



Minister visits Karoo Radio Astronomy Reserve - 2006/05/29

Major role players in the Karoo Array Telescope ([KAT](#)) project visited the proposed site for this technology demonstrator for the proposed radio telescope, the Square Kilometre Array ([SKA](#)) on 2006 May 29.

The photo-essay that follows shows events during the day.

The South African Minister for Science and Technology, together with the Premier of the Northern Cape Province, inspected the sites proposed for the SKA, KAT, C-Bass and other radio astronomy projects. The area will be declared in due course as an astronomy reserve. The visit formed part of a 3 day discussion which focused on the commitment from National and Provincial Government to the establishment of the astronomy reserve and the building of the Karoo Array Telescope and siting of the C-Bass Experiment in the reserve. C-Bass is a niche experiment that represents an international collaboration between a number of universities (Caltech, Oxford, Manchester and Rhodes) and HartRAO.

The proposed reserve is located 94 km from the town of Carnarvon in the Northern Cape Province. Minister Mosibudi Mangena was accompanied by Premier Dipuo Peters, Mayor Burnette Slambee - the Mayor of the Kareeberg District (which includes the town of Carnarvon), Dr. Michael Hendricks - Director General of the Northern Cape Province, Dr. Phil Mjwara - Director General of the DST, Dr. Adi Paterson - Deputy Director General of the DST, Dr. Rob Adam - Chairperson of the SA SKA Steering Committee, Mr. Gomolemo Archie Lucas - the Member of the Northern Cape Executive Council responsible for Science and Education, Dr. Bernie Fanaroff - Project Manager, Prof. Justin Jonas - Project Scientist and HartRAO Director, Ms. Anita Loots - KAT Project Manager, Ms. Ferrial Adams - GIS and Environmental Manager, Dr. Adrian Tiplady - Assistant Project Scientist, Ms. Kim de Boer - Assistant Project Manager and Mr. Albertus Van Schalkwyk - Carnarvon Town Manager.

The Minister and the Premier said that they were excited to see the site after reading many reports.

Six members of the media accompanied the delegation to the site. They were briefed in depth on Sunday night before the visit and have expressed interest in remaining in close contact with the project.

The farm owner, Jan Louw, and his daughter greeted the delegation on arrival at the site. Mr. Louw is fully supportive of the project and has maintained the site and diesel generator for the RFI equipment for the SKA project and on many occasions has provided accommodation and meals to the team.

At the site Prof. Justin Jonas explained to the delegation why the area is ideal for siting astronomical instruments operating at all wavelengths. He also explained that the declaration of the astronomy reserve and the construction of the KAT, C-Bass and possibly the SKA will be a win-win situation for all, especially the residents of Carnarvon and

the surrounding areas. He explained that:

- tar roads will be constructed to the site
- grid power will be extended to the site
- it is likely that the airstrip at Carnarvon will be tarred
- a Tb/s optical fibre cable will provide Carnarvon with the fastest internet access in South Africa
- jobs will be created by the construction projects science and
- engineering capacity in the Northern Cape will be enhanced through cooperation between the SA SKA Project Office and the National Higher Education Institute in Kimberley.

In discussions the following day, the DST and the Northern Cape Government agreed to establish a working group to ensure that the necessary infrastructure is installed for the site and that the Environmental Impact Assessment and geotechnical investigations are carried out rapidly. The working group has already started its work. The Northern Cape Government has appointed a project champion - Edcent Williams, head of the Science and Education Department, a project executive - Michelle Ishmail, and a project manager - Paki Monyobo. Ferrial Adam will coordinate the work of the SA SKA Project Office on the infrastructure project. The working group will be supervised by a top-level team, consisting of the Directors General of the DST and of the Northern Cape, with senior officials, and will report to the Executive Committee of the Northern Cape Government and to the SA SKA Steering Committee. This senior committee will meet at least four times over the year.

A sub-group of the working group has been established to work on setting up courses at the National Institute of Higher Education in Kimberley on Digital Signal Processing and RF Engineering. Telkom has expressed interest in providing resources for these courses. The sub-group will also work on the development of artisan skills for the project with the further education institutions in the Northern Cape.



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The Beech Kingair with VIPs arrives at Carnarvon in the central Karoo.



