

ENVIRONMENT

1998 - 1999



Bacteria in polluted water can result in a number of infections and diseases such as cholera and typhoid

(56) Star 20/11/98

Dangers of drinking water contaminated with sewage

By ANSO THOM AND ANNA COX

People drinking water contaminated with sewage are in the most severe cases at risk of contracting cholera or typhoid.

Paul Brits, director for Environmental Occupational Health and Safety at the Gauteng department of health, said although a person had to swallow 180 000 cholera vibrio before contracting the diseases, drinking a glass of highly contaminated water could be just as dangerous.

Brits said the department had not been informed of any cholera or typhoid cases related to contaminated water this year.

Moor pads, absorbent cotton wool pads with gauze left hanging in river water for 12 hours, were used to regularly test the water, Brits said.

"We have an intensive monitoring project and have assisted local councils with information campaigns," he said.

However, while many cases of gastro-enteritis were reported in Alexandra each day, it was difficult to say how many were caused by river water, said head of Greater Johannesburg's Eastern council health services, Dr Neil Martinsen.



NAASHON ZALK

Making sure ... microbiologist Reggie Brits tests water taken from the Jukskei River in Alexandra.

He said the council had embarked on a massive education campaign last year after a typhoid scare.

Officials had walked through the river bank areas regularly telling people not to use river water.

"Our saving grace is that the drinking water supply is excellent and everyone has access to taps. We don't believe that many of the gastro-enteritis cases are related to the river water," he said.

Brits said communities were told to boil the water or

add a capful of household bleach to 20 litres of water. He said the contaminated water could also cause open sores to become infected.

In Africa cholera is known to be transmitted by ingestion of contaminated food or water through municipal water supplies, ice made from that water, foods and beverages bought from street vendors, and vegetables irrigated with fresh sewage.

Large quantities of these bacteria can enter the body through the nose, mouth and

open cuts. The bacteria in the water can cause varying degrees of inflammation of the stomach and/or intestines.

The person can suffer from temporary diarrhoea, and in the worst case, when untreated, suffer from fever, severe dehydration, and death.

Waterborne bacteria can also cause eye and ear infections as well as diseases such as hepatitis A, which is a viral inflammation of the liver that causes flu-like symptoms, jaundice, and gastrointestinal discomfort.

Two weeks of rain falls in a day

PHOTOGRAPH: NASHON ZALK

People living along river banks and in low-lying areas should take care, warns Weather Bureau

BY MELBAIR-ANN FERRIS, HOPEWELL RADESK AND ROBERT VICTOR

Low-lying areas of Gauteng and the Free State could be flooded today, the Weather Bureau has warned, as the country braced itself for a third consecutive day of drenching rains.

So heavy has the downpour been that the bureau was forecasting last night that Gauteng would receive 50mm, the amount that usually falls over a two-week period in summer.

Local councils and civil defence units have been warned to be on the alert for flooding, as the rains continued to soak large parts of the country.

Last night's downpour on top of earlier thundershowers this week, have left the soil saturated and susceptible to flooding.

Weather officials have attributed the heavy rains to La Niña, a wet-weather phenomenon which has already resulted in large parts of the country receiving above-average rainfall.

Sagepa reports that Weather Bureau spokesperson Salkie Ntgrini said Johannesburg received 51mm of rain in a 24-hour period that ended on Wednesday. Assistant bureau director Kevin Rae said any further rain falling on ground that was already well saturated meant a definite risk of flooding.

Communities living along riverbanks and people in low-lying areas should exercise caution, he said.

About 80% of the country was affected by the storms, Rae said. Only areas west of Uitenhage in the Northern Cape had escaped the deluge.

Rae said the weather system blanketing the country was known as a "cut-off upper-air low-pressure system".

It consisted of colder air marooned within a trough of warmer air and cut off from other colder air to the south. Such systems accounted for about 10% of South Africa's annual rainfall, he said.

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Blame it all on a little Spanish girl

La Niña, the weather condition that has triggered unusually heavy rains across the country, brings wet weather in its wake, as opposed to the El Niño condition, which causes drought.

The term "Spanish for 'little girl'" is characterised by unusually cold ocean temperatures in the equatorial Pacific, compared with El Niño, which leads to unusually warm ocean temperatures.

