africa

Transparency International's chair, Jose Ugaz has said that Nigeria still remained in the 136th position in a ranking of corruption in about 170 nations despite its ongoing war on graft. He said that corruption remains a blight around the world. He made the remark after the anti-corruption watchdog released a list of its 2015 corruption perception index. In Sub-Saharan Africa, the report revealed that 40 out of the region's 46 countries showed a serious corruption problem and there was no improvement for continent powerhouses, Nigeria and South Africa.

Japan's economy minister resigns over money scandal, denies bribery

Japanese Economy Minister Akira Amari resigned abruptly on Thursday to take responsibility for a political funding scandal that has rocked the government, but denied having taken bribes.

Nehawu and TUT reach agreement on insourcing

The National Education Health and Allied Workers' Union (Nehawu) and the Tshwane University of Technology (TUT) have reached an agreement that will see the university insource all services currently managed by external service providers. The process will be gradually phased in taking into account that some contracts between the university and some service providers must reach their end point, according to Nehawu. The services that will be fully managed by the university with all employees permanently employed by the institution are the cleaning services, gardening and maintenance services, security services and catering services.

Nigeria Gets \$2.6m UNIDO Support for Rural Electrification

Managing Director for Programme Development and Technical Cooperation Division of the United Nations International Development Organization, UNIDO, Philippe Scholtes has announced a \$2.6 million support fund for rural electricity in Nigeria. Scholtes said the fund was secured for Nigeria from Global Environment Facilities, GEF, to improve its electricity generation in rural communities across the country. He explained that the fund will be used to generate power through small scale hydro power to ensure electricity gets to rural areas in the country.

Stanchart, ICBC China fund US\$98m rural electrification

Two financial institutions, Stanchart Ghana and the Industrial Commercial Bank of China (ICBC), have partnered government to finance a US\$98million electrification project in 556 communities in the Eastern, Northern and Volta Regions.

The move forms part of an extension of electricity infrastructure to support the operation of productive ventures, social projects and activities in the rural areas.

Peru: Rural electrification benefits over 1,300 localities in Cajamarca region

Over 1,300 rural communities of Peru's Northern Cajamarca region benefit from gaining access to electricity services, the Energy and Mines Ministry's Rural Electrification Department (DGER) highlighted. This progress was possible thanks to the works developed by the current administration over the last four years. The projects favored nearly 200,000 inhabitants from several Cajamarca's provinces such as: San Ignacio, Santa Cruz, Cajabamba, San Marcos, Celendin, Cajamarca, San Miguel, Cutervo, Jaen, Contumaza, Chota and Hualgayoc. It must be noted a series of projects were completed in 2015 with the aim of providing electricity to almost 30,000 Peruvian citizens.

Zambia: REA Awards Solar Mini Grid Contract

The Rural Electrification Authority (REA) has awarded a contract worth K6,174,016 to Astor Investments to construct two solar mini-grids in Central and Luapula provinces. Astor Investments, a Chinese construction company, is expected to construct the two projects in Chungwa area of Mumbwa and Lunga districts.

Save the Children is calling on Canberra to "immediately" spend \$20 million towards Ethiopia's drought response.

Failed seasonal rains across much of the Horn of Africa nation compounded by the El Nino effect has caused widespread crop and livestock losses in the agrarian nation. The drought is eroding harvests of everything from corn to sorghum, compounding a food shortage for a country where 30 per cent of the population subsists on less than \$US1.25 (\$1.76) a day. Already sub-Saharan Africa's biggest wheat consumer, Ethiopia will need \$US1.1 billion to buy food for more than 18 million people this year, according to a report by the government and humanitarian partners including the UN. The government estimates 10.1 million people need food aid; roughly 10 per cent of the population while an estimated 400,000 children are at risk of suffering severe acute malnutrition.

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South Africa's mines minister said on Thursday that 32,000 workers in the sector could lose their jobs following a slump in commodity prices due to slowing economic growth in China, the world's biggest metals consumer

Firms in the mining industry which employs more than 400,000 people and contributes around 7 percent to Africa's most industrialised economy, have warned that they have to cut costs and close struggling mines to cope with sinking commodity prices, rising costs and labour unrest.

The National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) said on Sep. 28 that about 22,000 jobs in the industry were under threat and urged the government to intervene to save jobs.

Spanish unemployment figures have experienced their biggest annual fall but unemployment remains at over 20%.

The National Statistics Institute said the number of unemployed Spaniards fell by 12.4% to 4.78 million last year, thanks to a strengthening economy. In the fourth quarter the rate dropped to 20.9% of the workforce, compared with 21.2% three months earlier. The figures, which are better than predicted, are at their lowest level since mid-2011.

Unemployment rate in Pakistan during the present government is the highest in the last 13 years while the educated class is more than twice jobless as compared to the illiterate, the Institute for Policy Reform (IPR) claims quoting the recently released government's Labour Force Survey 2014-15. - See more at: <http://www.thenews.com.pk/print/94628-Unemployment-rate-highest-in-13-years#sthash.wsoXuesg.dpuf>

It added that over one million males aged between 15 to 29 years are neither undergoing education nor searching for a job and thus are perhaps more vulnerable to crime and militancy. - See more at: <http://www.thenews.com.pk/print/94628-Unemployment-rate-highest-in-13-years#sthash.wsoXuesg.dpuf>

Protests over youth unemployment have spread to several towns and cities in Tunisia

Unemployment has worsened since the 2011 revolution, when President Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali was ousted. More than a third of young people are unemployed, with 62% of Tunisian graduates without work according to the OECD.

Protests over youth unemployment have spread to several towns and cities in Tunisia

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nearly 50% of Nigerian graduates are unemployed

The unemployment rate increased to 25.5 percent in 2015, according to South African government statistics.
A total of 41,032 (45.72%) of the 89,755 people who responded to the survey on jobberman.com said they were unemployed graduates

A large group has gathered outside a private hospital in Kempton Park in Ekurhuleni. They are protesting against the death of a man near the hospita
Moroccans protest over public job cuts

Thousands of Moroccan trainee teachers and their families took to the streets of the capital Rabat on Jan. 24 to protest against government plans to cut education jobs, defying an official ban on demonstrations.

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Malawi government has for the second time formally protested to Tanzania over its decision to publish a new map before the two countries have resolved a dispute over the boundaries of Lake Nyasa/Malawi.

The members of Sierra Leone's Inter Religious Council on Wednesday organized a protest march at the Parliament where they presented a position paper on the controversial abortion bill.

The Sudan Women's Solidarity Movement staged a sit-in in downtown Khartoum on Sunday afternoon, "in support of the victims of the incidents in the West Darfur capital El Geneina and other victims of war" in Sudan.

Hundreds of Ethiopians living in South Africa protested Monday outside the Pan-African Parliament (PAP) in Johannesburg, demanding that African legislators help them intervene in stopping alleged human rights violations in Ethiopia.

Ghanaians protest rising fuel and electricity tariffs
Protests Cost The Namibia University of Science and Technology (Nust) N\$90 Million... As University Scraps Registration Fees

Service delivery protest in Theembisa

Paris taxi drivers protesting what they consider unfair competition from rival services such as Uber are joining teachers and other public servants in nationwide strikes.

UMgungundlovu FET protesting the decision taken by the college management to have some course lectures permanently moved to the Northdale campus.

1000s march to protest education cuts in Morocco

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The parents of a primary school in Atlantis, north of Cape Town, have vowed to block any schooling until they are given a date for when they will get a new school building.

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0 000 opposition demonstrators have taken to the streets of Moldova's capital Chisinau, calling for early elections as a political crisis continues to rock the tiny ex-Soviet state.

Service delivery protest in Waterval Boven, Mpumalanga against dirty water

Foreign nationals protest preferential treatment of the SADC foreign nationals by home affairs

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Drought add to Job losses in the Cape

South Africa's state-owned power utility cut supply to five districts with about 116,300 residents after the municipalities failed to pay the company for electricity.

The United States is monitoring Iraq's largest dam for signs of further deterioration that could point to an impending catastrophic collapse, US army officers said

Thousands of homes and businesses have been left without power after being ravaged by Storm Gertrude.

The Joyce Banda-led administration first protested attempts by Tanzania to redraw the border and accused its neighbour of treating it in a way "that creates discomfort and distancing".

The newly published map, which shows the boundaries of the country's newly created regions, has reignited the ongoing dispute over the boundaries on Lake Malawi, which is potentially rich in oil and gas.

The Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST) yesterday reluctantly capitulated to student demands to abolish registration fees, in the process losing out on at least N\$91 million it could have made in registration fees this year.

The decision followed an eleventh hour meeting with higher education minister Dr Itah Kandjii-Murangi, who allegedly directed that the decision to scrap registration fees also apply to the University of Namibia (Unam). By October last year, students owed Unam a total of N\$43 million in unpaid fees.

Last year 13 000 students were enrolled at NUST, with the figure set to increase this year.

Teacher trainees have been protesting the cuts around the country for the past few months, and the response from security forces during some demonstrations has been violent. Riot police were scattered along the route of Sunday's march.

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the protest movement - which includes forces from the left and right that are considered both pro-European and pro-Russian - has stepped up demonstrations since a new government for the impoverished nation was approved on Wednesday.

Western Cape farmers have cut back on dozens of seasonal jobs amid a devastating drought.

Eskom Holdings SOC Ltd. disconnected supply at 7 a.m. in the Northern Cape province municipalities of Dikgatlong, Magareng, Ubuntu, Thembelihle and Renosterberg, it said on its Twitter account. The cuts will continue until 10 a.m. and resume from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m., the Johannesburg-based company said.

The Islamic State (IS) jihadist group seized the Mosul Dam briefly in 2014, leading to a lapse in maintenance that weakened an already flawed structure, and Baghdad is seeking a company to make repairs.

Around 8,500 properties in Scotland have lost electricity and thousands more across Ireland.

Following the November 2015 terror attacks in Paris, the US passed a bill in December denying visa-free entry into the country for people with dual citizenship of Iran, Iraq, Sudan or Syria or those who travelled to any of these countries in the past five years, even if they held passports from one of the 38 countries in the US visa-free travel programme.

Thousands of farmers on Thursday protested in northern Greece against a controversial pension reform that is part of the country's tough economic bailout, police said, Zika virus is spreading rapidly through the Americas leaving researchers scrambling to understand the very basics, including how to prevent, treat and diagnose the emerging mosquito-borne threat.

Germany's coalition partners agreed new measures Thursday to tighten asylum policies in an effort to stem an unprecedented influx of migrants, notably by making it easier to send back arrivals from North Africa and by delaying family reunifications.

Thousands of people took to the streets of Paris and even staged mock executions to protest about the visit of Iranian President Hassan Rouhani.

Zimbabwe-According to the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), over 1.5 million people who make up about 10 percent of the country's total population are facing hunger as crops fail and they have to make do with meager food supplies.

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A shopping list of equipment urgently needed to bring relief to people suffering the effects of the drought, was approved by the eThekweni executive committee this week.

Parts of Nelspruit's townships have been without water as South Africa continues to weather a drought.

More than 15 800 cattle have succumbed to drought as the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) has intervened with \$1 million worth of stockfeeds for supplementary feeding.

Water shortages mean smaller harvest for winemakers
Skills shortages increases

Wits, Unilever to pioneer practical work training for engineering students

The Municipal Infrastructure Support Agency (Misa) aims to release an expression of interest in March, followed by a tender, for a pioneering framework contract in the municipal water and sanitation environment.

Tsipras' government has announced plans to lower the maximum pension to 2,300 euros (\$2,500) from 2,700 euros currently, and introduce a new minimum guaranteed basic pension of 384 euros.

The tough new restrictions are intended to reduce the number of asylum seekers in Germany, which saw an influx of around 1.1 million migrants and refugees in 2015.

Some of it will also help the city's 100 plumbing teams to reduce the amount of water lost through leaks and burst pipes.

The teams deal with up to 400 faults a day, while specialist contractors look for non-visible leaks in the system.

Areas of Nelspruit's KaBokweni township have been without water for three weeks forcing some residents to spend about R1 per litre for water or drink from dirty streams. Illegal water connections, leaks and even theft are allegedly to blame for the water shortages that have left some of the township's almost 31,000 residents without water.

The Division of Livestock and Production Development (LPD) in the Ministry of Agriculture, Mechanisation and Irrigation Development said the most affected areas are Masvingo, Matabeleland North, Manicaland, Midlands and Matabeleland South.

the UK Commission for Employment and Skills has shown the number of positions left vacant because employers cannot find people with the skills or knowledge to fill them has risen by 130 per cent since 2011 – 209,000 in 2015 from 91,000 in 2011.

As part of the flagship initiative, which was supported by statutory body, the Chemical Industries Education & Training Authority (Chieta), 30 Wits Engineering students that had completed their second or third year of study would this year be employed full-time at Unilever's new R1.4-billion Khanyisa plant, on Johannesburg's East Rand.

Through the process, Misa, an agency falling under the Department of Cooperative Governance, aims to award zero-value contracts by July to managing contractors across 20 regions. Print Send to Friend 4 0 Municipalities would then have the option of contracting against the framework contract – where the mark-up is fixed and transparent for three years – with the winning bidder or bidders in their region. They could also sustain those defined contract terms across multiple water and sanitation projects for three years, without having to reissue a tender. Misa CEO Dr Sean Phillips tells Engineering News Online that the concept is designed to make it "easier, quicker and cheaper" for municipalities to procure contractor services for urgent water and sanitation works.

S African citrus farmers' investment paying off as EU exports rise

Three years of intense collaboration between the European Union (EU) and the Citrus Growers Association of Southern Africa (CGA) resulted in record South African citrus exports in 2015. Given that the EU is the biggest export market for South African citrus, the domestic industry continues to invest in measures to ensure the fruit it exports to the EU is free from citrus black spot (CBS).

It is our preference that if you wish to share this article with others you should please use the following link:

<http://www.engineeringnews.co.za/article/s-african-citrus-farmers-investment-paying-off-as-eu-exports-rise-2016-01-25>

Food security will be heavily affected by drought because we will not harvest the yield we expected. In some places, no planting was done while some will have very low yields," Zokwana told reporters

Mali's State-run cotton company will suspend ginning in most regions after unseasonable rains, the latest setback for the West Africa nation's crop in a season hit by unusual weather, the company said

Mali should be in its dry season but two days of heavy rain have drenched crops in the fields and rendered them temporarily unfit for processing, the deputy director of the CMDT cotton company, Abdoulaye Dolo, told national radio on Thursday.

Old Mutual has revealed that it was investing millions of rand on a dairy farm project in a joint venture with the Swaziland government's agencies.

500 cattle would be kept at the farm when operating at full-scale, with the project to be phased in over a three-year period. Asked about the risks of investing in the agriculture sector based on the harsh conditions currently being experienced in much of Southern Africa, Bell said Old Mutual had been investing in agriculture for a while and thus quantified its risks accordingly.

I

China aims to create more jobs, cut poverty by 2020

China is seeking to become what its government calls "a modestly prosperous society" by 2020. The instrument to achieve this will be the thirteenth Five-Year Plan, which starts this year. The plan is to absorb 40-million into jobs at their current locations, move 10-million to new job locations, while the remaining 20-million, not capable of working, would be absorbed by the social security network. The country is seeking, for the first time in its history, to eliminate absolute poverty.

South Africa's score on Transparency International's (TI's) Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) for 2015 was unchanged at 44; however, the country's rank shifted favourably from sixty-seventh to sixty-first, indicating that perceptions around the extent of corruption in the country were stabilising somewhat.

Perennial food shortages in Northern Kenya and some parts of the North Rift could soon be a thing of the past after the World Food Programme (WFP) embarked on a Sh455 million farming project.

Baringo County, will be the first beneficiary of the project, having entered into a two-year agreement to be financed by the Swedish government. Other counties set to benefit from the project are Marsabit, Wajir and Samburu. In the programme, WFP seeks to invest in building farming skills in the four arid and semi arid (Asal) counties.

Botswana is facing a serious prospect of food shortage following severe drought characterised by extreme heat level and limited rainfall which has made it difficult for farmers to plough this year.

According to statistics Botswana Agricultural Marketing Board (BAMB) which buys and store cereals for future use is in short of maize because of less supply. BAMB's annual report indicated that the supply had terribly gone down in the 2014/2015 ploughing season as they managed to get only 239 Metric tonnes (Mt) of maize compared to 13, 669 Mt the previous season.

More than 170,000 Mozambicans hit by acute food shortage

Mozambique's Food and Nutritional Security Technical Secretariat (SETSAN), and the relief agency, the National Disaster Management Institute (INGC) have disclosed that more than 170,000 people in the country's southern provinces of Gaza and Inhambane, are facing acute food insecurity due to the drought which has hit this part of the country, APA can report.

The Cameroonian government has signed a loan agreement estimated at 198 million euros for the construction and operation of a gas plant of 216 megawatt to be constructed in the coastal town of Kribi (south), official sources said on Wednesday.

The partners involved in the project include the African Development Bank (AfDB), the Development Bank of Central African States (BDEAC), Proparco (French Development Agency), the International Finance Corporation (IFC) the Netherlands Development Finance Company (FMO) and a syndication of local banks led by Standard Chartered Bank.

The contribution of AfDB alone amounts to 39.5 million euros and is meant for the construction of 100 km transmission line that will connect the south network (RIS) which is the largest one in the country.

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Indonesia investment in oil and gas in Mozambique until the end of 2015 totalled around US\$180 million, focusing on natural gas, said the Indonesian Ambassador

BHPL plans to drill for natural gas in the Buzi block, located along the Mozambique sedimentary basin to ascertain the potential for hydrocarbons. If prospecting and further exploration are successful, BHPL, which holds 75 percent of the rights to the Block, expects commercial production can begin in 2018.

The World Bank will provide funding of about US\$90 million for agricultural irrigation projects in central Mozambique, announced Rádio Moçambique (RM).

The funding aims to minimise the impact of drought in parts of Manica, Sofala and Zambézia provinces.

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Mozambique university to launch Chinese degree course

The course at Eduardo Mondlane University (UEM) will be conducted through its three-year-old Confucius Institute, an organisation affiliated with China's ministry of education and aimed at promoting Chinese language and culture, according to New China. Xing Xianhong, executive director of the institute, said that the university has taught short courses in Chinese to about 2,000 students, but this will be the institution's first full degree in the language.

Mozambique's National Human Rights Pressure Group on Monday promoted a march in the city of Tete to protest the abduction and murder of people with albinism,

Gabon: Health workers strike over unpaid salaries

Close to a hundred women marched on the streets of Somalia protesting against a recent attack on a Mogadishu restaurant which left 19 people dead.

WHO requests donor support to fix failing healthcare system in Libya

Tunisian Police protesting over salaries

The demonstration was organised after the failure of negotiations with the government on salary increases. A government official said the cost of the pay increases demanded by police would amount to \$480 000, which they cannot afford.

The protest comes after a wave of violent demonstrations against unemployment in that country last week. Tunisia is struggling economically and the worry about jobs, high costs and lack of opportunities is manifesting itself amongst its citizens. Unemployment stood at 15.3 percent in 2015, up from 12 percent in 2010, due to weak growth and lower investment.

Tanzania Starts Implementing Free Education

following parents' positive response to the Fifth Phase Government's commitment to announce the provision of free education in primary and secondary schools starting January this year Sirari Ward Secondary School in Tarime District has been overwhelmed by the large number of students who are supposed to be registered for Form One.

Bird Flu Kills 3.3 Million Birds in 24 States in Nigeria

According to the latest data obtained from the Department of Veterinary and Disease Control of the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, 96 local government areas have recorded the outbreak while estimated 2.5 million birds have been depopulated and buried.

