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South African steel production falls 12.7%, world output up 6.8%

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SOUTH Africa's steel output fell by 12.7% year-on-year to 6.7-million tons last year, while global production surged 6.8% to 1.53-billion tons, the World Steel Association (worldsteel) reported last week.

South African Iron and Steel Institute (Saisi) information specialist **Abrie Audie** noted that the worldsteel '2011 World Crude Steel Production' report was based on estimates, but said it was likely that the country's steel production was down by a significant margin. The country's steel mills experienced significant downtime during 2011.

ArcelorMittal South Africa, a unit of the world's biggest steel-maker, only resumed full production at its Newcastle plant on December 9, after being hit by a furnace failure last year.

South Africa's second-largest steel producer, Evraz Highveld, also experienced significant downtime while making improvements at its plant, adding to the national decline in yearly steel production, Audie stated.

Meanwhile, the worldsteel production figures showed significant growth in Turkey, South Korea and Italy. Of all the significant steel producers, only Japan

and Spain showed a decline in yearly production.

Asia's 2011 production was 988.2-million tons of crude steel, an increase of 7.9% compared with 2010.

China's crude steel production in 2011 reached 695.5-million tons, an increase of 8.9% on 2010. Japan produced 107.6-million tons in 2011, a 1.8% decrease from 2010. In 2011, South Korea's crude steel production was 68.5-million tons, a 16.2% increase compared with 2010.

The European Union recorded an increase of 2.8% compared with 2010, producing 177.4-million tons of crude steel last year. Spain produced 15.6-million tons of crude steel in 2011, a 4.6% decrease on 2010, while Italy produced 28.7-million tons in 2011, an 11.3% increase over 2010.

Last year, crude steel production in North America was 118.9-million tons, an increase of 6.8% on 2010. The US produced 86.2-million tons of crude steel, 7.1% higher than 2010 figures.

The Commonwealth of Independent States showed an increase of 4% in 2011, producing 112.6-million tons of crude steel. The yearly crude steel production for South America was 48.4-million tons in 2011, an increase of 10.2% on 2010.