Instead of disrupting global circulation patterns, as El Niño does, La Niña intensifies circulation patterns. As with El Niño, the shifting

warm and cool waters change the pattern of evaporation, which in turn changes where tropical storms occur, which changes the wind patterns.

Most of the time, El Niño's ocean temperatures return to normal, but about a third of the time, an El Niño overshoots its return to normal and becomes a La Niña.

La Niña events typically follow El Niño events, but are not as frequent. Data identifies this year as a La Niña year. If La Niña's pool of cool water continues and grows, the world's unusual weather will also continue. — Staff Reporter

SAFE WATER?

Local Council Drinking: 0.5 parts/100ml
Contest: 5125 parts/100ml (Washing)

What is E. coli?

Aerial or human faecal contamination which includes the possibility of getting pathogens such as salmonella and shigella to food poisoning with diarrhoea and vomiting.

Prevention:

Single to food poisoning with diarrhoea and vomiting.

JUKSKEI RIVER

700,000 people live in the area.

JO'BURG TAP WATER

About 0.5 parts/100ml tested every week. More chlorine added if 1.0 part is registered.

ALEXANDRA

Sample taken here

Council inaction leads to dangerously high pollution counts in city's rivers

By PRINCE HANCOCK AND MELBAIR-ANN FERRIS

Greater Johannesburg's failure to maintain or upgrade sewerage systems has resulted in unacceptably high pollution in most of the city's rivers, and there is growing concern that the problem could get worse without a huge injection of cash.

This week's heavy rains have brought added fears of increased pollution. The provincial government conservatively estimates the

cost of upgrading its sewerage pumps will be R28-million, but it does not have the money to do so - particularly in the Greater Johannesburg area, where the sewers are overloaded.

Chloronon, had acceptable E. coli counts. Every other point tested was way above the norm, which is zero for drinking water and 126 for water in which sport is played and clothes are washed.

Counts at Doring, Alexandra were at an astounding 3.7 million per 100ml of water. Modderfontein had 280 000 and downstream at Sebuzza the count was 53 000. Further up the course of the Jukskel river, the bacteria lessens to 1 700 at Leeuwkop prison.

These figures were released by Cydonia Laboratories, which tests river and tap water throughout the city on a regular basis for the local councils. Martin van Veen, a consultant to the Department of Water Affairs, said that if additional rains came in the form of intense storms, there was a possibility of floods, which could in turn cause large quantities of water to enter Johannesburg's sewerage system.

Diamond, said steps had been taken to rectify the sewer problems. The council had upgraded its treatment works to acceptable standards, he said.

Local Government MEC Sicoelo Shreeke said the province would establish a team to look at short and long-term measures and report its findings by the end of the month.

Water Affairs Minister Keales Aarnal has warned the Greater Johannesburg Metro Council to take action or face prosecution.

8th Nov 20/11/08

All change at Kruger Park - from elite reserve to a place for all South Africans

AR 24/11/98 (56)

Human perceptions with regard to animals and the environment have undergone important and drastic changes this century. We need to understand these changes, and to mobilise for the benefit of a more environmentally friendly society as a whole.

This is the challenge that the new management in the Kruger National Park has embraced with both hands.

We call it the democratisation of conservation, which is unfolding within the transformation framework of South African National Parks.

The need for the democratisation of conservation in Kruger emanates from the history of the park's establishment and its evolution from a pre-colonial epoch (through a colonial and apartheid era) to a post-apartheid epoch.

Since its inception as the Sabi Game Reserve in 1898, (renamed the Kruger National Park in 1926), colonial and apartheid conservationists worked tirelessly to build a conservation philosophy and ethic that suited the political, social and economic policies of their masters.

Indigenous black people were only tolerated because they provided the much-needed labour.

As a child who grew up in the shadow of this world-renowned, rich wildlife reserve I knew very well at a very tender age that I was not welcome in Kruger.

During the June-July 1970 winter holidays, our school - Woodhouse Primary in Matatfin - tried to arrange an environmental excursion to the park, but our teachers were told to try Maryleit because Bahle, the only camp for non-whites in the park, was fully booked.

I got to know about this 12 years later when I came to take up my first teaching job at my former school.

Unknown to me at that time was that the Mapindane, Makuleni, Phabeni, Tembosh communities, and also and many others, had just been forcibly removed from the park to its outer limits.