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Zimbabwe is the most corrupt country in southern Africa, with neighbouring Botswana ranking as Africa's least corrupt country, the latest graft perception survey by Transparency International has revealed. South Africa's score remains unchanged.

Read the original article on Theafricareport.com : Zimbabwe most corrupt country in southern Africa, Botswana Africa's least corrupt | Southern Africa

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The Congress of South African Trade Unions says it is deeply disappointed but not shocked by the "inconsiderate" decision by the South African Reserve Bank's Monetary Policy Committee to increase the repo rate by 50 basis points.

South Africans labour laws have led to massive job losses in the agricultural sector in the past 20 years, a report by the International Labour Organisation said.

The report was commissioned by Parliament's Portfolio Committee on Labour following the violent farmworkers' strike in the Western Cape in 2012. The report found that the job losses and casualisation of workers was an unintended consequence of South Africa's labour laws. The ILO also found that the laws had triggered a surge in farm evictions. The ILO warned lawmakers that a ban on labour brokers would exacerbate an already dire situation in the agriculture sector, as the brokers played an important role in providing seasonal workers to the sector.

The Minister of Environment and Tourism Pohamba Shifeta says there is a great need for the exploration of sustainable alternative sources of potable water for both human consumption and economic activities.

He said the lack of readily available water in the interior of the country limits prospects for economic growth.

Studies have shown that water availability in Namibia will diminish under climate change and in this regard a decrease in run-off and a reduction in groundwater recharge is expected by 2020. Thus putting the country in an absolute water scarcity dilemma, he said.

The Johannesburg Labour Court has found that the SA Police Service's employment equity plan from 2010 to 2014 was unlawful, trade union Solidarity said

The court ruled that the SAPS's employment equity plan amounted to a quota system and therefore contravened the Employment Equity Act and the Constitution. After fighting the matter for just over 10 years, Solidarity said the ruling would have a bearing on the outcomes of 12 other discrimination cases they had filed against the SAPS since 2005.

The World Economic Forum's Global Risks Report 2016 rates the failure of climate change mitigation and adaptation as the risk that could have the greatest impact on business over the next ten years, while also highlighting the increasing interconnectedness business risks. For drinks companies, Ben Cooper writes, it is the strong link between climate change and water scarcity that is among the most pressing concerns

Somaliland is facing its worst dry spell with the prevalent drought conditions in some parts of the country have been termed as severe and urgent action is needed sooner rather than later in order to avert a humanitarian crisis of unmanageable proportion with attendant human sufferings

The availability of water in Arab countries is steadily dwindling due to the rapid increase in population. There is a real need to sign new international agreements on the conservation of our water supply, conduct research, and find viable solutions to this issue

The UAE has paid close attention to this growing concern, and has worked diligently to take all the necessary steps to rationalise our water usage for both irrigation and drinking purposes. We have taken critical steps towards finding alternative ways of compensating for our growing lack of water in the country, specifically through means of desalination and sewage treatment for the purpose of irrigation.

Finance Minister Pravin Gordhan shocked the ANC lekgotla with his proposal to reduce social spending as a government cost-cutting measure.

Insurance Bill in Parliament seeks to regulate microinsurers

THE Insurance Bill, tabled in Parliament on Friday, will introduce a regulatory framework for microinsurers and a consolidated legal framework for the prudential supervision of insurers, the bill's memorandum says.

The bill introduces a new solvency assessment and management regime to ensure the financial soundness of insurers, a framework for the supervision of insurance groups and enhanced arrangements for reinsurance.

Brazil's government on Thursday said it would offer \$20bn worth of special loans to stimulate the recession-stricken economy.

It would extend credit lines of up to 83-billion reals (\$20.4bn) for farming, housing and infrastructure and for small and medium-sized companies, Finance Minister Nelson Barbosa said.

Hundreds of people angry at the installation of prepaid meters blocked roads and damaged infrastructure at an Eskom service centre in Zola

Service delivery protest at Lusikisiki Eastern cape

Service delivery protest in Linesia

service delivery protests in the Chamdor area of Krugersdorp

Wal-Mart to give pay raises to most of its workers

Most of Wal-Mart's U.S. employees will get raises as part of the world's largest retailer's previously announced commitment to invest in its workforce. Wal-Mart, which announced in October that it would invest \$2.7 billion in its workforce over two years, said more than 1.2 million U.S. hourly workers will receive pay increases.

Iranians held mass protests on Friday across the Islamic Republic, angered by Saudi Arabia's execution of a Shiite cleric that has enflamed regional tensions between the Mideast rivals.

Typhoid outbreak in Harare

Health officials in Zimbabwe's capital, Harare, have detected several cases of typhoid fever in the past week, adding to fears that a water crisis will fuel the spread of infectious diseases.

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Cases of Typhoid reported in South Africa
Drinking water facility benefits 150 Dhirol villagers

To address the water crisis in rural areas facing acute water shortage during summer, Tata Steel has installed a drinking water supply system that comprises a deep bore well, an overhead tank and eleven stand posts in Dhirol village of Potka block. More than 150 households in Dhirol village will benefit from installation of the drinking water supply system.

As Venezuelans stockpile water in their homes, health officials warn, they risk fueling an expansion of the mosquito population, and with it the transmission of Zika, the mosquito-borne virus blamed for causing brain damage in babies

Venezuela, which hardly needed another problem to add to its triple-digit inflation and plunging oil revenues, has registered 4,700 suspected cases of Zika since the virus, which originated in Africa, began sweeping through Latin America last year.

As Venezuelans stockpile water in their homes, health officials warn, they risk fueling an expansion of the mosquito population, and with it the transmission of Zika, the mosquito-borne virus blamed for causing brain damage in babies

Cosatu KZN march against new tax laws

The trade union federation is against the new tax law the 'Tax Administration Amendment Bill' signed into effect by President Jacob Zuma last month.

DEVASTATING drought and dwindling water resources, coupled with poor management of boreholes, threaten the country's underground water

Desperate farmers are drilling boreholes to extreme depths, some beyond 500m. But water and borehole experts say these depths are excessive, with the average extent varying between 60m and 150m.

African Farmers Association president Mike Mlengana said: "We have farmers drilling beyond 500m ... and that is on Gauteng's East and West Rand. They hit water, but if they are lucky it lasts two days, then it dries up. The levels being drilled are unprecedented."

Free State farmer James Tolmay said while he had a good supply of borehole water, his neighbours had big problems

Water Scarcity Negatively Impacts Economic Growth in Namibia

He said the lack of readily available water in the interior of the country limits prospects for economic growth. Studies have shown that water availability in Namibia will diminish under climate change and in this regard a decrease in run-off and a reduction in groundwater recharge is expected by 2020. Thus putting the country in an absolute water scarcity dilemma, he said. The Namibian government, in collaboration with the climate technology centre network and the council for scientific and industrial research, has developed a two-year joint research and development project to prioritise, support and strengthen the funding of technologies to address the water scarcity problem with a view to finding a long-term sustainable and comprehensive solution to water shortages.

a Mauritius firm that has signed a Rwf37 billion (\$48.8 million) rural electrification agreement with Rwanda, is under pressure to meet its obligations as the country's own power deadline to double the number of power connections comes closer.

The government is under pressure to double electricity connections from 24 per cent to 70 per cent by 2018, with part of the funding coming from donors.

Solar sources and mini-hydroelectricity plants in the country are expected to contribute 22 per cent of off-grid connections.

However, the latest information from the Ministry of Infrastructure shows that only one per cent of households have off-grid solar power systems.

Kenya transmission infrastructure struggling to meet demand

managing director of the Kenya Electricity Generating Company (KenGen), Albert Mugo, stated that efforts to boost power generation in the country will mean nothing without an upgrade of the ailing transmission infrastructure. According to Mugo, KenGen added an additional 360MW to the grid around five months ago with an extra 370MW expected to come online in the near future. He stressed that as long as old, faulty power lines exist, power outages will remain, Standard Digital News reported.

China empowers a million Ethiopians

There are about 60,000 Chinese living in Ethiopia who are involved in everything from telecommunications to railways, and employing or partnering with up to one million Ethiopians.

Ethiopian Koka Power Transmission Near Completion

The Ethiopian Electric Power is going to connect Koka Power Station to its transnational electric power transmission project by February, 2016. The 230kV transmission project will be connected with electric lines that go from Dire Dawa to Djibouti. The project which began in 2011 is 99pc complete and will have 352km of length of lines starting from Koka station.

World Bank approves 459MW gas-fired Nigerian Azura IPP

The World Bank has announced its approval to support the development of the 459MW gas-fired Azura Independent Power Project (IPP) to be located in the remote area of Benin City in Edo state, Nigeria. The Bank stated that its Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA), a political risk insurance and credit enhancement arm of the World Bank Group, has approved its support towards the development of Azura-Edo IPP. The project has now attained its financial close.

Power generation has begun at the US\$156 million 120-MW Itezhi Tezhi hydropower project on the Kafue River on Zambia's Kafue River, according to Itezhi Tezhi District Commissioner, Hendrix Kaimana.

The powerhouse has two 60-MW Kaplan turbines, and the project will provide renewable energy for national consumption and export, according to the European Union Africa Infrastructure Trust Fund. The organization also said Itezhi Tezhi will help reduce the amount of fossil fuels used for power in the Southern African Power Pool and in Zambia.

Kenya's Kajiado Wind Power Deal to Boost Green Energy Supply

China Machinery Engineering Corporation has entered into a contract with Kipeto Energy Limited for construction of a 102 megawatts wind power plant in Kajiado county and a 220kV transmission line. The Chinese firm will design, supply, carry out civil engineering and construction, commission and provide technical services for the project, on a turnkey basis which gives it freedom to procure materials on its own without involving the local company. The contract value is Sh22.5 billion. The project will be implemented in a period of 22 months from commencement of construction.

Uganda's electricity distributor Umeme to Spend Shs8 Billion on Replacing Electricity Poles

Electricity distributor Umeme is to spend Shs7.8 billion to replace 9,000 power poles on electricity distribution across select districts in the country. The poles, which are over 28 years old and rotting, are blamed for some of the unplanned power outages because in event of rain, such poles can easily fall.

CONSTRUCTION of the proposed Batoka Hydro Power Plant, joint project between Zimbabwe and Zambia will commence in 2017 following completion of feasibility studies this year.

Energy and Power Development Minister Samuel Undenge, who is the current chair of the Zambezi River Authority, told journalists this afternoon that once complete, the Batoka Dam would produce relatively cheaper hydro-electricity for the two countries.

Nigeria is turning Unemployed Youths to Entrepreneurs

n associate professor at the Department of Sociology, Monash University, South Africa, Professor Alex Asakitiki and his wife, Aretha, also a lecturer at the Department of Linguistic and Communication Study, Osun State University, Osogbo, have disclosed that they are presently training some unemployed youths because of their determination to help the youths to discover their potentials and become successful in life. The determination prompted the couple to initiate a project christened Kainosprojects through which they have been training youths in Nigeria and South Africa on creative business ideas and other developmental initiatives with focus on reducing unemployment by turning jobless youths to entrepreneurs.

To promote youth employability in the Middle East and Africa, Microsoft has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Udemy, a marketplace for online learning and teaching.

The MoU commits the parties to share skills-based course offerings available through the Udemy platform on "YouthWorks," a regional network of youth employability portals led by Microsoft and Silatech. Despite improving economic conditions, youth unemployment remains daunting in the MENA region and beyond. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) estimated youth unemployment in MENA at 28.3% in 2012 and expected that number to top 30% by 2018. World Bank data shows current youth unemployment numbers at 38% in Egypt and over 33% in Jordan. Despite being a leading economy in sub-Saharan Africa, South Africa has one of the highest levels of youth unemployment in the region, with almost 54% of youth unemployed.

Algeria's Unemployment Rate Up By 11.2 Percent in September 2015

Algeria's unemployment rate reached 11.2% in September 2015 against 10.6% a year earlier, while the rate of unemployed young people from 16 to 24 is close to 30%, the National Office of Statistics (ONS) told APS on Monday. Out of a working population of 11.932 million people, the employed population is estimated at 10.595 million people, while the unemployed population reached 1.337 million people. The rate of unemployed young people between 16 and 24 increased to 29.9% in September 2015 against 25.2% in the same month of 2014. The rate of jobless women is more important than that of men: 9.9% for men against 16.6% for women. Unemployment rate is estimated at 11.9% in urban areas (10.7% for men against 15.9% for women) and at 9.7% in rural areas (8.3% for men against 18.8% for women).

Protests in Haiti continue as supporters from the opposition and the government back calls for an end to the ongoing crisis in the Caribbean nation.

Among other demands, they are calling for elections to be held in the country with a new date for the presidential run-off set up. Outgoing president Martelly is due to leave office on February 7 but has argued that he will only do so when a clear path succession is identified.

As the Zika Virus continues to spread in Latin America, Colombia is battling to eradicate it.

According to statistics from the country's national health institute, 20,297 people have tested positive to the mosquito-transmitted virus. In one of the hardest hit cities eastern border with Venezuela, they are fighting back. Cucuta city, launched an educational and fumigation campaign.

Thousands of protesters in the Haitian capital Port-au-Prince have returned to the streets demanding that the Organisation of American States (OAS) does not interfere in its embattled elections.

President Michel Martelly whose term in office comes to an end on February 7, during the week called on the OAS to help resolve the political crisis in his country. The OAS delegation expected in Haiti on Sunday, January 31 is to lead discussions that will help the Haitians reach an agreement on the conduct of the second round of polls which have been indefinitely postponed. But the protesters say the international organisation is playing into the hands of the outgoing President who had requested their involvement. They also accuse the OAS of being behind all the chaos that has rocked the country since its birth. Many were of the opinion that if the the legislative elections were nullified by the court because of irregularities, then the same should have applied to the Presidential results that were marred with numerous discrepancies.

Hundreds of people protested in the capital of Central Africa Republic calling for nullification of the first round results of the Presidential election.

Kenya-Nigeria agree on visa deal to bolster trade

This move by the two states will bolster bilateral ties as well as spruce up business opportunities between the two countries. Now, there will be free entry for businessmen from both states as opposed to paying a visa fee on arrival.

Gabon: Health workers strike over unpaid salaries

The Gabonese government is under pressure from health workers across the country over unpaid salaries. The strikers are demanding unpaid premiums, higher wages and better working conditions. The government has not budged.

More than 10,000 unaccompanied refugee and migrant children have disappeared in Europe, the EU police agency Europol said on Sunday, fearing many have been whisked into sex trafficking rings or the slave trade.

The number relates to the last 18-24 months. The agency's chief of staff Brian Donald said the vulnerable children had disappeared from the system after registering with state authorities following their arrival in Europe.

Bus strike in Durban reason not known

The Eastern Cape has kept the lights on in four defaulting municipalities by paying Eskom with money meant for building water infrastructure in an area now devastated by drought.

the municipality, which was due to have got the money to build a dam, declared a state of disaster due to the drought, saying it needed R188 million to pay for drinking water.

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Quality of SA's drinking water falls 8 percent in two years

After several delays, the Water and Sanitation Department has released the 2014 Blue Drop Report on the quality of drinking water in South Africa. Drinking water quality fell by 8-percent between 2013 and 2014. Alarmingly, only 44 of 1,036 systems achieved the blue drop status of excellence. Although Gauteng is the best performing province, even its water quality declined by 6%. Limpopo has the worst water quality in the country. Mpumalanga is the only province whose water grade improved.

Cosatu may win tax battle

Cosatu was given a sympathetic reception at the ANC's national executive committee (NEC) meeting that ended on Wednesday, which would explain the cautiously optimistic tone adopted by federation leaders post the gathering

The National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (Numsa) says it's moving ahead with preparations to form a new labour federation in direct opposition to Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu).

South32 announced major restructuring plans for its South African manganese division, which included laying off 620 employees

Samancor Manganese is the joint venture between South32 and Anglo American and the world's largest producer of manganese, largely used in the making of steel and aluminium. It has operations in SA and Australia.

Mining at the South African operations was halted in November 2015. South32 said on Thursday that mining would resume but at a substantially reduced rate with output 22% below capacity.

The Department of Labour (DOL) has launched an investigation into the salaries of taxi drivers and rank marshals and has called on taxi industry workers to make submissions.

DOL spokesperson Mokgadi Pela said public hearings would soon begin to set the new wages. He went on to say: "The taxi drivers complain about the long hours they work, that they are not paid properly and there is no compliance with sectoral determination on the part of operators. They (taxi drivers) also say they have no contracts, no deductions for the unemployment insurance fund and no pay slips. They have appealed to the Minister [Mildred Oliphant] to assist."

food prices in SA rose by an average of 8.7% between December 2014 and December 2015.

The food basket survey released on Wednesday by the Markets and Economic Research Centre (MERC) showed that prices have exceeded the inflation rates of the consumer price index (CPI). Agri SA economist Wandile Sihlobo said the food price increases "put a challenge on the affordability of food" and would make it difficult for poor people especially to afford food. Neighbouring Lesotho on Wednesday declared a national emergency as the drought continued to hit farming communities across the southern African region. The food basket consists of, among other things: basics such as meat, margarine, baked beans, chicken portions and vegetables. The survey said the most affected items were basic food products that the poorest of the poor required for their sustenance and nutrition. During the period, fats and oils rose by 15.8 percent, bean products by 1.5 percent, dairy and eggs by 8.6 percent, vegetables by 11.2 percent, coffee and tea by 5.3 percent) and bread and cereals by 9.5 percent.

the government is blamed for the mass production of inadequately skilled and unqualified nurses in the country by closing nursing schools.

according to nurse and chief executive officer of Jubilee Hospital in Hammanskraal, Tiny Magano, the closing of nursing colleges led to a sharp drop in the standards of nursing as it opened a gap in which unscrupulous colleges and bogus training institutes mushroomed. In recognition of the failure to produce qualified nursing staff due to the closure of government training institutions, President Jacob Zuma made an undertaking to revitalise 105 colleges countrywide in his 2011 State of the Nation Address. "But nothing has come of this," the Democratic Nursing Organisation of SA (Denosa) Simon Hlungwani has claimed.

the Labour Minister, Mildred Oliphant, has increased the minimum wage for farmworkers and labourers in the forestry sectors by just under R1 for an hour's work.

In a statement on Wednesday, the department said the wages would increase from R13.30 an hour to R14.25 an hour. Monthly wages would go up from R2,772.33 to R2,778.83. Weekly workers would be entitled to R641.32 and those who worked one nine-hour-day would receive a daily wage of R128.26. The changes will come into effect on 1 March.

Pikitup workers embarked on illegal strike

SOUTH Africa's Chamber of Mines (CoM) warned a further 8% hike in Eskom's electricity tariffs could cost up to 40,000 jobs in the gold and precious metals industries and would merely reward Eskom for operational and budgetary failures.

"Given that many operations are currently operating at a loss or at a very marginal profit, the chamber estimates that Eskom's proposed electricity tariff increase of 16.6% would jeopardise an additional 20,000 of the 119,000 jobs remaining in the gold sector, and another 20,000 of the 189,000 jobs in the platinum sector," said Roger Baxter, CEO of the CoM in a statement.

More than 50 Port Elizabeth schools closed because of teacher shortage

A report-back meeting was held on Monday night, but education officials stayed away as they had been warned the meeting could turn against them. It was left to the Northern Areas education forum to inform parents that they would get only half the number of teachers they had asked for. The parents voted to keep the schools closed in protest and now they want the forum's representatives to step down. Parents say they will begin mass action next week unless the education department gives in to their demands.