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SA SKA Assistant Project Manager Ms. Kim de Boer watches the aircraft taxi in.



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VIPs disembark from the aircraft. Prof. Justin Jonas in the red windcheater, and Dr. Adrian Tiplady on his right welcome Dr. Rob Adam in the red cap. Ms. Anita Loots, KAT Project Manager, looks on purposefully on the left, camera in hand.



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Northern Cape Premier Dipuo Peters with the Mayor of the Kareeberg District, Burnette Slambee.



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Arriving at the KAT site near Carnarvon. Prof. Jonas on the left is welcomed by Mr. Jan Louw, the farm owner, on the right.



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Director General of the Department of Science and Technology (DST) Dr. Phil. Mjwara, Chairperson of the SA SKA Steering Committee Dr. Rob. Adam, Minister of Science and Technology Mosibudi Mangena, Premier of the Northern Cape Province Elizabeth Dipuo Peters, and the Mayor of the Kareeberg District, Burnette Slambee.



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SKA Project Manager Dr. Bernie Fanaroff with Premier of the Northern Cape Province Elizabeth Dipuo Peters.



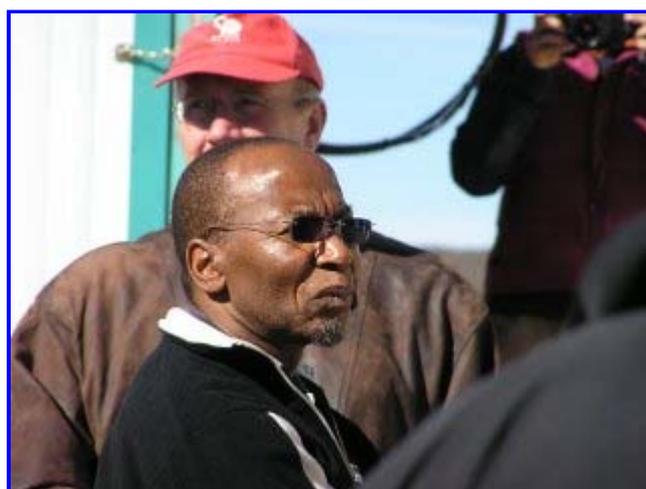
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The visitors at the SKA/SA Radio Frequency Interference (RFI) monitoring systems. Prof Jonas is giving the assembled visitors an impromptu lecture on radio astronomy. The antenna and mast to the left are part of one of the three mobile RFI measurement systems designed and built by Rhodes students.



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Director General of the Department of Science and Technology (DST) Dr. Phil. Mjwara with Chairperson of the SA SKA Steering Committee, Dr. Rob. Adam.



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DST Minister Mosibudi Mangena listens closely.



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SA SKA Project Scientist Prof. Justin Jonas describes the RFI systems.



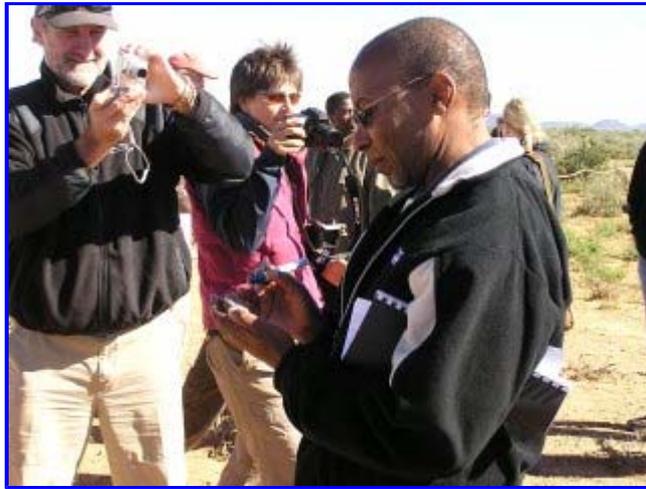
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Farm owner Mr. Jan Louw and his daughter with Minister Mangena.



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DST Deputy Director General Dr. Adi Paterson with Mr. Burnette Slambee, the Mayor of the Kareeberg District.



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Ceremonial rock signing by Minister Mangena.

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- Find out more about the SKA and KAT at www.ska.ac.za and www.kat.ac.za.

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