Parks and people were considered

This is an edited version of an address by **MADODA DAVID MABUNDA**, director of the Kruger National Park, at the recent SAB Environmental Journalists' Award Ceremony in Johannesburg

mutually exclusive, and the scientific model of conservation, as derived from the Yellowstone Model (in the United States), consolidated the alienation of the people outside the Kruger Park.

This alienation was reinforced by a sharp contrast in socio-economic living standards for those on either side of the fence, with the outside communities emerging as losers both materially, emotionally and morally.

After the democratic elections of April 1994, the National Parks Board was renamed SA National Parks as a sign of breaking with the past.

Its vision and mission heralded an approach and conservation philosophy that sought to change the injustices of the past and redress the imbalances created by years of colonial and apartheid conservation philosophies and approaches.

It had been quite common to hear white stereotypes such as "conservation does not relate to the culture of black people" - an attempt to deliberately ignore the emerging philosophy of conservation through cultural survival.

Indigenous communities were presented as evil savages and culprits for the massive degradation of the environment.

Small wonder then that SA National Parks has embarked on the road to reconciling parks and people through the establishment of its social ecology department.

This department has responsibility for engaging our neighbouring communities and harmonising the relationship between the conservation of natural resources and cultural/historical heritage of national importance.

Unfortunately change is difficult, no matter how noble the idea may be; the Kruger National Park is no exception.

For many years Kruger was a closed entity with its own culture and mode of operation. To many it still is a preserve for a privileged elite of whites who command the purse strings.

The apartheid government had oversubsidised the park and there was no need for park officials to run the park on business principles and earn a good return on the investment.

Instead, the Kruger Park was managed as an extension of the public service and it was a loss-making institution. Tourists were treated as a "convenient nuisance" and subjected to humiliating paramilitary management styles.

There was no customer service or service excellence offered. Most of the park's

'I knew very well at a very tender age that I was not welcome in the Kruger National Park'

white employees, with the exception of a few research professionals, came from mining, army, police and fire department backgrounds, bringing archaic and racist attitudes which did not serve the eco-tourism industry well.

When I took office, the profile of the park's employees was predominantly white, with Afrikaner males in top management positions and blacks and white women languishing at the bottom of the ladder.

The then management did not take kindly to the new board's transformation policies. To them, change was fine - as long as it did not change anything! Most of the proposed changes threatened the survival of white supremacy.

Our new board must be commended for



Walking tall: a hippo makes its way across a road in the Kruger National Park, safe in the knowledge that its future, and that of the park, is well guarded

the good job they have done since they took over from the old "Broederbond" board three years ago.

Their changes centred on the introduction and implementation of policies and processes that have changed the character of our organisation irreversibly.

The profile of employees at senior management levels has taken a new complexion. There are people from different professional and cultural backgrounds whose skills and experience have already started enriching the organisation.

Transformation monitoring reports indicate that overt racism, by no means dead, is nonetheless on the decline. Things have been different in the park since I took office on February 1.

A new culture is steadily permeating the organisation, which has witnessed open communication throughout the ranks - in

particular in the lower echelons. In spite of tremendous difficulties, it is most gratifying to note that Kruger Park is now a well-known household name among all South Africans.

The park's survival and future is jealously guarded by people in Mitchell's Plain, Mdantsane, Umata, Siyabuswa, Botshabela, Tshakuma, Namakgale, Soweto and any other black areas, rather than only in the white suburbs of Bryanston, Garsfontein, West Acres, Ventersdorp, Beuzidenhout Valley and Sandton.

The park has been handed back to its rightful owners: the 40 million people of South Africa; the SA National Parks and its employees are now mere custodians of this national heritage.

On the issue of implementing affirmative action, I appointed the first woman chief ranger in South Africa, Antoinette

van Wyk - and quite a few of her male colleagues lost their appetite for months. Whereas all senior management positions were previously held by white males, I have since appointed two suitably qualified and experienced black general managers - in human resources and social ecology.

It is a myth that there is a total dearth of suitably qualified black people that can take up responsible positions in conservation. In two years, the Kruger staff profile will reflect the true demographics of our country.

I have linked our centenary celebrations to the spirit of the African Renaissance which is sweeping the continent.

This renaissance spirit provides positive building blocks for conservation, particularly around trans-frontier conservation areas, which hold exciting prospects for conservation and eco-tourism as a sector.