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South Africa's Grain SA has lowered its estimates for maize imports to about 3.8 million tonnes. The body had earlier given an estimate of 5 million tons based on a government forecast.

South Africa's government hopes to produce 7.44 million tonnes of maize this year.

Previous estimates were linked to the El Nino weather pattern.

Maize production in the country has been affected by serious drought.

Grain SA, a voluntary association of grain farmers established to represent the interests of its members, said the change in the imports estimate was due to the higher-than-expected forecast of maize that the government expects to reap this year.

At least 33 people have died in the recent outbreak of a variant strain of pneumococcal meningitis in Ghana.

Official figures from Ghana's Health Ministry indicate that the Brong Ahafo region, in the middle of the country, where the recent outbreak started has recorded 153 cases. The figures may however change with time.

Pneumococcal meningitis is caused when the meninges bacteria invades the bloodstream and infects the membranes protecting the brain and the spinal cord.

South Africa must formally declare a national disaster for the government to release relief funds to help farmers through the worst drought in a century, the country's largest grain producer group said on Wednesday

With five out of nine provinces labelled disaster zones due to drought, the country now needs to acknowledge the situation nationally as farmers are starting to capitulate, Grain SA Chief Executive Jannie de Villiers told Reuters.

FS municipalities owe Eskom R842m, face blackouts

If Free State municipalities do not settle their debt or make sustainable payment arrangements with Eskom, they will soon face blackouts, the power utility has warned. About eight municipalities in the Free State owe Eskom almost R842-million. Print Send to Friend 0 1 Eskom has already served notices to the municipalities and said it would exercise its right to disconnect the supply of electricity by March 30. The municipalities in debt include: Nketoana, Masilonyana, Tokologo, Manstopa, Ngwathe, Dihlabeng, Nala and Phumelela.

To further revitalise the agricultural and agroprocessing value chain, Rural Development and Land Reform Minister Gugile Nkwinti will, this weekend, host a workshop with 1 000 AgriParks advisory committee members from 44 districts.

This formed part of the of government's nine-point plan to ignite economic growth, which comprised simultaneous actions in key strategic areas, at a scale large enough to constitute a "big push". Print Send to Friend 1 0 The Minister would also discuss his department's land reform and rural development programme. The 15-year AgriParks initiative, for which a R2-billion budget had been allocated for 2015/16, sought to create jobs, generate revenue and empower women and the youth through the establishment of farming activities in rural areas.

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Zika virus spreads via transfusion - Brazil health official

Two people in southeastern Brazil contracted the Zika virus through blood transfusions, a municipal health official said on Thursday, presenting a fresh challenge to efforts to contain the virus on top of the disclosure of a case of sexual transmission in the United States.

The iSimangaliso Wetland Park Authority signed a R10-million contract last month with local tailings storage facility specialist Cyclone Engineering Projects to remove about 100 000 m3 of dredge spoil obstructing the natural course of the uMfolozi river, in KwaZulu-Natal.

Dredge spoil was artificially deposited in the natural course of the river to separate it from the St Lucia estuary to protect the estuary from silt inflows. This significantly reduced freshwater flowing from the uMfolozi river, the largest of five rivers entering the estuary. It also interfered with the natural regulation of opening and closing the estuary mouth. The impacts of this approach are still evident. With current rainfall levels the lowest in 65 years, the lake system has compartmentalised. Presently, only about 30% of the lake's surface area has water and species recovery is slow.

Zimbabwe declares disaster in drought-stricken areas

Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe has declared a state of disaster in most rural parts of the country severely hit by a drought, with 26 percent of the population said to be in need of food aid, the government said in a statement late Thursday.

Declaring a state of disaster allows international donors to raise money quickly to provide food aid to Zimbabwe, which has said it will step up imports of the staple maize by buying up to 700,000 tonnes this year to avert hunger.

Gauteng Infrastructure Development MMC Matshidiso Mfikoe says she believes using boreholes is one of the ways to address water shortages in the province.

Mfikoe says the City of Johannesburg is supplying water to over four million residents and demand is exceeding supply.

She's called on residents to enquire whether they'll be able to drill a borehole on their premises.

"Areas that have bigger yards... we realised during the water shortages last year that we are using our portable water for irrigation so we encourage you to explore the option."

A number of Gauteng schools still without running water

The Gauteng Education Department has revealed a number of schools in the province are still without running water and as a result are currently making use of temporary toilets.

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Government has proposed an increase in water tariffs which will likely be implemented in 2017.

The hike would follow a three-tiered model for water prices. The first would provide free water to the poor, the second would provide water at a reduced cost and while the third tier will be for those who can afford water and may need to reduce their usage. Government says the measures will ensure sustainable supplies and help address infrastructure challenges.

Residents have reacted with outrage to the City of Cape Town's intention to hand out harsher fines to water-wasters, many saying the City itself was doing very little to prevent the irreplaceable resource from being wasted.

The City has imposed a 20 percent water restriction on consumers and those exceeding these new limits will see their water bill increase by 20 percent. The City is also preparing to increase its fines for people breaking the water by-law.

The City Council has said that water restrictions in the city could remain in place well into next year as other municipalities in the Western Cape moved to join it and Stellenbosch in limiting supplies.

The Drakenstein municipality announced it was restricting its water supply to residents, and the West Coast municipality is expected to follow suit, as town councils feel the pressure of keeping the taps running after a dry winter.

Cape Town extracts 99.5 percent of its water from six dams – Wemmershoek, Steenbras Lower, Steenbras Upper, Voëlvele, Theewaterskloof and Berg River – which are only around 46 percent full.

Minister of Energy and Minerals, Sospeter Muhongo, has stated that the third phase of rural electrification is on the cards for Tanzania

about 5,900 out of 15,290 villages equivalent to 33% have been connected to electricity through the REA rural electrification projects. Muhongo said the remaining villages lined up to get power during implementation of the third phase are scheduled to take off soon. The minister said the expansion could only be implemented after the Rural Energy Agency has presented an implementation report of the first and second phases, which will in turn indicate the roadmap to the third phase.

Muhongo said the report on the REA projects will be discussed at a meeting to be held between the 6th and 7th of February 2016.

The U.S. has committed to provide more than \$7 billion in financial support. Direct funding to expand energy infrastructure projects include loan guarantees, direct loans, technical assistance, risk mitigation insurance, direct grants to African governments for energy projects and working capital loans for U.S. exporters.

The Obama administration launched Power Africa in 2013 as arguably the U.S. government's flagship energy initiative in Africa. The plan draws on the resources of 12 government agencies to advance energy sector reforms, expand energy access and boost electricity generation capacity from renewable energy sources. Since the launch of Power Africa, the African Development Bank, the World Bank Group and the Swedish government have committed an additional \$9 billion in support. According to the Power Africa road map the original \$7 billion has leveraged an additional \$43 billion from a wide range of public and private sector partners. The initiative is aimed at To add more than 30,000 megawatts of clean and efficient electricity generation in all of sub-Saharan Africa and to increase electricity access by adding 60 million new home and business connections.

French venture capital fund, Total Energy Ventures (TEV), a division of French multinational integrated oil and gas company, Total, is seeking to invest in solar energy solution start-ups, Off Grid Electric and Powerhive. The companies, which have a large Africa-focus, are both involved in deploying clean power solutions to emerging markets and communities that are living off-grid or have limited access to the grid.

Uganda's solar Co secures land for a power plant

In East Africa, solar power solutions provider Emerging Power Uganda said that it has been granted a 25-year lease agreement by the Basoga Kingdom. The agreement will allow Emerging Power Uganda to own a 100-acre piece of land in Mayuge for the development of a solar PV power plant worth Sh102 billion (\$295.2 million). Busoga Kingdom permanent secretary, Gideon Ronald Lubaale told the Daily Monitor that the solar company will under the agreement be subject to pay annual rent of Sh15 million (\$4,341). According to local media, the Electricity Regulatory Authority (ERA) is currently reviewing Emerging Power Uganda's application for a licence to generate power using solar PV technology. Reveche revealed that during construction, the project will employ about 50 fairly-skilled workers.

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In other energy news in East Africa, Kenya Power together with the Rural Electrification Authority (REA) have released statistics indicating that the project of connecting the country's primary schools is nearing completion.

The Akon Lighting Africa initiative will be presenting their project at Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week (ADSW), the Middle East's largest gathering focused on sustainability, next week.

the African Development Bank (AfDB) granted a \$136 million (ZAR2 billion) loan to the Gambia River Basin Development Organization (OMVG) in order to facilitate the expansion of electricity access and provide renewable, clean and affordable energy in The Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau and Senegal, the Bank said in a statement.

A US-based biomass technology firm, Entrade, and Stockholm-born turnkey power provider, Pamoja Cleantech, have teamed up to deploy 100 micro-power units to rural communities in Uganda. The power systems, which have the capacity to perform as a base-load power source, are fuelled by agricultural waste

Ford plans 'hundreds' of jobs cuts across UK and European operations
The \$200m cost-saving plan targets admin staff

Botswana: Govt Addresses Water, Electricity Supply Shortages

The radio station reported that so far, wiring works have been completed in 4,591 schools, which are awaiting inspection by Kenya Power before being switched on, while metering is being done on 630 primary schools.

The project aims to bring solar powered electricity to 600 million Africans. The company's efforts have to date been active in 14 countries on the continent.

According to the bank, electricity access in Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, The Gambia and Senegal is estimated at 12%, 19%, 35% and 60% respectively.

With low electrification rates a key concern for economic growth and development, the goal of the OMVG Energy Project is to increase these figured to 20%, 65%, 42% and 75% respectively by 2020.

Following a successful pilot programme, Pamoja has announced to bring carbon neutral power to 30,000 people and 15,000 farmers in rural Uganda.

Peik Stenlund, Director of Pamoja Cleantech AB commented: "Entrade's technology will bring 24/7 base-load power to the people of Uganda, establishing a micro-grid that solar can be a part of when available. We are very impressed with the impact this technology will have for the people in Africa."

This initiative has been financially supported through partnerships with the World Bank, the United Nations Business Call to Action and the Nordic Climate Fund through a partnership with Norges Vel.

Botswana: Govt Addresses Water, Electricity Supply Shortages

The Minister of Finance and Development Planning, Mr Kenneth Matambo says all projects for water and electricity will be accorded high priority in the allocation of the budget.

Delivering the 2016/17 budget speech to the National Assembly yesterday, Mr Matambo said water and electricity were key inputs into the country's economic activities.

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The Rwandan government has partnered with Ignite Power to provide rooftop solar to 250,000 households by 2018.

The initiative expands on a successful pilot that started in 2014. Rwanda has a goal of bringing electricity to 70 percent of households by 2018, an increase from about 20 percent in 2014.

Ignite Power will provide the financing for the \$50 million project, according to Climate Action. Customers will pay on average about \$5 per month for a rent-to-own model in which they will get a solar system that can power some lights, a radio and a television, and cell phones.

Cosatu has raised concerns about what it says is a campaign to de-legitimise its affiliate unions.

Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) has raised concerns about what it says is a campaign to de-legitimise its affiliate unions through laws and the premature release of sensitive reports.

The federation is unhappy with the leak of a basic education task team report on the alleged sale of government teacher's jobs by members of South African Democratic Teachers Union (Sadtu).

Cosatu and the Cape Chamber of Commerce have called for the Public Investment Corporation (PIC) to invest in job creation projects instead of focusing on profits

The two organisations made the call in Parliament on Wednesday during public hearings on extending the benefits for the Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF).

The portfolio committee on labour, which is holding public hearings on the Unemployment Insurance Amendment Bill, said the Bill was aimed at accommodating people and increasing maternity benefits for those who were excluded in the past, including women who had miscarriages and students doing learnerships.

Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) has warned workers not to expect an announcement about the implementation of a national minimum wage due to the stark differences that remain between labour and big business

Cosatu's Bheki Ntshalintshali has laid the blame for the lack of progress on a national minimum wage at the doorstep of big business. He says next weeks' State of the Nation Address is unlikely to feature good news on the talks. Labour expert and chairman of one of the sessions at the symposium, Dr John Reynolds, says the problems have been caused by differing estimations. "Business and treasury have used a very conservative model. The model that was developed, for example, for the national minimum wage research initiative has shown that 74,000 would not have adverse consequences." While business has proposed a wage of around R1,800, labour is proposing around R4,000. Meanwhile, Cosatu has warned that quality work with good pay and added benefits is increasingly being replaced with precarious jobs which exploit workers.

the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) is warning that the Gupta Family's influence on government is a serious concern.

He says workers are cautious about the powers the Gupta family appears to wield. Cosatu is also unhappy about potential job losses at the Guptas Optimum Coal Mine, but the family says these will be minimised. This is after the Guptas reportedly secured the deal and Denel announced its expansion without authorisation from National Treasury and the Public Enterprises Department

The UAE Water Aid Foundation has launched the \$1-million Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Global Water Award for innovative projects and organisations aiming to find sustainable solutions to tackle the issue of water scarcity using solar energy for purification and desalination.

Water levels in Kariba Dam have significantly improved following rains that have pounded the catchment area in recent days, raising hope that levels will rise to allow for resumption of normal power generation.

Researchers release new scarcity map which will help drought-prone regions prepare for dry conditions

Drought-afflicted regions of the world will be able to better combat worsening conditions by using a new water scarcity map more comprehensive than any before it. The map spans the entire globe, and it was created to help authorities counter future droughts. Published last month, the project was a joint effort between a team of University of Minnesota researchers from the Institute on the Environment and scientists hailing worldwide.

The International Organization of Employers is calling upon East African governments to create policies that enable informal businesses to transition into the formal sector.

While speaking to the Federation of Kenya Employers, Linda Kromjong, the Secretary General of the global employers' body also called for fast-tracking of the regional integration agenda as a means to achieving mobility of labour across the region.

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The Nigerian government plans to boost job creation in 2016 through massive spending on capital projects including construction and agriculture. However, funding its huge budget this year remains a challenge.

it was stated that members of the Eastern African Power Pool (EAPP) will be interconnected by the end of 2018. Kenya Electricity Transmission Company (KETRACO), acting managing director, Fernandes Barasa, said that interconnectivity will facilitate trade of electricity within the region, News Ghana reported.

Kenya's power generation capacity is set to increase as Kipeto Energy Limited has announced its partnership with China Machinery Engineering Corporation.

The two firms have signed a Sh22.5billion (\$218,4 million) contract for the construction of a 102MW wind power plant in Kajiado County. The contract also includes a 220kV transmission line in Kajiado County, reports the Daily Nation.

African diplomats in New Delhi have issued a protest note following incidents in which African students in India were attacked by mobs

Kenyan taxi drivers threaten to protest over Uber
NUM to protest against alleged racism at Afrisam

Over the past few months, students, in solidarity with farmers resisting land grabs in the Oromia region of Ethiopia, faced off with security forces in some of the biggest protests the country has ever seen

PE parents protest at education dept

Kenya's Used Vehicle Dealers Protest

Student, Trader Protests Quashed in Sudan Capital

The government and trade union federation Cosatu have agreed that the impasse between them on the Taxation Laws Amendment Act which includes retirement tax reforms needs to be resolved as soon as possible

A recent report by the Commission on Ending Childhood Obesity (ECHO) draws attention to the alarming rise of childhood obesity and the serious threat it poses to the health of children under the age of five years old

The Congress of South African Trade Unions has noted with shock the media reports that there is talk of a possible sale of a 49% stake of Eskom by the National Treasury to private investors. If this is true, the federation will vigorously oppose such an ill thought and inappropriate policy proposal from the Treasury

Akinwumi Adesina, African Development Bank President, addressed the issues of youth employment and migration in a speech delivered before the 34th session of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) Heads of State and Government Orientation Committee, at the Africa Union Summit in Addis Ababa on 29 January 2016.

In a statement on Tuesday, NUM said the protest action "stems from three incidents involving different white employees, who referred to fellow black employees as 'baboons' and 'goedere' (things)".

The Oromo community, Ethiopia's largest ethnic group, began protesting in November against the "Addis Ababa Master Plan", which, the government said, aimed to develop areas surrounding the capital. Protesters said the plan would only evict farmers and leave them dispossessed and impoverished.

While the protests were about the plan, it also was an opportunity for the Oromo people who feel marginalised economically and culturally by the government, to be heard. And the struggle over the plan is part of a bigger accusation leveled against the state: the forcible removal of removing tens of thousands of people from their homes to make way for large-scale, commercial ventures (mostly foreign).

Marlon Daniels, regional chairman of the recently formed Nationalist Coloured Party in Nelson Mandela Bay, led the group of protesters on Monday and outlined the following demands contained in the petition:

- * Learners with special educational needs to be catered for
- * Section 20 schools to be changed to Section 21 schools where schools would manage their own budget
- * The need for non-teaching staff such as secretaries and groundsman
- * The pupil teacher ratio to be 30:1

"Currently we have schools in our area with 80 learners in a class, this at Gelvan Park Primary and there is another school in Windvogel with 113 learners in a class," said Daniels.

Kenya's used car dealers have sounded the alarm over the growing importation into the local market of Uganda-registered vehicles whose quality is not known and for which no taxes have been paid. Many Kenyans are reportedly now involved in a tax and regulatory arbitrage to ship in cheaper and older cars. Most of the used cars coming from Uganda, though cheaper, are much older than those in the Kenyan used car market because Kampala has not put an age limit on imported second-hand automobiles

Students demonstrated against the ongoing war in Darfur and other conflicts in Sudan, while market traders demanded an end to the removal of their shops. Minister in Presidency for Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, Jeff Radebe, met with the leadership of COSATU on Saturday in line with his mandate from President Jacob Zuma to find an urgent solution to the Taxation Laws Amendment Act stalemate," Presidency spokesman Bongani Majola said.

"Both government and COSATU agreed that a solution should be expedited to resolve the impasse," Majola said.

"In this regard, the Presidency is working with relevant government departments to find the quickest possible legal route to resolving the issues. It was also agreed that the affected parties should be given enough time to discuss the matter with a view to reaching consensus," Majola added.

"There are 42 million children in the world that are obese, not just overweight. And that in the African region alone it's about 49 million children." Dr Anniza de Villiers, Medical Research Council

Addressing the issue of youth migration, AfDB President Adesina says that "Africa's pervasive lack of economic opportunity for the youth also fuels migration. Sometimes it is internal migration, where the youth leave rural areas for urban centres, putting a strain on our cities and still not finding opportunity. Sometimes it is external migration to Europe and beyond.

Ghana-President John Dramani Mahama has appealed to the European Union (EU) to help create jobs for the youth in Africa, to reduce the surge of Africans migrating to Europe.

President Mahama has, however, called on the European Union to also support troubled African countries like Libya, where most migrants cross to Europe, and also urged countries that participated in the migration summit held in Valetta, to implement the five-point political declaration and 16 concrete action plans agreed on at the summit, "which are to be implemented by the end of 2016."

Swedish Migration Agency expects up to 140,000 asylum seekers 2016

The Migration Agency said it expected between 70,000 and 140,000 to claim asylum in Sweden this year, with the lower number possible if "control measures have a clear effect throughout the year and additional measures are introduced when the number of asylum seekers begins to rise in May". The Agency's higher estimate includes up to 27,000 unaccompanied minors. Sweden took in 163,000 asylum seekers last year. The last forecast in October, made before border controls were introduced, was for up to 170,000 asylum seekers this year.

More and more South African nurses are taking their skills and knowledge abroad for the promise of more pay and better working conditions.

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according to Roger Baxter, CEO of the Chamber of Mines of SA, the South African mining sector cut 47,000 jobs between 2012 and early 2015 as the industry grappled with soaring costs and low commodity prices.

Mineral Resources Minister Mosebenzi Zwane said recently a further 32,000 jobs were under threat, and the industry was working closely with the government and labour to minimise job losses. Speaking before the start of the Mining Indaba in Cape Town, Mr Baxter said the gold industry, followed by platinum and coal, had cut the bulk of the 47,000 jobs in little more than three years. Mining costs had increased by an average 20% a year for the past five years, he said, and electricity was the core component in those cost increases.

The National African Federated Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Nafcoc) said it was "deeply concerned" by rising food costs and has moved to save its members from the negative impact, which has seen poor communities restrict their purchases.

Sub-Saharan African sugar producers will shift sales to growing regional and domestic markets when exports to the European Union become less attractive after production quotas are dismantled in 2017, industry sources and analysts said

While the current drought plaguing many parts of Southern Africa is taking its toll on mining operations, it will also start to impact on host communities, who are competing with the mines for potable water.

Project management consultancy Royal HaskoningDHV mining and heavy industry director Berte Simons told Mining Weekly Online that, the drought could become a bigger problem in drought-stricken areas as underground water reservoirs, mining operations and communities are always interacting. She believed this would inevitably lead to friction between mines and their host communities. Print Send to Friend 0 0 Simons added that there were several areas in South Africa where reservoirs, mining operations and surrounding communities coexisted in water-tight areas and that Royal HaskoningDHV assisted mines in enabling these surrounding communities to gain access to potable water.

Anglo American Platinum (Amplats) will cut 1,000 jobs at its struggling Twickenham mine, the firm's chief executive said
More state doctors' posts likely to be frozen

According to the SA Medical Journal, the number of administrative employees has increased by 12%, from 34,284 in 2012 to 37,336 in September last year. But the number of doctors employed increased by only 3.5% during the same period, from 18,701 to 19,352. The situation is likely to get worse, with medical posts being frozen in Mpumalanga, Free State, North West, Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal, according to the SA Medical Association (SAMA).

Yellow fever outbreak kills 37 in Angola
2.8 million face hunger in Malawi

About 2.8 million people are grappling hunger in Malawi due to poor harvest caused by the El nino weather pattern. Floods and drought have hit the country's staple maize crop resulting to poor harvest in the region. Cecilia Kaziputa is one such farmer who has not yielded much due to drought on the heels of floods.

Zika outbreak in Cape Verde raises fear of possible spread to mainland Africa
Activists in South Korea held demonstrations protesting North Korea's recent rocket launch

Despite opposition from the international community, North Korea went ahead and launched what it says is an Earth observation satellite over the weekend. Other countries including South Korea say this is a front for a ballistic missile test.

Tunisians march 400km over unemployment

Sixty unemployed youth in the poor central town of Gafsa in Tunisia, marched almost 400 km on foot to the capital to demand for jobs. The Gafsa region is strategic for Tunisia because of its phosphate mines, but remains among the poorest

Engineering News reports that cement and concrete manufacturer Lafarge SA confirmed that about 800 of its employees were due to embark on a protected strike

Following extensive negotiations, the company and the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) have not been able to reach an agreement over several matters, including salary increases. The company is apparently offering a salary increase of 7.5% while the NUM is demanding 8.5%. Other issues include acting allowances, salary gaps and housing grants.

more than 10,000 eligible staff members have benefitted from the more than R1.4bn which has recently been distributed, according to Mediclinic.

In 2005, Mediclinic created the Mpilo Trusts to recognise and reward staff through the allocation of shares to individuals who had loyally served them over a period of time. At the time, two employee share trusts, The Mpilo Trust and The Mpilo Trust (Namibia), subscribed for approximately 15.8 million ordinary shares or 4% of the issued ordinary share capital of Mediclinic. They were held for the benefit of about 10,927 employees, of which 52% were black and 89% were women, at the market value of R18.40 per share. In the ten years since the first allocation of units by the Mpilo Trusts, the value of the Mediclinic shares linked to the units has grown by approximately R100 per share.

fourteen Buffalo City Metro (BCM) employees who received lucrative promotions even though they did not possess the necessary qualifications have been demoted.

A further two were demoted after one was given a senior position that did not exist in the metro's organogram. The employees were seconded to the higher paying positions between May 2013 and early 2015, but have been "de-seconded" to their original positions as of 1 February.

Shortage of staff in home affairs Durban

This was the finding during the oversight visit of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts (Scopa) after it made its way to the provincial office in Pietermaritzburg, the Ladysmith district offices and Dukuza satellite office in July last year. The auditor-general found that there was inability to obtain sufficient and appropriate audit evidence regarding revenue, payables, accruals, commitments, assets and liabilities. The committee recommended that the filling of vacant posts be fast-tracked.

South Africa plans to set up a fuel cell component plant by 2018 to increase demand for the metal and support firms hit by plunging prices and labour strife

Vinay Somera, chief executive of Isondo Precious Metals, said his firm was preparing a feasibility study and had secured a licence from US-based Chemours Technology, to assemble components for the fuel cells using platinum. Fuel cells generate electric power by combining hydrogen and oxygen over a catalyst such as platinum. The metal has so far mainly been used in catalysts to make diesel cars cleaner. Under the deal with Chemours, Isondo would manufacture, market and sell licensed fuel cell components globally

Nigeria experiences protests over implemented tariff hike

The Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC) implemented the new electricity tariff in 11 distribution companies, to integrate the fixed charge component in the adjusted MYTO. The Abuja Electricity Distribution Company has seen the tariff jump from N14.70 (\$0.07) to N24.3 (\$0.12) per kWh for residential customer classification (R2)

Nigeria could lose close to 37 percent of its GDP to corruption by 2030 if measures are not taken, a report from PriceWaterhouseCoopers has warned.

The study which has been submitted to the Nigerian government by the professional services firm has called on officials to immediately deal with the phenomenon. It presents corruption in Africa's largest economy as a pressing issue affecting public finances, business investment and standards of living. The report however lauds President Muhammadu Buhari's anti-corruption drive and recommends long term measures be instituted. It states that much remains to be done to explore the dynamic effects of corruption which stops Nigeria from achieving its potential

Ivory Coast: State oil company workers extend strike over retrenchments

At least 50 out of 600 employees were dismissed last month with more than 100 others expected to lose their jobs in the coming days.

students of Chuka University protesting over disputed union elections, forcing the institution to be closed indefinitely

Government is set to scrap certain clauses of the Tax Amendment Act to appease labour federation Cosatu, which made threats to withdraw support for the ANC in the upcoming local government elections unless President Jacob Zuma repealed the law.

Minister in the Presidency Jeff Radebe told City Press in an interview on Friday that all signs pointed towards finding a way of "postponing" the implementation of some of the law's disputed aspects

Scientists say two-thirds of the global population, about 4 billion people, live with severe water scarcity for at least one month during the year. Meanwhile, half a billion on Earth experience this all year round

The study also shows areas of severe water shortage exist where there is twice as much water demand as there is availability. Individual homes tend to require the least water with about one to four per cent of the total, according to the researchers. India and China make up nearly half of those living with fragile water resources. Other regions highlighted included central and western United States and Australia.

In the World Economic Forum's most recent report, water crises was listed as one of three greatest global risks in the next decade, alongside climate change and mass migration. This is the first time global water scarcity has been measured on a monthly basis as previous studies have been evaluated annually, according to the study.

Labour federation Cosatu desatisfied with President Jacob Zuma's State of the Nation Address, decrying the lack of details and specific interventions. High on the organisation's list of expectations was a firm commitment and leadership on critical issues such as unemployment, the national minimum wage and social security.

However, the president failed to thoroughly explain how his administration planned to fast track the social security policy, which was limited to only one sentence in his speech when he spelled out that government was finalising its formulation

At the 9th Water and Sanitation Sector joint annual review by the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry and the EU as development partner, it was stated that Namibia has met the target for safe drinking water however the target for sanitation was missed dismally

the fundamental challenge lies with the lack of progress on sanitation with only 34% of the population having access to improved sanitation as indicated by the Namibia Demographic and Health Survey of 2013." The survey indicates that the victims of inadequate sanitation are primarily the poor in rural areas where only 17% have access to sanitation facilities with an alarming rate of 46.5% having to rely on open defecation

Water scarcity worsens in Nigeria

The situation is said to have led to scarcity of sachet water popularly known as "pure water". It was gathered that the current scarcity is not unconnected with the strike by workers of the state water corporation.

Some sachet water marketers have stopped producing while those that are still producing have increased the price.

A bag of sachet water which was sold at N70 now sells at N100 from the factory and retailers sell at N120 while a sachet is now sold for N10 or two sachets for N15 as against the previous N5

The Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) in Mpumalanga was denied entry to the Lily Mine in Barberton where three workers were still trapped after a crown pillar collapsed, the trade union federation said on Monday.

Egypt has been at odds with the Ethiopian project, announced in 2010, fearing it could harm its historical share of Nile River water. Ethiopia had repeatedly assured Egypt on its water security. Cairo, Khartoum and Addis Ababa are currently discussing technical studies to assess potential effects from the undertaking of the dam project.

Egypt should be prepared to cope with "water scarcity" caused by Ethiopia's disputed Grand Renaissance Dam project, said the head of the country's national water company.

Statements by the water company chief come hours after President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi said the state can no longer afford to subsidize potable water supplies

OVER the past three months, food prices have increased at eight times the rate than they did in the past year, as the drought and the weak rand caused many retailers to price items higher in a bid to protect their profit margins.

The Pietermaritzburg Agency for Community Social Action (Pacsa) tracks food inflation on 36 basic food items purchased by lower-income households in the city. The cost of its January food basket increased 9% compared to three months ago.

A 10kg bag of potatoes cost about R33 in November. It cost about R73 last month — more than double, according to Pacsa's food price barometer.

Two heads of cabbage that cost about R16 three months ago were selling for R28.50 in January. And cooking oil was R87, about 38% more in January than in November.

...

more than 40 million people in Africa are facing food insecurity – and some, outright starvation.

The continent needs at least \$4.5 billion for emergency relief, but just a fraction of that has been raised so far, even as analysis from Oxfam shows that an early response is far cheaper than a late one. The Horn of Africa – particularly Ethiopia – and much of southern Africa is in bad straits; and the weather is not the only factor at play. A country's ability to cope depends partly on its public finances and ability to mobilise resources; for some, weakening currencies is making food imports more expensive, and conflict is making it difficult to move supplies around.

South Africa's Pioneer Food Group has warned of deteriorating conditions facing food makers in the country.

The company said its groceries division was able to hit profit and margin targets, while international "traded well" - although currency exchange proved an issue. Bakeries performed "satisfactorily". However, drought hit maize production, resulting in a 74% hike in input costs for the sector. However, the food maker also sounded a note of caution that conditions in the South African market could be poised to worsen. "Rand weakness and the concomitant cost-push effect will accelerate inflationary pressure on food manufacturers, and increase the burden on consumers. The severe drought in South Africa has furthermore exacerbated this situation," the company cautioned.

THE Zimbabwean government has widened its tax bracket to include value added tax (VAT) on nearly 40 imported basic food commodities, as the country's revenue performance continues to disappoint.

In the January 22 Government Gazette, Finance Minister Patrick Chinamasa amended section 78 of the VAT Act by repealing clauses that until now allowed the imported food commodities to be taxed at zero rate. The tax is effective from February 1.

The Government of the People's Republic of China has donated US\$9.23 million (MK6.8 billion) to Malawi following President Prof. Peter Mutharika's recent appeal for humanitarian support in the wake of food shortage in the country.

More than 50,000 children in Somalia "face death" because of the ongoing drought there, the UN says.

It added that nearly one million Somalis, one in 12 of the population, "struggle... to meet their food needs".

The drought in Somalia has been partly caused by the El Nino weather phenomenon which has affected east and southern Africa.

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New Brighton resident, Themba Mtati told ANA that residents over the non-completion of a community paving project.

Durban University of Technology protest over financial and academic exclusion, registration fees and residence issues.

SACP protests against bail for ANC suspected killers

Thousands of locals turned out to march against the so-called "hotspot" which is to be erected on an abandoned army base outside the village of Pylio.

Residents and the local mayor fear the centre will damage the tourism industry - the main source of income on the island.

Angry Greek farmers protest in the capital against pension reform plans

Service Delivery protest disturbs schooling in Limpopo

Service delivery protest in Mankweng, Limpopo has led to the disruption of schooling in the area, police say

Service Delivery protest in Riverlea, Joburg

Thousands of steel workers from across the European Union are demonstrating against the import of cheap Chinese products and are warning EU leaders not to exacerbate the situation by granting Beijing market economy status.

As Mozambique's rivers dry up, the hopes of a harvest evaporate too

As southern Africa grapples with devastating drought, maize fields lie empty, the soil is like sand and water must be shared between cattle and people. For the second year running, Mbalavala's maize fields, which should have been planted months ago, lie empty; the soil in vegetable gardens is like sand and what little water there is from an emergency borehole must be shared between cattle and people.

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In the recent weeks tensions are reported to have sharply increased in Tete, Zambezia and Sofala provinces.

According to UNHCR 3,185 people were registered in Kapise on 31 January 2016, two thirds of them minors. On 14 February 2016, the numbers had climbed to 5,656 people (still with more than 2/3 being women, children under 5, or the elderly). Numbers are on the rise with new arrivals every day and the pace of arrivals have starkly increased in recent days, reaching several hundreds a day in the last days. The people arriving in Kapise have not yet been officially recognized as refugees.

the government and labour continue to be at loggerheads over strike balloting, an issue that Labour Minister Mildred Oliphant wants to enforce under threat of trade union deregistration.

Oliphant said during a media briefing by the social development cluster of ministers on Tuesday that discussions were under way at the National Economic Development and Labour Council (Nedlac) and there was an agreement in principle that strike ballots should become a requirement. A concrete and final agreement would have to be reached by Nedlac's committee of principals. However, Cosatu president Sdumo Dlamini said the labour federation was opposed to strike ballots in the manner proposed by the government, with ballots being taken from each worker at every company. He commented: "We are still opposed to that type of thing. It is not workable."

KwaZulu-Natal government is going to clamp down on employees who owe millions of rands to the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS)

About 15,000 civil servants owe the underfunded scheme just over R400-million, excluding those who work in municipal departments. Premier Senzo Mchunu said on Wednesday: "Those who benefited must do the honourable thing and pay back the money because there are thousands of students who are battling under these difficult economic conditions." His spokesman said the premier would be taking the necessary steps to get the provincial government departments to pay back the money and added: "We haven't looked at municipal workers, we will be gunning for them too." Mchunu also called on the private sector to encourage employees to repay the scheme what they owed.

Drought causing job losses in Free State

Free State, KwaZulu-Natal, North West, Limpopo and Mpumalanga have been declared drought disaster areas. Apart from job losses, the drought had also led to increased food inflation. Magashule also touched on the killing of farmers and said the provincial government was working with Free State communities to bring criminals to book.

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Nurses protest over wages, working conditions

The nurses also called for the outright rejection of their white uniforms, which have been used in the profession for decades. The demonstration was led by the Young Nurses Indaba (YNI). The nurses were all dressed in black, saying it signified their mourning for the profession. The health workers said they felt as if they have been forgotten by government, as they were forced to work under unacceptable conditions with very little pay.

Anglo American announces plans to exit Kumba and reduce headcount

The mining group is looking to exit its controlling 69.7% stake in Kumba Iron Ore after it said it would build its future around copper, platinum and diamonds. Anglo does not expect to complete the Kumba transaction until sometime in 2017. Across the group, the company is targeting a reduction in headcount of 50,000 people. Some 40,000 will leave the company through the disposal of assets, and 10,000 from further downsizing and streamlining. Of the company's 11,500 global support staff, only 5,000 will remain. This will affect people employed at the company's offices in Main Street, Johannesburg.

De Beers to cut more than 300 jobs in South Africa

The Anglo American unit will cut 152 jobs at its Venetia mine and a further 214 posts at its other mines in South Africa, the union stated. Anglo American said on Tuesday it plans to sell many of its units and mines as part of a sweeping strategic overhaul to cope with a commodities rout

Tucson Electric Power (TEP) is building a new 500-kV transmission line in Pinal County to ensure continued service reliability for customers in southern Arizona.

SA seeks \$250m from BRICS bank to build power transmission lines

If approved, the money would be used to build transmission lines connecting solar and wind power plants to a national grid, Ebrahim Patel said, as Africa's most industrialised economy turns to green energy to diversify away from coal.

After four years of administration by National Treasury, four companies are suing the Limpopo department of education for almost R300 million over cancelled contracts.

The companies include:

Indian educational software firm Sankhya Learning, which is suing the department for R130 million;

Textbook supplier EduSolutions, which is suing for R121 million;

Construction firm Aurecon Joint Venture, which is suing for R41 million; and

Another company, a "professional service provider", which has not been named in the department's annual report and which has already successfully sued for R7 million.

Service delivery protest phola park

Residents of Phola Park and Simile in Sabie, Mpumalanga went on the rampage demanding clean drinking water, electricity and job opportunities.

Traffic flow was disrupted on New Canada Road when Pennyville residents embarked on a protest action.

According to the ward councillor Basil Douglas residents were complaining about lack of service delivery.

The City of Cape Town has launched a water conservation programme as dam levels continue to decrease.

Mayor Patricia de Lille launched the campaign today at Stodels Garden Centre in Kenilworth in the hopes of spurring on locals to start saving water. De Lille says the dams in the Western Cape are currently at 42,5 percent. She says 10 workers from the city's Extended Public Works Program have been tasked with raising awareness about water conservation.

The Water Authority in the North West has assured Mahikeng communities that their water is safe for consumption.

This after complaints by locals that the water quality had degenerated. The Mahikeng Local Municipality says the cause for the water problem is due to malfunctioning water pipes.