Too late for some as forum ponders safe use of asbestos

CT 27/11/98

(56)

JOHANNESBURG: In 1963 William Nakaphala was employed at the Penge mine in Northern Province to break up asbestos ore and place it on a conveyer belt. He was paid R2,50 a month and held the job for five years.

Nakaphala is now 51, and cannot walk up a flight of stairs without pausing for breath. He suffers from coughing fits and is unable to work.

He has asbestosis, meaning that his lung tissue is scarred as a result of inhaling airborne asbestos fibres.

Nakaphala, who hails from Mafefe village near Pietersburg, received a R12 000 payment from Workman's Compensation in 1995, but this was quickly used up and he now lives off a R500 monthly disability grant.

Nakaphala is one of thousands of South Africans who suffer from asbestos-related illnesses.

The severity of the problem prompted Parliament's environmental affairs committee to convene a national conference to discuss ways to deal with the problem. The gathering got under way near here yesterday.

Deputy Environmental Affairs Minister Peter Mokaba said there was no doubt that asbestos was harmful and the question that had to be answered was what to do about it.

He declined to say whether he supported an outright ban on asbestos, saying public policy had to balance a number of issues, such as the effect on employment.

"We see no contradiction between job creation and environmental management," he said.

Brian Gibson, the convener of the asbestos user group which represents the industry, said he believed a total ban on asbestos

would be inappropriate.

"Scientific evidence proves that asbestos can be safely used."

Gibson claimed the industry had improved its safety record considerably, and would support a further tightening-up of regulations.

He said the effects of inappropriate industry practices in the past were being felt now because of the latency period experienced with asbestos-related diseases.

The local asbestos industry has shrunk considerably over recent years, and currently employs less than 5 000 people and contributes R650 million to the GDP.

Any solutions that come out of the conference will probably prove too late for William Nakaphala and the community of Mafefe, who are still inhaling the asbestos fibres which blow off the mine dumps and asbestos-surfaced roads next to their homes. — Sapa

GAME RESERVES

BUDGETARY DROUGHT THREATENS TO SHRIVEL ECOTOURISM

Migrating tourists may not be the only rare species in danger

pm 27/11/98

(56)

SA's provincial game reserves are in financial crisis after funding cuts. The consequences for the country's ecotourism growth drive will be severe.

The perilous financial state of the various conservation departments is one of the key findings of the report of the Board of Investigation into the Institutional Arrangements for Nature Conservation in SA, headed by Judge M E Kumleben.

The report blames much of this on the political negotiations preceding the 1994 elections, which left responsibility for SA's national parks with central government but control of provincial game reserves with the provinces.

The result is that provincial conservation budgets have been slashed, threatening the survival of nature conservation departments everywhere except Gauteng. There, the combination of a large population and limited conservation areas to protect means the budget is reasonable.

By contrast, KwaZulu-Natal Nature Conservation Services (KZNCS) CEO George Hughes reports his current operating budget has been slashed to 18,2% of that of the previous financial year.

That results from a 25% cut in provincial funding combined with the realignment of operating budgets after the amalgamation of the former Natal Parks Board and the former KwaZulu Conservation Department. KZNCS has already closed two small recreational reserves and chopped back on its operating budgets at all others.

Conservation sources say continued financial pressure will cause more closures as well as curtailment of essential nature conservation policing and protection services in the provinces.

They add this pressure on conservation departments could lie at the root of the scandal that erupted in Mpumalanga Parks over the proposed sale of certain reserves.