Water shutdown in Vryheid	The Abaqulusi Municipality has confirmed a total water shutdown for the town and its surrounding areas including Bhekuzulu and Lakeside due to the severe drought. The Zululand District Municipality is one of the areas hardest hit by the drought. Councillor Harry Heyns says the municipality is unable draw water from Klipfontein Dam with levels now below 18%.
Two million EU migrants work in Britain	According to the organization, the UK is home to around 2.7 million EU residents, half of whom are from the old Western European nations and half from the newer states of East Europe. The majority of EU migrants have come to the UK for work and 1.8 million are in employment with the remaining 900,000 being either students, retired or perhaps working in the home.
Billions Stolen From Students' Loans Board	Education minister Joyce Ndalichako yesterday ordered a special audit into operations of the Higher Education Student's Loans Board (HESLB) and gross irregularities in the release of Sh3.2 billion in student's loan
A new report by the World Bank Group indicates that 85 percent of Sierra Leoneans living in the Diaspora at least hold a bachelor's degree.	
Rice - Africa's Ticket Out of Poverty	Africa is eating more rice than other food staples, though it produces less than it needs. This is good news for the cereal's potential to help Sub Saharan Africa out of poverty according to researchers. Rice is the second most important source of calories in Sub-Saharan Africa, according to the Africa Rice Center (AfricaRice), a research organisation working to contribute to poverty alleviation and food security.
Steelworkers union funds food bank for laid-off members	Hundreds of Newport News Shipyard employees were laid off this month. Now the United Steelworkers Local 8888 has partnered with the Foodbank of Southeast Virginia and the Virginia Peninsula Foodbank to assist its members who are now out of work. The union made two \$1,500 donations to the area foodbanks to fund a food distribution to help the families put food on the table during this difficult time.
Nigerian workers may ask for N50,000 minimum wage University of Pretoria protest against the use of Afrikaans University of Pretoria proposes new English language policy	The University of Pretoria has proposed that all its lectures be offered in English only, according to a statement on its Facebook page
Erickson to Construct Transmission Towers for Sterlite Grid in the Pir Panjal Range of India	Sterlite Grid is building ~ 450 kilometers of transmission lines and 400 220-kilovolt gas insulated substations (GIS) in Amargarh. To complete this line, nearly 1,150 towers will have to be erected in some of the most challenging terrains of Pir Panjal in the inner Himalayan region.
China is the leading financier of infrastructure projects in Africa	The 2015 Africa Construction Trends Report states that China has provided bulk of finance to help implement mega infrastructure projects like roads, seaports, railways and power transmission lines in the world's second largest continent. The 2015 Africa construction trends report says that infrastructure projects valued at 375 billion U.S. dollars were at different stages of implementation across the African continent. According to the report, a total of 301 mega infrastructure projects in diverse sectors like transport, energy, mining, real estate, water supply and telecommunications were being implemented in the continent. Smith said that China has overtaken governments, domestic private sector and western donors to emerge as the leading source of finance for development of new infrastructure projects in Africa.
Kenya is fast tracking its electricity interconnection with Uganda, Tanzania and Ethiopia, adding that the Kenya-Ethiopia transmission line should be completed in the next two years (2018).	Procurement of contractors for the 612 kilometers line is complete and engineering design ongoing," he said. The project will be funded jointly by World Bank, African Development Bank (AfDB) and the French Development Agency at a cost of one billion U.S. dollars. The Kenya-Uganda electricity transmission line will also be funded by the AfDB. The 127 km line is 60 percent complete and will be completed in the next ten months. Barasa said the Kenya-Uganda line will permit Kenya to export power to Rwanda. Kenya has already signed a Power Purchase Agreement with Rwanda, where Kenya will begin selling to Rwanda 15 Megawatts of Power in the next two months.
Mozambican President Filipe Nyusi inaugurated a gas fired power station, with the capacity to generate 120 megawatts, in Ressano Garcia, on the border with South Africa.	The power station cost around 200 million US dollars, raised by the Mozambican company Gigawatt (owned by Mozambican and South African shareholders). The station has 13 generators, each capable of generating 9.5 megawatts. The power will all be sold to the publicly owned electricity company, EDM. The Gigawatt power station can supply 24 per cent of the electricity needs of southern Mozambique (excluding the MOZAL aluminium smelter).
Egypt has pulled out of the grand East African regional power pool until its concerns over the use of the Nile waters have been addressed.	In the recent Council of Ministers' meeting in Addis Ababa held by the 10 Eastern African Power Pool (EAPP) countries, Egypt refused to sign and adopt the master plan for the power pool as the hydropower generation projects in Ethiopia and Sudan are on the Nile. The 10 countries are Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Sudan, Tanzania, Libya and Uganda.

Zambia Plans to Revisit Power-Tariff Increase After Reversal

Zambia still plans to raise power tariffs to levels that reflect the cost of supplies after calling off intentions to more than triple them this year, Energy Minister Dora Siliya said. State-owned electricity supplier Zesco Ltd. withdrew its application to increase charges for households, businesses and factories this month, after the regulator approved it in December. The move was meant to help the company pay for emergency imports as the southern African nation faces a supply deficit, as well as to attract private investment in generation.

Renewable energy developers edged out in Egypt's Kom Ombo solar project

Egypt had originally announced that it would tender 10 projects totaling 20 megawatts each for the Kom Ombo solar photovoltaic (PV) scheme in Upper Egypt. It has now opted to consolidate those into one utility-scale project totalling 200MW, the government-owned Egyptian Electricity Transmission Company told The National. This change, which only allows one winner, is hurting the country's renewable energy market, according to Italy's Building Energy. "This changes a lot in the market in the region in general," said Matteo Brambilla, the managing director of Africa and the Middle East for Building Energy. "The real market is struggling to happen."

Dubai-based Access Power will further its reach by developing a US\$19 million solar project in Uganda to help provide reliable energy to 40,000 homes.

Access, through its partnership with French firm Eren Renewable Energy, will build a 10 megawatt solar photovoltaic (PV) plant in Soroti, about 300 kilometres north of the capital, Kampala.

The project will come online in July, marking the first project in the company's strategy to target more solar and wind projects across the African continent.

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GERMANY State Secretary, Stephan Steinlein assured Nigeria of his country's determination to complement efforts to boost the country's energy supply.

Last week, the first official solar independent power producer (IPP) licence was issued for the 125 MW Kankiya solar power plant in Katsina State. It is one of the flagship projects of the partnerships, in which several German companies are involved. In his address, he noted over the last two years, the Nigeria had finalised its renewable energy and energy efficiency policies, developed a comprehensive finance mechanism for renewables and set up a rural electrification fund, capitalised with funds from the national budget. Nigeria has strengthened the National Power Training Institute of Nigeria and trained over 2 000 locals in the fields of renewable energy and energy efficiency.

Chevron to Spend N188 Million in Training 40 Delta Youths On Agriculture
Nigerian Government and Japan Sign Agreement for Emergency Power Supply in Abuja

He states that the agricultural training program is in line with the SMART agenda of the state government.

The agreement would see the Japanese government extend a N1.3 billion yen grant, (approximately \$11 million and over N2 billion), to upgrade two substations in the FCT and Nasarawa State.

The agreement, which makes the Federal Ministry of Power, Works and Housing the implementing partner, will lead to the procurement and installation of power capacitor banks at the existing substations in Abuja and the neighbouring Nasarawa, to decrease the transmission loss and stabilise power supply to approximately 7,000 households in Abuja.

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\$147m required to save 2 million Nigeriens from hunger – UN
The United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (Unicef) says while South African children aren't severely affected by food insecurity due to the current drought, the country's inability to produce maize does have an impact on the health of children in other Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries.

China will aim to close more than 1,000 coal mines over this year, with a total production capacity of 60 million tonnes, as part of its plans to tackle a price-sapping supply glut in the sector, the country's energy regulator said.

China has a total of 10,760 mines, and 5,600 of them will eventually be required to close under a policy banning those with an annual output capacity of less than 90,000 tonnes, the China National Coal Association has estimated.

China has promised to stop approving all new coal mine projects for three years in a bid to control capacity. The country produced 3.7 million tonnes coal last year and has an estimated capacity surplus of 2 billion tonnes per annum.

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Gordhan allocates R2,5 billion to clear student debt

Finance Minister Pravin Gordhan announced on Wednesday that the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) would receive R2,5 billion to pay off student debt

The community of Phagameng near Modimole embarked on a protest due to an alleged water shortage.

Service delivery protest at Siqualo informal settlement (Mitchells Plain)

Residents of Phola Park and Simile in Sabie, Mpumalanga went on the rampage demanding clean drinking water, electricity and job opportunities.

Water interruption protest in Thembisa

Service delivery protest in Shaka's Rock on the KwaZulu-Natal North Coast

violent protest at the university of north west over the appointment of Student Representative Council (SRC)

Mozambique Negotiations Over Minimum Wages Begin

Mozambican employers are claiming that factors such as the recent depreciation of the national currency, the metical, against the US dollar, the severe drought in southern and central Mozambique, and the tensions with the rebel movement Renamo will influence any increase in the statutory minimum wage.

The country's unemployment rate declined by a percentage point in the fourth quarter of 2015, to 24.5% of the population.

According to the Quarterly Labour Force Survey, the working-age population was 36.3 million, of whom 16 million were employed, 5.2 million unemployed and 15.1 million not economically active. Almost 66% of the unemployed were people between the ages of 15 and 34. Over half (57.6%) did not complete matric. Year-on-year, the official unemployment rate increased by 0.2 percent of a percentage point.

The African National Congress (ANC) has called on the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) to take immediate action and defend workers at eNCA who are allegedly being prohibited from forming a trade union

Employees are fighting against what they say is an anti-union sentiment at the broadcaster after their attempts to form a workers forum were allegedly shut down. The Communication Workers Union has said it will approach the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration over the dismissal of an eNCA employee who claims he was axed for organising his colleagues to form a union

Public protector Thuli Madonsela released her report into irregularities, including corruption, maladministration and improper conduct, at the South African Post Office (Sapo). She found that some of the allegations were substantiated, while others were without substance.

Cosatu has called for the government to maintain or increase spending on infrastructure development to get the economy growing again.

The Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) has condemned violent and racist attacks that have taken place across the country's universities

The federation labelled the violence as early signs of a "neo-Nazi phenomenon" which needs to be crushed and defeated.

These statements follow racial clashes that have taken place at the University of the Free State (UFS) and the University of Pretoria (UP) this week.

Cosatu spokesman Sizwe Pamla said, in a statement, that they plan to fight racism regardless of who is behind the racial tensions.

"There is no corner of South Africa that should be treated as a white enclave, where apartheid racial policies still thrive," said Pamla. He said the racial attacks can be blamed on the slow pace of transformation of higher education, ineffective land reform process and failure of economic control patterns.

THE membership of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) has dropped to 206,000 — a level last seen in the 1990s.

The NUM's membership figures, according to Cosatu's organisational report at its congress in November last year, stood at 270,000. This was an increase from June, when its membership stood at 230,000. Mr Sipunzi said the union's membership stood at 206,000 in the last week of January. "Some of the employers have foiled our recruitment efforts by not processing our forms," he said.

Panic gripped hostel inmates of a Kanya Ashram after more than 50 girl students were affected by diarrhoea at Antaraba under Mohana block in Gajapati district.

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Over 2,500 pupils at Buswelu and Kaselya primary schools in Ilemela District are at risk of contracting cholera and other waterborne diseases due to the scarcity of water facing the learning institutions.

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Congress of South African Trade Union (Cosatu) says while it is committed to working with government over the proposed tax reforms, it has not decided whether it will continue with its planned downing of tools, next month.

Presidency Minister Jeff Radebe announced that plans to implement pension law reforms would be delayed till 2018.

Despite the fact that the labour environment has been relatively stable in the last quarter of 2015, it still has the potential to negatively impact the manufacturing sector's attempts to be sustainable, according to Philippa Rodseth, executive director of the Manufacturing Circle.

Over the quarter, respondents not only increased capacity, but also upgraded processes and facilities. About 70% of respondents said they implemented new technologies and innovations to improve their production facilities and processes.

Three quarters of respondents cited implementation of new methods towards enhancing competitiveness, including new product process innovation and efficient use of resources. To a degree, there was also increased use of technology and mechanisation.

Efforts towards enhancing productivity and competitiveness also included skills development.

Debt levels fell in more than half of surveyed manufacturers, signalling deleveraging in the face of a rising interest rate environment, according to Rodseth, executive director of the Manufacturing Circle

The Congress of SA Trade Unions (Cosatu) and the SA Communist Party have agreed to expose and deal with "those associated with state capture through parasitism in public sector formations", the two organisations said on Saturday.

The Congress of South African Trade Unions has called on the government to intervene at Telkom, which announced job

Telkom said last week that it would cut 300 jobs at its corporate office and outsource a further 254 jobs.

School children hustle for water as scarcity bites hard in Ogun

The Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) has now called on the state to acquire 50% of all mines.

U.S. jobless claims up, but trend points to firming labour market

Initial claims for state unemployment benefits increased 10,000 to a seasonally adjusted 272,000 for the week ended Feb. 20, the Labour Department said on Thursday. The prior week's claims were unrevised.

THE Zambezi River Authority says the rains received so far are not enough to end load shedding as water levels in Lake Kariba have declined following reduced river inflows from major sites

Violent protest by Siqalo residents . It is believed the group was protesting about employment agreements.
Anti-government protesters rally for 'free and open Poland'

Tens of thousands of Poles chanting "We will defend democracy" and "Lech Wałęsa" rallied on Saturday in Warsaw to protest against moves by Poland's three-month-old conservative government which they say undermine freedoms and the constitution.

Thousands of protesters marched along a national road near the city of Nantes to protest against the construction of the new airport and the eviction of the locals from the planned construction site.

Protesters also claim that the \$633 million project will be detrimental to the environment and is a wasteful use of government funds.
Approved in 2008, the new airport is scheduled for opening next year and will replace the current Nantes Atlantique Airport that handles 3 million passengers a year.

Protesting farmers marching towards RSS headquarters in Nagpur detained -

A large number of cotton growers, who had threatened to commit self-immolation before RSS headquarters in Nagpur, were on Sunday detained as the protesters supported by Congress leaders marched towards the building over alleged non-payment of dues by a buyer, who they claimed is close to the Sangh.

Workers protest at Tesla gigafactory against Nevada tax breaks that workers claim are being spent to bring workers from New Mexico to work at the gigafactory construction site.

Oromos protested against the Addis Ababa's Integrated Master Plan proposed to expand the capital's territory in order to bring better services and greater economic opportunities to the rural areas surrounding Addis.

For the Oromos, however, the plan constituted an attempted land grab that could result in the forced eviction of Oromo farmers and the loss of valuable arable land in a country regularly plagued by drought.

Thousands of Hungarian parents kept their children home from school on Monday to protest the government's education policies

At least 34,000 people had joined the protest's Facebook page. Two weeks ago, tens of thousands attended a teachers' rally in Budapest to protest education reforms that have included extreme centralization, increased administrative tasks for teachers and a lack of choice in textbooks.

Nigerians protest high bank charges

Nigerians are planning to boycott banking activities on Tuesday, to protest exorbitant deductions by banks, activities on social media are indicating. Consumer Advocacy Foundation of Nigeria, a not-for-profit group dedicated to advocacy for consumer rights and protection in Africa's largest consumer market is leading the protest.

Migrants protest at Greece-Macedonia border as bottleneck builds

Stranded migrants lay with their children on rail tracks at Greece's northern border Sunday, demanding to be allowed to continue their journey, as Athens warned the number of people "trapped" on its soil could more than triple next month.

Migrants protest at Greece-Macedonia border as bottleneck builds

Stranded migrants lay with their children on rail tracks at Greece's northern border Sunday, demanding to be allowed to continue their journey, as Athens warned the number of people "trapped" on its soil could more than triple next month.

Nurses' strike pushes back 120 surgeries in Delhi govt hospitals in demand a hike in pay grade, nursing allowance, risk allowance and night-duty allowance.

Obama passes Act to bring electricity to Africa through co-ops

President Barack Obama has passed a law encouraging public-private partnerships to help bring electricity to 50m people in sub-Saharan Africa. The Electrify Africa Act states that the United States will partner and consult with governments of sub-Saharan counties as well as international financial institutions, the private sector and co-operatives, to promote first time access to power and power services for 50m people by 2020.

a new index compiled by Good Governance Africa (GGA) reveals which are the best – and worst – run municipalities in the country.

The index was compiled based on various data sources, including the 2011 census, National Treasury's Local Government Yearbook, as well as various releases from Stats SA. GGA looked at 234 local metropolitan universities and assessed them across 15 different criteria split into three main groups, namely administration, economic development and service delivery.

Nine of the top ten municipalities are run by the Democratic Alliance, according to the report, with all 17 of the party's municipalities appearing in the top 40.

The bottom 10 municipalities are all ANC-run, with a showing from one IFP and one NFP-run municipality.

Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn said that undertaking small and middle energy projects is crucial to realize and reach Universal Electrification of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030 especially in rural areas utilizing renewable energy such as solar, hydro power, wind and geothermal.

The number of refugees and migrants trapped in Greece may reach 70,000 in coming weeks, Greece's migration minister said

New UN report finds migrants play critical role in Asia-Pacific development

The International Organization for Migration said it is scaling up the repatriation of African migrants suffering abuse and exploitation in Libya, mainly at the hands of the police and the militias.

More than 13 percent of asylum seekers arriving to Germany last year have disappeared from view of the authorities, the German daily Sueddeutsche Zeitung reported Friday (26 February) based on a response from the federal interior ministry to a question by the left-wing Die Linke party.

A total of 13 422 qualifying households in 104 villages, townships and small towns in the North West will access electricity for the first time this year, North West Premier Supra Mahumapelo

he Deputy Minister of Energy and Minerals Dr. Medard Kalemani has instructed the Tanzania Electric Supplying Company (Tanesco), Regional Managers, in collaboration with the Rural Energy Authority (REA), to make sure all villages earmarked for the implementation of REA's second phase project are connected by March 31, this year.

Clover Industries is warning it will have no choice but to soon hike the selling prices of its products as the rand continues to trade weakly.

service delivery protests by Blikkiesdorp residents in Cape Town

KwaZulu-Natal municipalities have to cut water usage by 15% or there will be no water in the province by the end of 2016, KwaZulu-Natal Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs MEC Nomusa Dube-Ncube said
NIGERIA'S BANK OF INDUSTRY JUST COMMISSIONED ITS FIRST CLEAN ENERGY PROJECT

Landfill waste, food insecurity and unemployment are three major challenges that the City of Johannesburg (CoJ) aims to prioritise in its 2040 vision, said CoJ manager Trevor Fowler at a Johannesburg Investor Roadshow event held in Johannesburg on Friday.

The Premier made the remark during talks with French Environment and Sustainable Development Minister and COP 21 Chairperson Ségolène Royal here Wednesday. Their discussion focused on how to work together to realize the African Renewable Energy Initiative as Ethiopia has a ample experiences in the aforementioned issues.

Greece, a primary gateway to Europe for tens of thousands of people fleeing war in the Middle East and beyond, has been inundated with refugees and migrants after border shutdowns through the Balkans, stranding thousands in the country in the past ten days.

Migrants from countries across Asia and the Pacific play a key role by helping to drive economic growth in their countries of destination while also supporting families in their countries of origin, but the benefits of migration remain under-acknowledged, a new United Nations report has found.

Launching the report today at the Foreign Correspondent's Club of Thailand, Hongjoo Hahm, Deputy Executive Secretary of the UN Economic Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), emphasized that the scale of migration is only likely to increase in Asia and the Pacific, but that the outcome of the trend is in the hands of the region's countries.

Over the past few months, the International Organization for Migration reports it has repatriated thousands of Africans from Libya, mainly to Burkina Faso, Gambia and Senegal. In its latest operation a few days ago, IOM returned 117 migrants to Burkina Faso, including five women and two children. IOM spokesman Itayi Viriri said the migrants told stories of horrific treatment by militias and blatant exploitation at their places of employment. He said many young men spoke about working for weeks on end for no pay. he head of Germany's federal office for migration Frank-Juergen Weise said on Thursday that there are currently up to 400,000 people in the country whose identities are unknown to authorities.

Germany is also struggling to send back asylum seekers to other EU countries under the Dublin regulation, which says people have to register their request in the country where they first enter the EU.

In an effort to better our current delivery rate of 87% electrification roll out, 13 422 qualifying households in 104 villages, townships and small dorpias that never had electricity before across the province will be electrified in 2016 at an estimated cost of R279 million," said the Premier.

This as he was delivering the 2016 State of the Province Address (SOPA).

rural community in Anambra state, Nigeria is about to get access to electricity following the completion of an electrification project funded by Nigeria's Bank of Industry (BOI). The unveiling of the solar project took place in Onono-Anam community in Anambra state and was commissioned by the Executive Governor of the state, Willie Obiano.

He noted that by 2040, the city aimed to reduce landfill waste by 93% and that, to date, it had been reduced by 5%. Print Send to Friend 0 0 The city's vision also included steps to eradicate poverty, ensure resource security and environmental sustainability, as well as build sustainable human settlements and enable social inclusion. "Food security and agriculture is another top priority that the CoJ is focused on. Three years ago there were 400 000 people in Johannesburg who were food-insecure. We have since assisted 80 000 people to date to ensure that they have a stable source of food," said Fowler.

Land reform, agriculture developments are on track, Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Minister Senzeni Zokwana said

Implementation of government's agriculture and agroprocessing value-chain policy revitalisation programme has started, with 27 proposals received from commercial farmers for land reform allocation, Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Minister Senzeni Zokwana said in a Parliamentary reply.

The latest Municipal Benchmark Initiative (MBI) report, supported by the Water Research Council, revealed that, while the country's municipalities saw year-on-year improvements across five of the six MBI performance areas measuring 31 performance indicators, Water Conservation Demand Management saw static movement or declines in five of the six internal indicators

on-revenue water by volume stood out as a top concern as it declined from 33% in 2013 to 34% in 2015 – well above the proposed benchmark of 25%, said Ekurhuleni metropolitan head of water and sanitation and benchmarking ambassador Phil Mashoko. The number of connections metered, at 84%, and system input volumes for households, at 21 m³ per household a month, remained unchanged, while system input volumes for the population declined to 199 l/d per capita – well short of the 175 l/d benchmark – and water resource management health declined from 59% in 2014 to 57% in 2015. The 2015 benchmark report, launched in Kempton Park, noted that water conservation and demand management ticked up slightly from 53% to 55%. The poor performance was mainly as a result of ageing infrastructure and consumer behaviour, he noted.

THE food security situation in Zimbabwe has worsened as the whole country is in urgent need of relief, Food and Nutrition Council Director, George Kembo, has said.

Kembo was speaking last week in Harare at an event where the United States announced \$10 million additional funding in response to the critical food security situation in the country.

Zimbabwean government avails R1million for food aid distribution across the country

Overall food prices stayed put on the month in February, as falling sugar and dairy prices offset a spike in vegetable oil prices, according to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)

About 2.8 million people are starving and in urgent need of food as opposed to the 1.5 million which NGOs have been providing assistance to

FAO's Food Price Index, a trade-weighted index tracking international market prices of major cereals, vegetable oils, dairy, meat and sugar, averaged 150.2 points for the month, virtually unchanged from a revised 150.0 points in January, according to a news release from the agency. It was down 14.5 percent from a year ago.

Central African Republic (CAR) faces a "dire" food crisis with over half the population suffering hunger following three years of conflict, two UN agencies warned.

Overall crop production in 2015 remained 54 percent below average levels prior to a March 2013 coup which plunged the impoverished former French colony into chaos, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Food Programme (WFP) said in a report. Production was up 10 percent on 2014 but this was largely due to an increase in the cassava crop. Grain harvests were 70 percent down on pre-crisis levels.

Almost 16 million people face hunger in Southern Africa because of a drought exacerbated by an El Nino weather pattern and that number could climb to almost 50 million, the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) said

The figures exclude South Africa, where President Jacob Zuma said last month that 2.7 million households would be affected by the drought. Regional breadbasket South Africa had its driest year on record in 2015, threatening the key maize crop and pushing spot prices for the grain 100 percent higher over the past year.

Mozambique: The number of people facing food insecurity because of the severe drought in southern and central Mozambique is about 166,000, Prime Minister Carlos Agostinho do Rosario told the country's parliament, the Assembly of the Republic

AgriSA has warned that water resources across Southern Africa are being depleted at an alarming rate due to the ongoing drought, which has been declared a national disaster in Zimbabwe.

AgriSA says food production and supply has reached critical levels in countries including Malawi. There are also serious concerns about potential food shortages this winter. Agri SA wants the government to declare the drought a national disaster to free up additional funds for relief.

Staff were withdrawn from two voter registration stations in Khayelitsha, Cape Town, on Saturday morning after a group of protesters apparently tried blocking the entrances. Protesting outsourced workers and students on Tuesday morning disrupted the University of South Africa's 5th Research and Innovation Week. Students and staff of Rhodes University, as well as Grahamstown residents, marched to the town's police station. The protest followed the alleged harassment on 19 February of vocal student activist Lihle Ngcobozi.

Speakers were supposed to discuss the issue of languages in universities on Tuesday. Instead, workers and students disrupted the proceeding and Unisa had no choice but to cancel the event.

While on her way to the university campus, Lihle was allegedly harassed by two police officers. According to Ngcobozi she was man-handled and told to stop her and her friends' involvement in the Rhodes University's student movement. She described the men as white and dressed in police uniform.

Villagers in Masakona opposed to the inclusion of their villages in a new municipality in Limpopo have burnt a school and the shop of a man suspected of backing the new municipality.

Members of South Africa's AMCU are staging an underground protest at Nasonti's Hlobane mine north of Johannesburg over unpaid wages, a union spokesman said

There is a liquidation problem there. The workers have not been paid. They are sitting there because they have not been paid," Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union (AMCU) spokesman Manzini Zungu told Reuters.

Forty workers were underground taking part in the protest, AMCU's Twitter account @_AMCU said.

The government owes municipalities a phenomenal R5.4 billion for unpaid water services, while ordinary South Africans and the private sector owe nearly R110bn.

A protest over electricity in Tsunami, which is in Delft, turned violent this morning after protesters blocked the N2 and Symphony Way setting vehicles alight. A number of protesters were arrested. No injuries have been reported.

The country's "chronic" shortage of engineers in municipalities is having a detrimental effect on the quality of drinking water and the ability of municipalities to prevent crippling water losses.

Worse water crisis looms in 2035 warns Dr Jakkie Cilliers, head of African Futures and Innovation at the Institute for Security Studies (ISS).

Major cities in Zimbabwe, including the capital Harare and the second largest city, Bulawayo, are moving to install prepaid water meters despite resistance from residents associations and civil society organisations, which argue that prepaid meters deny poor people access to water—a right, they say, that is enshrined in the constitution.

Police and the Ethekewini Municipality's Land Invasion Unit scrambled to stop the building of shacks on city land near the Riverhorse Valley Industrial Park

The Food and Allied Workers Union (Fawu) is considering whether to leave Cosatu as the launch of a new federation draws nearer.

Earthlife Africa asks court to set aside nuclear determination
Hundreds of thousands of Brazilians flooded the streets on Sunday in the biggest ever protests calling for President Dilma Rousseff's removal, reflecting rising popular anger that could encourage Congress to impeach the leftist leader.

Thousands of Chinese coal miners have taken to the streets in a city near the Siberian border to protest against unpaid wages, in the first direct challenge to Beijing's plan for orderly downsizing and job cuts in the state-owned coal sector.

Isithebe service delivery protest

protest in IEC centres against municipal demarcation

Vavi invites Cosatu to join new federation

Pikitup has issued a stern warning saying it will take action against striking workers if they continue to stay away from work.

This was revealed by Thabo Manyoni, the chairman of the SA Local Government Association (Salga), who said the total R115 billion figure included interest. Manyoni was speaking on Friday at the launch of Salga's annual report on water services in South Africa, as part of its Municipal Benchmarking Initiative. The report found a "year-on-year improvement" in water quality, human resources and skills development, service delivery and backlogs, operations and maintenance and financial management.

The protest came after residents claimed that the City refused to connect electricity in the informal settlement. Early this morning protesters headed to the N2 and Symphony Way, blocking traffic and setting a truck that was transporting beer on the N2 alight as well as a school bus on Symphony Way

The "Municipal Benchmarking Initiative" report from 2015 - compiled by the SA Local Government Association and the Water Research Commission - found the country didn't even have 10% of the required number of engineers needed to adequately run the country's municipal water networks. There were, according to the findings, just 0.4 engineers to every 100000 people, a far cry from the idea of five per 100000 Saice says South Africa needs.

In its updated forecast for the Water Research Commission, the ISS and the Frederick S Pardee Center for International Futures found that water demand in South Africa will outpace supply every year to 2035.

When asked what this means, Cilliers explained: "We modelled South Africa's water demand and supply from 2014 to 2035. South Africa is currently over-exploiting its water resources at the national level. This means that national water withdrawals for municipal, industrial and agricultural sectors exceed levels of sustainable supply," he said.

Local authorities such as Mutare, Gweru, Gwanda, Masvingo, Victoria Falls and Chitungwiza are also considering introducing prepaid meters. Local authorities say they will result in improved revenue collection and by extension an improvement in service delivery, as well as reducing wastage and water treatment costs. The move has proved unpopular, particularly in Bulawayo, where residents have held public demonstrations in protest. Residents first demonstrated against the decision on November 14th 2014

At a recent national executive committee (NEC) meeting, union leaders reportedly engaged in a heated debate on the issue. Fawu has been at odds with the federation since the expulsion of the National Union of Mineworkers and former general secretary Zwelinzima Vavi.

The demonstrations were the latest in a wave of anti-government rallies that lost momentum late last year but have regained strength as a sweeping corruption investigation nears Rousseff's inner circle. From the Amazon jungle city of Manaus to the business hub of Sao Paulo and the capital Brasilia, protesters marched in a nationwide call for Rousseff to step down, raising pressure on lawmakers to back ongoing impeachment proceedings against her that just a few weeks ago appeared to be doomed.

Beijing has said it would lay aside Rmb100bn (\$15.4bn) to "resettle" coal and steel workers as part of a plan to cut unproductive capacity in both sectors, but local governments and the companies themselves are supposed to bear a portion of the costs.

On Monday, violence erupted in the area when about 3,000 residents went on a rampage, accusing the Mandeni municipality of poor service delivery and nepotism, among other issues

Blocking roads and stoning vehicles, the protesters prevented IEC officials from opening eight voter registration centres in Vuwani, near Thohoyandou.

Vavi says the trade union landscape in South Africa needs to change and believes the 184 registered unions should be compressed along class lines. Vavi and metal workers union Numsa are due to launch a new federation this year after Cosatu expelled them. Vavi says trade unions should not be fragmented.

The striking workers, who are affiliated to South African Municipal Workers Union (Samwu), are demanding better pay and the immediate dismissal of Pikitup managing director, Amanda Nair, whom they accuse of corruption. Even though Nair was cleared of charges of impropriety relating to a R263m tender in 2015, Samwu has maintained allegations of wrongdoing.

In its bid to win the 9 600 MW South African nuclear build programme, the French will propose a funding model that seeks assistance from international and domestic financial partners.

Kenya's electricity grid code to include renewables

Moody's eyes SA municipalities, Sanral, City Power for downgrade

Carbon tax implementation likely in 2017

DR Congo: Hydro projects face delays

Tanzania: AfDB outlines \$1bn energy spending to 2020

New 2,000 MW hydro-power dam in Ethiopia is set to be launched to help boost manufacturing and industrialization of its agrarian economy, Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn has announced.

Construction Workers in Nigeria down tools

Kenya signed a \$408-million loan agreement with Japan that will be used to finance its renewable energy sector. The loan is to fund the construction of a 140-MW geothermal power plant, the Olkaria V.

Australian mining company Peninsula Energy, through local subsidiary Tasman Pacific Minerals Limited and local investment partner Lukisa JV Company, plans to build a large-scale uranium mining operation over 7,000 square kilometres in the Karoo

Moroccans protest UN Chief's position on Western Sahara

Zimbabwe plans \$10bn legal compensation for white farmers

Violent service delivery protest in Umbumbulu Road, south of Durban,

informal settlement Zandspruit resident rioters burn tyres, hurl rocks after illegal power lines removed

About 90% of the world's 67-million domestic workers have no access to social security protection, with migrants left particularly vulnerable, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) said on Monday.

To mark International Women's Day 2016, the International Labour Organization (ILO) released a report showing that women still face enormous challenges finding and keeping decent jobs. Today, women have an employment-to-population ratio of 46 percent compared to nearly 72 percent for men. That represents an improvement of just 0.6 percentage points since 1995.

France, through EDF and Areva, will likely seek funding assistance from other countries like China, as well as Eskom and South Africa's intensive energy users to fund the upfront costs of the programme. However, Envoy of the French President for the nuclear partnership, Dr Pascal Colombani, explained that the full 9 600 MW would unlikely be rolled out at once, so the upfront cost should not be as high as previously quoted in the press.

In East Africa, Kenya's Energy Regulatory Commission seeks to update the current electricity grid code to integrate power generated by renewables.

Moody's said these steps were prompted by the potential deterioration of SA's credit profile as captured by Moody's recent decision to put the country's Baa2 government bond rating on review for downgrade. The ratings agency pointed to the close operational and financial linkages between the national government and municipalities, illustrating the centralised nature of the local public sector.

After ten years in the making, it was possible that South Africa would implement a carbon tax in 2017, as directed in National Treasury's Draft Carbon Tax Bill, published late last year, Carbon Check South Africa said on Friday.

Energy and water resources minister Jeannot Matadi Nenga has said that at least three hydropower projects should come on stream by the end of 2017. The 9.3MW Kakobola dam on the Lukufu River in Bandundu province should be completed by Indian companies Angelique International and Bharat Heavy Electricals Ltd, "hopefully" by the end of Q1 2016 and "almost certainly" by the end of June, though this is at least three months behind the last announced schedule. Matadi Nenga said construction had not been easy, partly because the plant had to be built on a sandy riverbank.

The African Development Bank has outlined plans to invest more than \$1bn in energy projects in Tanzania by 2020 in its 2016-2020 Country Strategy Paper, which was approved on 24 February.

The country is currently planning to become a top regional electricity exporter and under a new development plan, by 2015-2020 Addis Ababa has a vision of raising output to 17,346MW from a current capacity of just over 2,200MW from hydropower, geothermal and wind sources.

Construction works in Nigeria have come to a grinding halt following an indefinite strike by workers in the construction sector allied to the National Union of Civil Engineering, Construction Furniture and Wood Workers, NUCECFWW. The workers have staged a protest against alleged refusal of employer's body under the umbrella of Federation of Construction Industry (FOCI) to abide by the rules of engagement outlined in the National Joint Industrial Council, NJIC.

The Olkaria V is being constructed by Kenya Electricity Generating Company (KenGen), which has said it expects to begin construction in July, with the plant arriving on the grid by the end of 2018.

The plant is part of KenGen's plans to add 720 MW of power, the majority of which will come from geothermal sources, over the next four years.

Residents have until 15 March 2016 to comment on the proposal covering land in the Eastern, Northern and Western Cape provinces. These comments will form part of the group's mining rights application, which will be submitted to the Department of Mineral Resources for review. The mine is expected to operate over thirty years, split into two phases: open pit and underground mining.

Morocco's government had last week accused Ban of not being neutral in the Western Sahara conflict, saying he used the word "occupation" to describe Morocco's presence in the region that has been at the centre of a dispute since 1975.

Zimbabwe plans to compensate white farmers whose lands were seized during a widespread redistribution programme by the government. Earlier in the week, a document was submitted to parliament outlining how farmers will be paid, be it for both land and self-improvement as well as equipment acquired from them.

They are complaining about the nomination of a ward councillor

The report noted that women were by a wide margin the most affected — accounting for 80% of all domestic workers globally. In Italy, about 60% of domestic workers were excluded from social security systems, the report said. The same was true for 30% of domestic workers in France and Spain.

The proportion of women in senior leadership roles around the world has also shown very little improvement over the past decade or so, currently standing at about 22 percent, according to Grant Thornton. The industries where women are most likely to progress into upper management positions are education and social services, along with healthcare. In these two industries, one in four senior managers is female on average. 33 percent of senior management roles in hospitality are held by women, along with 27 percent in the food and beverage sector.

The new data shows employers in the United States adding 242,000 jobs last month. The BLS report also shows the unemployment rate at 4.9%, maintaining the eight-year low it first hit in January. Economists had been calling for around 200,000 payroll additions in February and for the unemployment rate to remain steady.

The number of Americans filing for unemployment benefits has reached its lowest level since October, suggesting sustained strength in the labor market.

Unemployment in the 19-country euro zone fell slightly in January but the figures will be cold comfort for a region seeing slowing growth, business activity and exports and dismal inflation data.

Illinois' unemployment rate is among the worst

Canada loses 2,300 jobs in February and unemployment hits 7.3%, highest level in nearly three years

South Africa's FirstRand is in talks with a trade union about cutting 600 jobs at its retail banking unit, a union official said

More than US\$7-billion was circulating in the informal sector in Zimbabwe despite the fact that the country's budget was just a measly \$4-billion, a local economist has revealed.

Kenya Has the Largest Number of Jobless Youth in East Africa

National minimum wage will hurt workers

African Rainbow Minerals cuts jobs as H1 profits halve

Nigeria, haunted by high unemployment and a sinking oil-dependent economy, is pushing to diversify its economy with a "made in Nigeria" manufacturing campaign

R3 billion Gauteng education budget goes to full ICT in 26 schools

a service delivery protest at the nearby Gomora informal settlement in Hercules

Service delivery protest in Frere

Service delivery protest at uMlazi

Mpumalanga community stands up to demarcation

Over-crowding in public schools remains a concern for the Provincial Department of Education in the North West.

Revisions to payroll counts from December and January were also net positive. The gain for January, first recorded at a light 151,000, was revised up to 172,000. Meanwhile the December count was revised higher to plus 271,000 from the most recent reading of 262,000. Net total job gains in December and January were therefore 30,000 higher than what BLS previously reported. Monthly job gains over the past three months have averaged 228,000.

The Labor Department said on Thursday that initial claims for state unemployment benefits declined 18,000 to a seasonally adjusted 259,000 for the week that ended March 5.

In January, the unemployment rate was 10.3 percent in the euro zone, down from 10.4 percent in December, the lowest level since August 2011, according to Eurostat. Continuing a long-term trend, the lowest unemployment rates were recorded in Germany (4.3 percent) and the highest in Greece (24.6 percent) and Spain (20.5 percent), the statistics agency said.

In January, Illinois' unemployment rate was 6.3 percent, far higher than the nation's 4.9 percent for the same month, according to the latest information released Monday by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Only three other states plus the District of Columbia have unemployment rates worse than Illinois: Mississippi at 6.9 percent; Alaska at 6.6 percent; New Mexico at 6.5 percent; and D.C. at 6.5 percent.

Canada shed jobs in February and the unemployment ticked up to 7.3%, its highest level in nearly three years, as low oil prices continued to hurt the country's resource-dependent provinces. Canada lost a net 2,300 jobs in February, Statistics Canada said Friday. Expectations were for a gain of 10,000 jobs and no change in the jobless rate, according to economists at Royal Bank of Canada

Sasbo, the union that represents workers in the banking industry, was continuing talks with First National Bank in an attempt to avoid job losses, said spokeswoman Vanessa Hattingh. "Sasbo has managed to reduce the affected numbers to some 600. The consultation process continues in an attempt to further reduce the number of forced retrenchments," said Hattingh.

Mugano said there was need for those in the informal sector to formalise their operations and put their money in the bank, saying it helped them access loans. Mugano said there were 5.7 million micro- small to medium enterprises in the country, which employed about 84 percent of the total population who were employed. He said suggestions that the unemployment rate in the country was 80 percent was not correct as these were actually employed in the informal sector.

The report, officially released Tuesday, says Kenya's rate of unemployment -- now standing at three times that of the neighbouring Uganda and Tanzania -- is also among the highest in the world. The report says that nearly one in every five Kenyan youths of working age has no job compared to Uganda and Tanzania where about one in every 20 young people is jobless, underlining the harsh economic reality that Kenyan youths are facing. Unemployment among Kenya's youth is now estimated to stand at 17.3 per cent compared to six per cent for both Uganda and Tanzania.