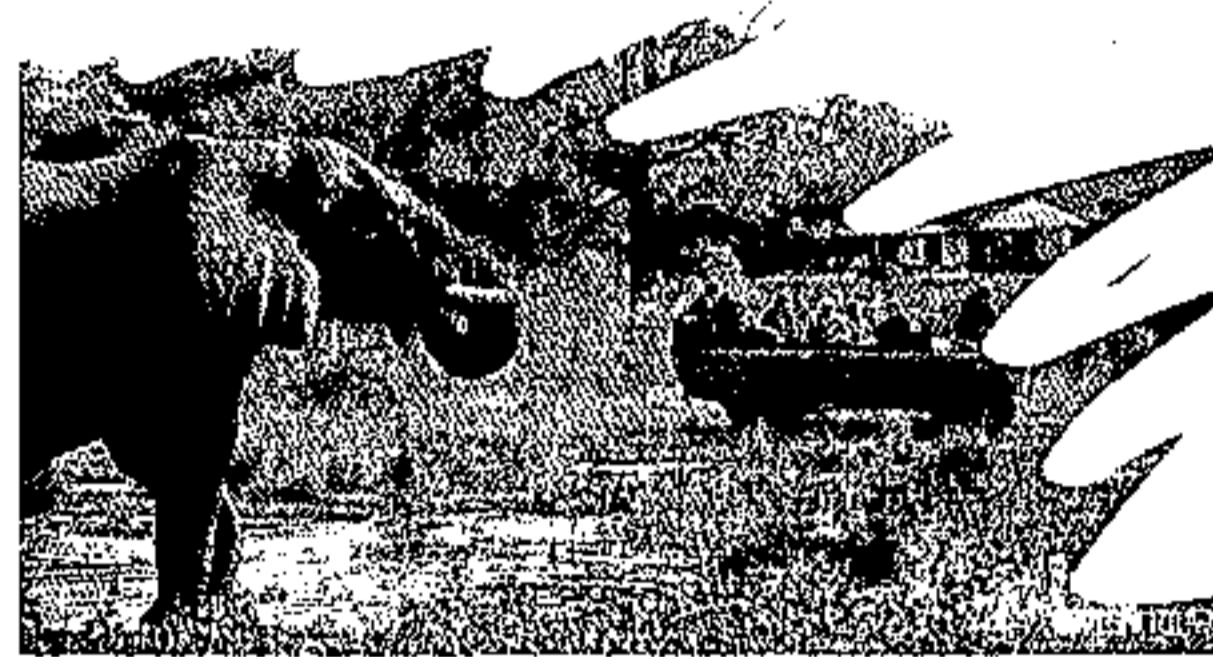
Though provincial governments view nature conservation as one of their least pressing concerns, the Kumleben report says there are convincing economic arguments for supporting the reserves.

"Though a protected area, by its very nature, can seldom show a profit or even be self-supporting, it is of value to peri-

pheral communities — in some cases their lifeblood — and contributes significantly to the national economy," the report says.

It says economic multipliers make the Kruger National Park worth R3bn-R5bn to SA. A recent doctoral thesis showed the tiny Addo National Park near Port Elizabeth is worth about R360m in national income generation.

The Kumleben report finds it "short-sighted and fallacious to expect a protected area to be economically self-sufficient and thus fail to extend the financial



responsibility for its continued existence beyond its boundaries and beyond the limits of the direct — and inadequate — subsidy granted." It says possible sources of new funds for provincial nature conservation include a sufficient share of the national lottery, tax relief for donations to nature conservation causes, and "user fees" in the form of a small excise tax on

the purchase price of hunting and fishing equipment. The "user-fee" proposal has been successful in the US and has the support of non-governmental authorities representing wildlife and conservation interests in SA.

The report concludes that unless the country's game reserves get more funds, many "will have no chance of surviving". It recommends trusts be created to channel funds to particular reserves to ensure money raised or allocated is used "for its intended purpose".

Brendan Ryan

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A golden (green) opportunity missed

Salim Fakir
A SECOND LOOK

There were great expectations about the appointment in March, by Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism Pello Jordan, of a board of investigation into the management of nature conservation. The board was headed by Judge Mark Kumbleben. It represented, symbolically at least, an avenue for conservationists both to chastise the government and to identify ways in which problems facing conservation could be dealt with in the future.

At present there are about 422 proclaimed conservation areas in South Africa, about 6% of the total land space. Not all of them have been set aside according to sound scientific criteria.

The history of protected areas in this country is a chequered one, with their creation often involving the displacement of communities. Given that conservation does not enjoy a clean political history, the question of its future is coloured by its past.

The board's key terms of reference included investigating:

- the management of national parks in terms of the functions of the national and provincial governments;
- the institutional, legislative and financial measures required to support future conservation activities under the current Constitution; and
- identifying ways in which protected areas can assist local communities.

After months of submissions, the board recently released its report. Among its recommendations, it argues for the reassessment of the present protected areas on scientific grounds.

As to whether they should be in the charge of national or provincial authorities, the board said this should be decided according to who is best able to carry out the job. It recommended the minister appoint a committee of scientists and biodiversity specialists to assist in the process of reassessment.

It also said authorities should be encouraged to establish local community boards to integrate community issues into the management of protected areas.