South Africa's economy is in recession. Many jobs are being lost and others are in jeopardy. Imposing a national minimum wage under current circumstances verges on insanity, an act of unbounded cruelty against the most vulnerable workers in the country. If a national minimum wage is imposed, a large-scale loss of jobs among low-income workers will be inevitable.

ARM cut planned spending for the first half of 2016 by 15% to R1.4 billion (\$92 million) mainly from curtailments in the ferrous metals Black Rock Project, which is its most capital intensive venture.

The R3 billion will go towards the completion of twelve new schools currently at construction stage and rehabilitation of 123 existing schools.

They demand that the mayor addresses them on the failure to deliver

Umjindi residents opposed the proposed merger from the moment they heard about it. In February last year, consultation meetings with its residents "ended abruptly" because they would not let local government and the Municipal Demarcation Board (MDB) members speak, the Barberton Times reported. On March 2, residents blockaded roads in protest against the merger. On March 4, police had to rescue Umjindi's mayor, Lazarus Mashaba, from an angry crowd at another consultative meeting.

The uMgungundlovu District Municipality has implemented a 15% water restriction, it said

Large parts of central Joburg are without water as the Yeoville reservoir ran dry during maintenance work.

Limpopo police have arrested a man allegedly masquerading as a municipal employee and demanding R500 000 from contractors in return for a R305m water project.

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The agricultural sector has suffered losses of about R16-billion as a result of the drought that has devastated many farms, a government statement said

SADC countries will need close to US\$3 billion to deal with food shortages in the 2016- 2017 period following widespread droughts and flooding due to El Nino weather effects.

A cooperation agreement has been signed to build a \$6 billion, 2,600 km pipeline to send natural gas from offshore Mozambique to South Africa, the partners in the project said Tuesday.

The International Centre of Insect Physiology and Ecology (icipe) Launches U.S.\$2.5 Million Renewable Energy Project

The International Centre of Insect Physiology and Ecology (icipe) Launches U.S.\$2.5 Million Renewable Energy Project

A UK firm is to build a solar project worth \$2.5 million (£1.7m) in Kenya.

Malnutrition rates in Zimbabwe are at risk of "spiralling out of control" if more is not done to prevent the crisis, the UN has warned.

A total of 434 pupils were expelled from Gauteng schools in the last financial year, the provincial education department said

The South African Municipal Workers Union (Samwu) has removed its president, Pule Molalenyane, first deputy president, John Dlamini and its national treasurer, Portia Lindi.

TAXI commuters in Joe Slovo near Milneron were left stranded since Monday when taxi drivers started protesting against the City impounding their vehicles.

Municipal spokesperson Mbali Ndlovu said Umgeni Water which supplies potable water to eThekweni Metro, uMgungundlovu District, Ugu District, ILembe District and Msunduzi Local Municipality, has been tasked with ensuring that the restriction is implemented. More than 40 areas are affected including Kensington, Troyeville, Bez Valley, Bertams, Doornfontein, Berea, Yeoville, Hillbrow, Braamfontein, Malvern, Parktown, Cyrildene, Observatory, Bruma and the city centre.

Ledwaba said on Sunday the man had identified himself as an employee of the Sekhukhune Municipality and demanded the cash in return for a multi-million rand water reticulation project intended for seven villages in the District of Sekhukhune.

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Figures gleaned from Government reports and other humanitarian agencies indicate that Zimbabwe will require US\$1,6 billion, Botswana (US\$123 million), Swaziland (US\$274 million), Mozambique (US\$1,8 million), Lesotho (US\$37 million), Namibia (US\$60 million), Malawi (US\$190 million) and Angola (US\$26 million) for drought relief as most countries in the region suffer the worst drought in memory. Governments have funding gaps ranging from 40 to 60 percent and have appealed to international humanitarian agencies for immediate and short-term support to avert starvation.

The planned link will help monetize the vast gas resources of Mozambique's Rovuma Basin and meet growing demand in South Africa for gas for power generation. The line will also provide offtake opportunities for other countries in southern Africa along the way and will also deliver gas to key towns and settlements across Mozambique. The other parties involved are Mozambique's state-owned Empresa Nacional de Hidrocarbonetos, private sector consortium Profin, SacOil and the China Petroleum Pipeline Bureau, a leading Chinese and international pipeline construction company.

Funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), to the tune of US\$ 2.5 million (Sh254M), the scheme is part of the Greening of icipe Initiative.

In addition to renewable energy, the initiative includes energy saving and water conservation measures, with the aim of reducing the Centre's carbon footprint and making its environment more eco-friendly.

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The UN's children's agency, Unicef, said nearly 33,000 children were suffering from severe acute malnutrition, and they were in urgent need of treatment.

The majority, 347, were kicked out for selling, possessing, or using drugs, or drinking alcohol. A further 65 were expelled for either threatening or assaulting a pupil or teacher, stealing, having a weapon, or failing to adhere to their school's code of conduct.

In a statement, Samwu said the decision was taken during its central executive committee meeting on Monday.

Samwu said the union's executive convened after provinces had attempted to persuade national office bearers to convene.

Samwu said after the Cosatu special congress, they were shocked to learn that former national office bearers were attending meetings in "dark corners" and "conniving" in connection with a new federation.

Samwu said the office bearers removed the deputy general secretary, Duma Lebakeng, as well as the Eastern Cape provincial chairperson, Gauteng provincial chairperson, North Cape chairperson and KZN provincial office bearers. This was done without following proper constitutional parameters.

At least 60 shops owned by foreign nationals in Mookgophong, Limpopo, were forced to close on Tuesday after protesting residents allegedly looted and vandalised some of them.

Zandspruit on the West Rand was a no-go area on Wednesday morning after residents took to the streets in a service delivery protest.

Student protesters cause over R145m in damages in three months

The most notable cost was at the University of KwaZulu-Natal with an estimated R82 million.

This was followed by the University of the Western Cape with more than R46 million worth of damages. Tshwane University of Technology had over R5 million worth of damages and was the third highest. The least affected universities were Rhodes University with R250 000, Walter Sisulu University with R351 287 and the University of Johannesburg with R345 000.

Nigeria: FG Uncovers 11,000 Ghost Workers, As Buhari Orders Routine Audit of MDAs

Not long after it eliminated 23,000 ghost workers from the Federal Payroll and saved N2.29 Billion, the Federal Government on Wednesday said it has discovered another 11,000 ghost workers even as President Muhammadu Buhari issued an executive fiat for a routine audit of all ministries, agencies and parastatals.

Nigerian Workers Shut Petroleum Agency Over Leadership Tussle

The offices of the Petroleum Products Pricing Regulatory Agency (PPPRA) nationwide were shut down yesterday by staff of the agency under the umbrella body of the Petroleum and Natural Gas Senior Staff Association of Nigeria (PENGASSAN), PPPRA Branch, over alleged imposition of an acting executive secretary on the agency.

Ghanaian Businesses are expected to massively lay off workers in the coming months due to the unfriendly business conditions in the country since 2013 up till date.

The year 2015 is on record in Ghana as one of the most challenging and exceptional years on many fronts. The volatility experienced on global commodity and currency markets, coupled with Ghana's macroeconomic headwinds and three consecutive years of an energy crisis had a material adverse impact on business.

Zimbabwe: 13 000 people missing From Govt Payroll

At least 13 000 people have been rendering service to Government but have not been captured on its pay system, creating an obligation of more than \$84 million per year in salary arrears to the already cash-squeezed Treasury, as a Civil Service audit report has revealed. The audit reveals that 96 percent of the number was found in the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education

Nigeria: Protest in Bauchi Over Delay in Pension Payment

Pensioners in Bauchi state on Tuesday besieged the office of the State Accountant-General to protest the delay in the payment of their pension for the month of February. The pensioners expressed their displeasure over the delay in the payment of their entitlements in spite of the fact that they had been verified in the on-going verification of workers and pensioners in the state.

Victory for Workers and Cosatu As Parliament Adopts the Revenue Laws Amendment Bill

The Congress of South African Trade Unions very much welcomes the adoption of the Revenue Laws Amendment Bill by parliament today. This Bill represents a huge and a major victory for workers and COSATU in particular because officially government has agreed to COSATU and workers' demands; to stop the Taxation Laws Amendment Act's compulsory annuitisation of provident funds. COSATU's engagements with the ANC, SACP, Presidency, Government and Parliament have been successful. Government has agreed to COSATU's demands to: Stop compulsory annuitisation with immediate effect; Allow workers to still have access to their savings as before; To release the long awaited comprehensive social security paper by June 2016 for engagement; -To negotiate with COSATU and other stakeholders at Nedlac on retirement reforms and comprehensive social security before government may propose any further legal or policy changes. These agreements are now part of the Revenue Laws Amendment Bill and Parliamentary Report, which will be adopted in the National Assembly today. Government will also be required to submit reports every six 6 months to Parliament on these engagements with COSATU and other stakeholders. This is now set in law in the Bill and Parliamentary Report.

Ethiopia: Ministry Prepares New Civil Servants Draft Proclamation

The Ministry of Public Service and Human Resource Development, has prepared a draft proclamation which allows civil servants to get annual salary increment on the basis of their performance.

The new proclamation helps to properly implement the Job Evaluation and Grading (JEG) reform, Alemaw Mengist, State Minister of Public Service and Human Resource Development, told FBC Friday.

The amendment is required because a study confirmed that there are gaps in the existing proclamation, he said.

Mozambique: National Minimum Wage Could Be Adjusted in April

The CTA warned this week that the country's economy and salaries could be affected by the current national situation characterized by drought, floods, political and military tension and the decline of the metical against the dollar. The alert was launched in Maputo by the CTA's vice president, Rui Monteiro, at the end of the first plenary session of the Consultative Labour Commission (CCT), which took stock of the economic and social performance of 2015 and will provide bases for the salary adjustment in Mozambique. The national minimum wage is adjusted annually with effect from April 1. According to Monteiro, the tension could retract carriers and affect tourism activity, while natural disasters also influence economic growth forecasts.

Kenya: Bill Passed By Senate Expected to Create Jobs

The County Industrial Development Bill is seeking to ease the setting up of small industries to add value to products. County governments will be at the forefront in providing financial and material support to individuals or groups interested in establishing manufacturing plants. The industries, some of which will be funded by donors and the private sector, will be selected in public forums held at ward, constituency and county levels.

Nigeria: National Hospital Staff Protest Over Unpaid Allowances

Three unions in the National Hospital, Abuja yesterday commenced a three-day protest over unpaid teaching allowances since June 2013. The unions include the Senior Staff Association, National Association of Nigerian Nurses and Midwives and the Medical and Network Association. Chairman of the Senior Staff Association, Comrade Jeleeli Adewale Kilani, said they were asking for the reinstatement of teaching allowance of staff on the Consolidated Health Salary Structure (CONHESS) 7 and 8 which was stopped in June 2013.

Nigeria: W'Bank - Nigeria Needs 40 Million Jobs to Absorb Unemployed By 2030

The World Bank on Tuesday estimated that with the country's population of over 170 million, it would require between 40 million to 50 million new jobs by 2030 to absorb new labour market entrants. It also noted the informal sector of the economy appeared to have greater potential for growth and job creation.

South Africa: R5 Billion Solar Plant Opens in Northern Cape

The 50 MW Bokpoort plant forms part of South Africa's Renewable Energy Independent Power Producers Procurement Program (REIPPP).

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Tanzania: Local Engineers Attend GE Oil & Gas University

Like many African countries, Tanzania has no shortage of supply of natural oil and gas. However, there is a shortage of skills and experience in this sector within Tanzania. To address this, multinational companies like GE are working hard to empower local people by building valuable skills, and helping to ensure the sustainable development of the country.

Africa: Powerless - Lack of Grid Access, Unreliable Electricity Supply Still Plague Majority of Africans, Survey Finds

While more Africans live within reach of an electric grid than a decade ago, only four in 10 enjoy a reliable power supply, according to new survey findings from Afrobarometer. In some countries, that proportion is four in 100. Based on nearly 54,000 interviews in 36 African countries in 2014/2015, Afrobarometer's report concludes that more than a century after the invention of the light bulb, a majority of Africans are still in the dark, either intermittently or constantly.

Nigeria: GE to Support Bresson's 500 Megawatt Power Project in Nigeria

As the Global Energy giant, General Electric (GE), has thrown its weight behind Bresson's plans to provide 500 Mega Watts (MW) of electricity to the national grid by 2017. The Managing Director of Gas power Systems, Mohammed Mijindadi who disclosed this over the weekend during Bresson AS working visit to the Vice-President, Yemi Osinbajo, added that the project has become a priority.

THE zesa Holdings board has ratified the 200 megawatts Dema Emergency Diesel Power Project, paving way for installation works to begin.

Sakunda Holdings won the tender to install the plant.

This comes as local electrical equipment manufacturer Helcraw Electrical (Pvt) Limited has secured \$120 million from the African Import and Export Bank for the construction of another emergency power plant in Mutare. The Mutare plant is expected to add 120MW to the national grid. Government classified the projects as "urgent" as it works on other big projects under Zim-Asset to arrest power shortages bedeviling the country. The Dema plant is expected to start generating electricity in the next 12 weeks, in time to meet the winter peak demand.

British Members of Parliament have warned that plans to deport skilled migrant workers who earn less than £35 000 per year and originate from non-European Union (EU) countries will create a skills shortage in the economy.

At least 40 000 migrants, among them Zimbabweans, will be affected by the new regulations which come into effect on April 6. The new earnings threshold will particularly affect those in low skilled jobs. The United Kingdom Office of National Statistics reported the Zimbabwean population in Britain increased from 47 158 in 2001 to an estimated 200 000 in 2010.

Gauteng officials will be criminally charged for tender irregularities, the provincial health department said

"The Gauteng Department of Health investigation into alleged wrongful awarding of R32-million security contracts has recommended that criminal charges be instituted against the chairperson..." it said in a statement. "It was also recommended that four officials who were part of the BEC (Bid Evaluation Committee) be charged departmentally for their role in the said process." The companies in question were Might Women Investments (which was awarded a R6-million contract), Skets Projects (awarded a R7-million contract), Mjayeli Security (awarded a R9-million contract) and Bokone Bokone Guarding (awarded a R10-million contract).

THE Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) has called for a thorough investigation and "stern action against all those businesses, which are found to have tampered with their electricity connections to avoid paying large amounts on their electricity bills".

Zambia seeks to add 420 MW to its power grid in 2016

Zambia is planning to add 420 megawatts (MW) to its electricity grid this year as it embarks on new generation projects, the head of its investment agency said on Tuesday.

The country's power shortfall has risen to 1,000 MW from 700 MW in November due to lower hydro generation as water levels have dropped because of drought. Zambia Development Agency Director General Patrick Chisanga said the 420 MW would come from a new 300 MW coal-fired power plant, and a 120 MW hydroelectric one.

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U.N. food experts warned Tuesday of "alarming" levels of starvation in South Sudan with food prices at record highs after two years of civil war marked by atrocities.

Dubia based Dodsal group on Monday announced that it has discovered gas reserves worth an estimated \$8 billion in Tanzania

Wall street journal reports that the discovery could help lift the eastern African nation's economy. The family owned conglomerate said it struck 2.7 trillion cubic feet of natural gas deposits at a field in the Ruvu Basin which is located about 50 kilometers west of the country's largest city, Dar es Salaam.

Deputy President Cyril Ramaphosa has called for a massive expansion of South Africa's skills base to ensure people benefit from the country's natural resources, create more jobs and boost the ailing economy.

Child labour rises in Gaza amid soaring unemployment

With a skilled citizenry, the country could expand its industrial sector and process more raw materials because skills grow the economy, create jobs and "tend to raise the standard of living and reduce inequality", he said.

Child labour has risen sharply in Gaza, where youngsters toiling in garages and on construction sites have become breadwinners for families feeling the brunt of the Palestinian enclave's 43 percent unemployment rate. In the past five years, the number of working children between the ages of 10 and 17 has doubled to 9,700 in the territory, according to the Palestinian Bureau of Statistics.

Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) in Mpumalanga has appealed to President Jacob Zuma to intervene in the five month old farm workers strike

Workers at Umbhaha Banana farm have been on strike since November last year. The workers are demanding to be unionised. Cosatu claims to have exhausted the entire avenue to end the strike amicably, but failed. However, the farm management is refusing to allow unions to recruit members on the farm.

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Malawi and Mozambique can't agree on refugee crisis

Malawi is at loggerheads with Mozambique over the handling of over 12 000 Mozambican refugees, currently living in makeshift camps at Kapise in the border district of Mwanza. The bone of contention between the two neighbouring countries is over where the refugees should be moved. Malawi wants them relocated to Luwani Refugee Camp, which at the height of Mozambican civil war hosted over 300 000 Mozambican refugees. Mozambique is against that, saying the refugees should be repatriated back home.

Mozambique launches 100MW floating power station

Turkey-based Karadeniz Holding is to supply Mozambique and Zambia with 100MW through a floating power station, launched over the weekend by the two state presidents.

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Turkey-based Karadeniz Holding is to supply Mozambique and Zambia with 100MW through a floating power station, launched over the weekend by the two state presidents. City of Cape Town units have been on the scene since Friday after backyarders attempted to invade pockets of land in and around the area, where they set up structures on private property belonging to Greenacres farm owners.

Authorities are out in their numbers in Dunoon after attempted land grabs resulted in unrest in the area over the long weekend.

When their plans were thwarted by the authorities, disgruntled residents apparently took to the N7 and attacked the Dunoon MyCiTi bus station and threw stones at passing vehicles.

Russian, SA unions differ on nuclear job opportunities

A Russian nuclear union that is keen to win labour support for South Africa's new build programme will have a tough job winning over trade federation Cosatu. The campaign is part of Rosatom's bid to win the 9.6 GW nuclear build programme, which is planned to take place from 2023 to 2030. Igor Fomichev, president of the Russian Trade Union of Nuclear Power and Industry Workers, told Fin24 this week at the Nuclear Africa Conference outside Johannesburg that Cosatu members are interested in his presentation and "agreed to further relations".

The Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) on Friday added its voice to growing concerns about rising interest rates, and condemned the Reserve Bank's decision to increase the repo rate by 25 basis points

The Reserve Bank's Monetary Policy Committee on Thursday hiked the repo rate – the rate at which commercial banks borrow funds from the Reserve Bank – from 6.75 percent to 7 percent per annum in a bid to tame rising inflation. This meant that the prime interest rate was now 10.5 percent.

Protests erupt over water scarcity in Kishtwar

Reports said residents of Tregam, Sarkoot, Pochhal and other parts of Kishtwar staged demonstrations in protest against acute scarcity of drinking water and failure of the PHE department to meet the requirement of the people.

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Labour unions are being forced to find ways to survive as companies retrench workers or close down as they battle the struggling economy

Although the highest job losses are in mining, other sectors such as transport and logistics, communications, wholesale and retail trade are also shedding jobs.

Unions are not only facing massive losses of members, but they are also spending money challenging companies retrenching workers.

According to Corruption Watch annual report released on Wednesday, schools were corruption hotspots for 2015.

The investigation revealed that nine out of the 10 cases were of principals abusing school funds for their own personal gain.

According David Lewis from Corruption Watch the number of reports they've received relating to corruption in schools amounts to hundreds.

Cosatu has expressed concern about job losses if companies quit iSithebe in the wake of the rioting which has destroyed millions of rands in property.

In a press statement released in the aftermath of protesters burning, stoning and looting factories and setting trucks and trailers alight, provincial secretary of the trade union federation, Edwin Mkhize, said the closure of factories would leave many of the 20 000 people employed in the industrial area out of work, "subjecting them to extreme poverty".

Cosatu wants Cape Town to cut R50 million advertising budget

Cosatu on Monday called on National Treasury to compel the City of Cape Town and the provincial government to stop what it termed the "fruitless and wasteful expenditure of public funds" on advertising.

The South African Medical Association (SAMA) trade union has been dissolved as the organisation admits to service delivery challenges to members under its current model.

The move will have a number of ripple effects including Cosatu's loss of an affiliate.

SAMA's board of directors penned a letter to members recently, explaining that the adjustment was meant to improve and optimise representation of employed doctors in both private and public institutions.

Public sector doctors were the union's main members, while specialist and private practice general practitioners were catered to within other divisions of the association.

South Africa's active solar regions to multiply as firms factor in grid risk	South Africa's energy minister Tina Joemat-Pettersson opened March 17 the latest phase of Solar Capital's 175 MW De Aar solar farm, making the project the largest solar farm completed in Africa and the Middle East. The farm was built in phases of capacity 85 MW and 90 MW and the whole plant took 28 months to complete.
South Africa's active solar regions to multiply as firms factor in grid risk	South Africa's energy minister Tina Joemat-Pettersson opened March 17 the latest phase of Solar Capital's 175 MW De Aar solar farm, making the project the largest solar farm completed in Africa and the Middle East.
South Africa's active solar regions to multiply as firms factor in grid risk	The farm was built in phases of capacity 85 MW and 90 MW and the whole plant took 28 months to complete.
Egyptian Holders of postgraduate degrees as of 2014 protested on al-Qasr al-Aini Street to demand their appointment in government institutions.	they complain that they are unemployed or are employed below their education level,
Violent taxi drivers strike in Durban	
Brazzaville shopkeepers protest 'massive fraud' in presidential poll	
School's out in Hungary in protest at government control	
California to raise state's minimum wage to \$10.50 an hour next year	
The Australian Council of Trade Unions wants a 4.6% rise for the lowest paid, but Australian Industry Group calls for 'modest' \$10.50 a week	
Peruvian raise the minimum wage on Wednesday by 13 percent to 850 soles (\$252) per month, effective May 1, following pay-increase proposals by the country's presidential candidates.	
Pennsylvania Governor Tom Wolf raised the minimum wage for state workers and employees of some contractors by 40 percent to \$10.15 an hour	
Prime Minister David Cameron unveiled a new savings scheme aimed at low-paid workers – where the government pays in a bonus of up to £1,200.	
Ontario's minimum wage to jump 15 cents to \$11.40 in October	
Farmworkers across South Africa will be earning a little more after the new minimum wage came into effect on Tuesday. Workers who work nine hours a day will now earn R128.26. This is an increase of R8.20 per hour.	
Evraz Highveld Steel and Vanadium employees received their retrenchment letters, but there is no word of any retrenchment packages.	
More than 5,000 people have taken voluntary retrenchment packages at Lonmin following a restructuring process,	
Zambia's Chibuluma mine cuts 2016 retrenchment numbers	Zambia's Chibuluma Mines Plc has reduced the number of employees it will lay off as it grapples with lower copper prices, opting to reduce output instead of outsourcing, it said on Friday.
	The mining firm, majority-owned by South Africa's Metorex, a unit of China's Jinchuan, said in December it planned to lay off 263 of its 514 employees in the first quarter of 2016.
Telkom in mass voluntary retrenchment offer to its workforce	Telkom has offered voluntary retrenchments to a large portion of its workforce on Friday.
	Telkom CEO Siphon Maseko has provided an update on the consultation process with unions regarding the company's restructuring plans.
	the company said that it faced a situation where the unions have blocked all its attempts to have meaningful discussions with them.
China to lay off millions in biggest retrenchment program in nearly 20 years, sources say	China aims to lay off 5 million-6 million state workers over the next two to three years as part of efforts to curb industrial overcapacity and pollution, two sources said, Beijing's boldest retrenchment program in almost two decades.
	China's leadership, obsessed with maintaining stability and making sure redundancies do not lead to unrest, will spend nearly 150 billion yuan (\$23 billion) to cover layoffs in just the coal and steel sectors in the next 2-3 years.
Telkom wants to cut 6 000 jobs by the end of 2016	
Botswana nickel miner to retrench workers to survive cash crunch	The cash-strapped Botswana nickel producer Bamangwato Concession Limited (BCL) has announced plans to retrench thousands of workers and dispose of non-core assets, including a private jet, in order to survive a crippling internal liquidity crunch that has been aggravated by the slump in the demand and price of nickel on the global commodity market.

Zimbabwe DIVERSIFIED telecommunications group, Econet Wireless will embark on a massive retrenchment exercise as it streamlines its operations in the face of a tough operating environment, businessdigest has learnt
About 78% of jobs lost come from finance, insurance sectors
ATLATS Resources, a platinum development company, is to cut more than half of some 6,101 employees at its Bokoni Mines operation in the north-eastern Bushveld Complex in terms of a restructuring plan first announced in September

Retrenchments in Malaysia hit five-year high, says ministry
AMCU VOWS TO HALT 32,000 POSSIBLE JOB CUTS

The Zimbabwean cash-strapped Chitungwiza Municipality has resolved to pay \$250 000 as retrenchment packages to over 200 workers who are staging a sit-in strike at its offices.
Eurozone Unemployment Rate Drops To Lowest Level Since August 2011

France's unemployment rate rose 1.1 percent in the month of February, pushing jobless numbers to a record 3.591 million people, the Labour Ministry said
Western Cape aims to create 300,000 new jobs in the next five years

Greece's unemployment rate stood at 24.4 percent in the 4th quarter of 2015, compared to 24 percent in the previous quarter and 26.1 percent in the corresponding quarter in 2014, a survey published by the Hellenic Statistical Authority, ELSTAT, revealed on Thursday.

Western Cape to CREATE OVER 100,000 JOBS IN AGRICULTURAL SECTOR

The Brazilian government released new figures Wednesday showing the number of suspected and confirmed cases of babies born with undersized skulls and brains continues to rise.

Nelson Mandela Bay contract workers protest for permanent jobs

truck set alight on Tuesday on N14 near Delareyville by Botselo Milling strikers
UIF to pour R35bn into job-creation scheme
City of Cape Town secures job opportunities for disabled communities

KZN teacher unions call for hike in Grade R teacher salaries

The highest number of retrenchments within a five-year span was recorded last year, according to the Human Resources Ministry, with 38,499 layoffs across all sectors. -The highest number of retrenchments was recorded in 2007 (42,336), 2008 (47,145) and 2009 (64,516). - See more at:
<http://www.themalaymailonline.com/malaysia/article/retrenchments-hit-five-year-high-says-ministry#sthash.X5Vtr4Or.dpuf>

Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union (Amcu) says it will put a stop to the possible 32,000 job opportunity cuts in the industry by diverting skills elsewhere.

Unemployment in the 19-nation eurozone dipped for the sixth consecutive month in January, dropping to 10.3 percent — the lowest level since August 2011. The unemployment rate in the 28-nation European Union, meanwhile, was recorded at 8.9 percent in January — the lowest since May 2009 and down from 9 percent in December.

Engineering News writes that, leveraging the Western Cape's reputation as the "digital gateway to Africa" and a growing platform for new entrepreneurs, provincial Economic Opportunities Minister Alan Winde on Wednesday recommitted his department to further promoting job creation.

His goal is to add over 300,000 jobs to the economy in the next five years. In his Budget Vote Speech for the 2016/17 financial year, Winde revealed that the Department of Economic Development and Tourism had received R486-million to fund its fight against unemployment in the province. Amongst the various departmental allocations, the Skills Development and Innovation programme would receive R63.24-million in the current financial year.

The Western Cape government has set a target to create more than a 100,000 jobs in the agricultural sector over the next five years.

Delivering his budget speech in the provincial legislature yesterday, Agriculture, Economic Opportunities and Tourism MEC, Alan Winde, identified job creation, expanding export routes and bailing-out struggling farmers as among the department's top priorities.

Since Oct. 22, when reporting microcephaly became obligatory in Brazil, there have been a total of 745 confirmed microcephaly cases, the ministry said. Lab testing has confirmed the presence of the mosquito-borne Zika virus in 88 of those cases so far.

HeraldLive reports that two groups of contract workers protested outside the Nelson Mandela Bay council chambers on Wednesday, pleading with the municipality to hire them permanently.

SABC News reports that the City of Cape Town says it has secured job opportunities for about 100 people with disabilities through its Vulnerable Groups Programme.

The Mercury reports that teacher unions in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) are taking on the Department of Basic Education demanding better working conditions for Grade R teachers, starting with the doubling of their salaries.

The unions claim the sub-par treatment of the Grade R teachers is leading to instability which undermines the department's own plans. Deputy President of the National Teachers' Union (Natu), Allen Thompson, stated: "We feel the R24-million allocated for payments of their stipend is not adequate. They should be paid R10,000 a month because the current R6,000 stipend is way too little."

Rio Tinto's ZAC mine closed after arson attacks over jobs for locals	ANA reports that arson attacks, apparently related to jobs for local community members, have forced the closure of the Zululand Anthracite Colliery (ZAC) near Ulundi in northern KwaZulu-Natal. The company, in which Rio Tinto has 74% stake, announced on Monday that operations had been suspended at the mine "until these perpetrators are arrested and the security situation can be brought under control".
Magistrates in uproar over 'sub-inflation pay hikes'	ANA reports that magistrates are in an uproar, and their morale "very low", in their struggle to secure salaries, and regular increases, that put them on a par with judges.
NHS 'is fuelling migration crisis' by hiring foreign nurses	NHS trusts and the Department of Health will be condemned for preferring to fly in recruits from overseas rather than spend on home-grown talent. More than 8,000 nurses were brought in from abroad in 2014-15, nearly double the figure from the year before. The numbers are expected to soar again this year after Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt waived a cap on non-EU nurses before Christmas to avoid a winter crisis in the NHS.
Employment in formal nonagricultural sector inches up 0.5% in fourth quarter	The latest Quarterly Employment Statistics (QES) survey showed the number of employees increased by 43,000, or 0.5%, to 8.99-million in the fourth quarter of 2015. This represented an increase of 6,000 year-on-year, or a rise of 0.1% in 2015, compared with the year to December 2014. Mining jobs continued to decline, showing a year-on-year decrease of 5.9%, or 29,000 employees, to 462,000 by December 2015. The construction and transport industries also recorded decreases. However, the trade, finance and other business services and community and social services industries registered quarterly gains of 2.3%, 0.8% and 0.5% respectively to 1.9-million, two-million and 2.5-million.
Zaire: More than 830 migration flow recorded at border with DRC	The SME spokesperson, Domingos Sebastião, said that 319 citizens enter regularly the national territory coming from DRC. He also mentioned 214 national citizens, of 516 people, as having crossed legally the border bound for DRC. The official, who was speaking Sunday to broadcasting radio programme of provincial command of National Police, noted the movements were recorded at border check points of Luvo (Mbanza Congo), Soyo and Cuimba. He added that there was an increase of 96 migratory flows compared to the previous week
Bojanala bus strike leaves Rustenburg commuters stranded	SABC News reported on Wednesday that Bojanala Bus Services in Rustenburg, North West, had come to a halt, with drivers on strike for a second day demanding better wages and fair labour practices, among other things.
Kenya: Bolloré Africa Logistics hired for the Turkana wind project	In Kenya, logistics network firm , Bolloré Africa Logistics has been awarded the contract to operate logistics for the 310MW wind power project in Turkana. According to the Daily Nation, Vestas Wind Systems, which is supplying 365 wind turbines for the Lake Turkana wind power plant has contracted the logistics company to facilitate customs operations and transport of the cargo from the port of Mombasa to the project site in Loyangalani District, Marsabit West County
The Turkish ambassador to Ethiopia had disclosed that Ethiopia remains the biggest recipient of Turkish direct investment in Africa.	he newly-appointed Turkish envoy, Fatih Ulusoy, said the horn of Africa's nation had so far attracted \$2.5 billion of the total \$6 billion Turkish direct foreign investments in Africa. Ethiopia and Turkey also have strong commercial relationship with their trade volume seeing substantial growth every year
The political risk insurance and credit enhancement arm of the World Bank Group said on Wednesday that it was providing guarantees of almost €700 million for loans by international commercial banks to shore up Eskom's power transmission infrastructure in South Africa.	
Hundreds of SABC employees to be disciplined for medical aid fraud	In September, the SABC put the number of employees implicated in fraud relating to its medical aid, administered by Medscheme, at "just under 200". The number only includes employees based at it's the SABC's head office in Auckland Park. The employees were allegedly paid out by health professionals for services the latter claimed from the medical aid but which were not rendered. Because disciplining some 200 workers would have taken an unreasonably long time, the SABC chose to completely waive formal disciplinary hearings in favour of having the employees make individual representations, which would be considered by a chairperson.
South African gold-mining companies, some of which are being sued for historical incidents of lung disease, formed a working group to pay compensation to affected workers and prevent new cases occurring.	The group, which includes AngloGold Ashanti Ltd., Anglo American South Africa and Sibanye Gold Ltd., plans to set up a so-called legacy fund to supplement compensation paid by the state, it said in an op-ed in Johannesburg-based City Press Sunday.
Rwanda has signed a \$24.17 million financing agreement with the African Development Bank (AfDB) in support of the regional 147MW Ruzizi III hydropower plant (HPP).	The Ruzizi III plant is a regional project shared by Rwanda, Burundi, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and is expected to generate more than 147MW of electricity.
Sterling and Wilson commissions 90MW solar PV plant in South Africa	Sterling and Wilson, a leading global solar EPC with around 1,000MW of installed solar PV capacity on ground, has commissioned its 90 MWp solar photovoltaic power plant in South Africa. The solar power plant commissioned by S&W has been set up for Solar Capital De Aar (Pty.) Ltd close to De Aar in the Northern Cape region of South Africa.

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power squabbles within the SA Municipal Workers' Union (Samwu) have left thousands of workers confused.

This after two Eastern Cape executive members, provincial chairman David Toyisi and deputy secretary Vuyokazi Daniels who were elected in May last year, said they did not recognise expulsion letters sent to them last week Tuesday by union president Pule Molalenyane as he was also recalled from his position last Monday. Their disputed expulsion came after months of fighting and division between the Eastern Cape's executive members.

Food and fuel prices send consumer inflation sharply higher to 7% in February

The consumer price index increased by 1.4% month-on-month in February. Food inflation was headed for double-digit increases, Econometrix chief economist Azar Jammine pointed out and added: "Inflation will come back down in the next two months but then start picking up again in the second half of the year on higher food and possibly also petrol prices, unless oil prices fall."

South Africa may trim its estimate for corn production this season by 2.5 percent because of damage from the worst drought in more than a century, a survey showed

The Crop Estimates Committee may say that farmers will harvest 7.1 million metric tons this year, the median prediction of 10 analysts in a Bloomberg survey shows. That's less than the Feb. 25 forecast of 7.26 million tons by the CEC, and would be the smallest amount since 2007. It would also be 29 percent less than the 9.96 million tons produced in 2015.

BDLive reports that SA is losing thousands of teachers annually, with most headed to the United Kingdom and the exodus showing no sign of slowing down.

South Africa's Land Bank offers concessional loans to drought-hit farmers

The bank, which focuses on the agriculture sector, said in a statement it had raised 400 million rand (\$26.70 million) from the government-owned Industrial Development Corporation (IDC) for drought relief measures.

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ZIMBABWE's cash crisis is so severe some banks are no longer supplying dollars and are dispensing South African currency, said the main opposition party, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC).

SA's artisan development model 'problematic', says Treasury's Jonas

Engineering News reports that Deputy Finance Minister Mcebisi Jonas said on Thursday that if a country's artisan skills base was weak, chances were its economy would be weak. He was speaking at the opening of Mercedes-Benz SA's (MBSA's) new artisan Learning Centre in East London. The Centre is the product of a R130-million joint investment by MBSA and National Treasury's Jobs Fund. Mcebisi said one part of the solution to improving artisan development in SA was to "rev up investment" in this field, with the second part being the realisation that the current model for artisan development was "problematic, by and large".

South Africa's 2016 maize crop seen down nearly 30 percent on drought

South Africa will likely harvest 7.1 million metric tons of maize in 2016, 29 percent less than the 9.95 million metric tons reaped last year because of a drought and late plantings, a government agency said on Wednesday. The forecast harvest, which the Crop Estimates Committee (CEC) said would be the smallest crop since 2007, is above market expectations of 6.77 million metric tons, according to a Reuters' poll of traders.

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Mozambique continue cereal imports as drought worsens

The Mozambican Minister of Agriculture and Food Security, Jose Pacheco has said his country will continue to import wheat in order to meet current needs and contain a severe drought sweeping across the southern region. Speaking on Tuesday, Pacheco said that wheat is a cereal deficit in its production, a fact that puts more weight on the scale of food imports.

Drought causes S. Africa potato prices to double

An industry body reports that the worst drought in more than a century has drastically cut potato yields in growing regions, causing the prices of the commodity to more than double this year, in comparison with last.

Zimbabwe government orders 500 000t Drought Relief Grain
African Rainbow Minerals (ARM) said on Friday its first-half profit halved due to sharply softer commodity prices, prompting layoffs and costs cuts to stay afloat.

Mozambique to build \$500m dam to contain drought, produce energy

The Mozambican authorities say work is expected to kick off in May to build a US\$500-million dam to supply many parts of the southern Mozambican province of Maputo with water and energy, APA learn here on Monday. Construction of the Moamba Major Dam over the Incomati River will last three years to complete and it will be carried out by a consortium led by Brazilian multinational, Andrade Gutieres.

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KZN freezes non-essential posts in order to cut costs

Finance MEC Belinda Scott said the province's finances were under pressure and she had implemented a number of measures to ensure that cost cutting took place. The biggest effort to cut costs would come from freezing non-essential posts in the provincial government. The health and education departments were excluded from these freezes. The provincial government hoped to save R811 million through freezing some posts and eliminating others that had not been filled and were not essential. At the end of the 2014/15 financial year the provincial government employed 212,839 people

The United States government will provide \$50,000 (approximately M768, 000) to improve access to safe drinking water and provide hygiene education in two districts of Mafeteng and Mohale's Hoek, hardest hit by the ongoing drought, APA learns here Wednesday.

Private hospitals short of nurses and specialists

60-plus hospitals were short of nurses and specialists, and Mediclinic South Africa CEO Koert Pretorius indicated that nursing salaries were the largest operating input cost due to the shortage.

Eskom tariff increase to cost SA 5 000 jobs

The 9.4% Eskom tariff increase that will take effect on Friday will add more than 1% to the inflation experienced by low-income households and cost the economy 5 172 jobs, energy regulator Nersa said in granting the increases.

Keaton Energy's Vaalkrantz Anthracite Colliery had an illegal underground sit-in which took place last week as underground mining was temporarily on stop.

An unspecified number of workers, employed by the liquidated Nasonti Mining Services and contracted to Keaton subsidiary Leeuw Mining & Exploration, embarked on the protest over a pay dispute on 29 February. It is understood that the workers refused to leave the shaft until wages and retrenchment packages, which they claim are owed to them, were paid out. The employees were served with an eviction order on 2 March. The employees only agreed to exit the underground workings after Leeuw's mine management presented a proposed three-part resolution plan.

angry women farmworkers who say they were unfairly dismissed from a farm in Philippi have blockaded the gates of the farm, preventing the sale of produce.

The women accuse the farm owner, Leon Rix, of racism and ill treatment, but he has denied the allegations. The group of about 20 permanent farmworkers were apparently given their wages and told to leave and return after a month because there was no work for them.