While some of the recommendations are acceptable, the report does not say much



Side by side: The Kumbelben report fails to deal adequately with the conflict between communities and reserves, unlike the Richtersveld National Park in the Northern Cape (left), which has included local people in its conservation strategy

more than what is already known.

For instance, it could have used the case of the Vaalbos National Park in the Northern Cape, which is in the process of being deproclaimed, as a case study. The failure of Vaalbos as a national park would have provided fertile ground to draw out the key problems of protected areas.

Conflicts involving Dweesa and Twebe in the Eastern Cape and the San in the Kalahari Gemsbok National Park illustrate the importance of land rights in conservation areas. But the board did not look at the nature of community conflicts around protected areas in depth.

The report, I believe, simply does not go far enough. The board should have taken a far stronger interrogative approach, rather than summarising the inputs it received.

The board went in with the assumption that conservation *per se* is not up for question, and in so doing did not test the validity of current conservation practices. It did not ask: is there a need for change, and, if so, where and how?

Does its suggestion that more money should be fed into conservation imply that it believes the way in which protected areas are being managed is efficient and cost-effective?

The report lacks a development and economic framework for conservation, and does not see protected areas as a competing land use. The fact that the inquiry did not address these issues perpetuates the general evangelical tendencies of conservationists, who pursue conservation at all cost.

Fundamental restructuring of the conservation sector has still to occur, although it is happening on a small scale in some places. Is there not a need for protected-area authorities to justify their existence? One could legitimately ask whether scientific criteria are sufficient to arbitrate over issues that are also affected by social and political factors.

Why should conservation management be inseparable from other environmental issues? Is there a need for a distinction between "green" (mainly wildlife management) and "brown" (mainly pollution and urban squalor) issues?

"Brown" issues are inadequately financed in South Africa. Compared with "brown" issues, the conservation sector is fairly well off. Some provinces, like the North West, are integrating "brown" issues with their overall responsibilities in protected-area activities, even though their budgets are stretched. The report does not make any serious

the realities that govern community relations with protected areas. The issue is not about setting up local boards, but the continued prevalence of paternalistic attitudes to communities.

Blame for this should not be placed on protected-area managers alone, but rather on the fact that there is no coherent support at the political level for community-based projects in protected areas. While there is some political will, it still needs to be translated into policy objectives and linked to the financing of conservation projects.

Conservation, if it is to survive into the 21st century, needs a broader vision that includes society. Conservationists have not shown a great deal of innovation and leadership in dealing with this challenge.

Much of this vision has already been set out in the National Biodiversity Policy, which sets out a more integrated approach to the issues of conservation, sustainable use and the sharing of benefits that can be derived from biological resources. But, true to form, the Kumbelben report hardly made mention of this national policy.

Salim Fakir is country programme co-ordinator of the ITCN-World Conservation Union

M+S 27/11-3/12/98 (56)

Now you can make your garden grow beautifully with sewage (56)

New methods are considered to convert sludge into compost *Star 27/11/98*

By MELANIE-ANN FERIS
Environment Reporter

A new use has been found for the thousands of tons of sewage sludge produced in South Africa every year. Researchers for the Johannesburg Metropolitan Council are manufacturing large quantities of compost, which is free from disease-carrying compounds.

Tony Pitman, manager of waste water reclamation for the council, said the city produced about 75 000 tons of dry sewage sludge annually.

The technology to convert the sludge into disease-free compost was adapted from technology used in many US cities, Pitman said.

The disease-free compost is now distributed to an agent who is marketing it in the agricultural and horticultural sectors.

According to the council only a minimal income is being derived from the sale of the compost; most of it is used in bartering for wood chips which is needed in the processing of the compost.

A Water Research Commission (WRC) spokesperson said sewage sludge - the by-product of treated sewage - was used in its raw form as fertiliser but this was stopped when it was discovered that the fertiliser could cause the spread of diseases.

According to the spokesperson, researchers for the council investigated several

methods to try and decrease sludge.

This included working the sludge into waste ground, a process which was used by local authorities for the past 15-years.

It was recently discovered that this process caused the pollution of groundwater in the Gauteng region, the spokesperson said.

Another method was to store small quantities of de-watered sludge in managed garbage, but it became difficult to compact the sludge in the dumps.

"However, this method does not appear to hold any environmental dangers provided it is managed properly. Tests at the Goudkoppies landfill, where this method is used, found no

evidence of poisons in the waste seeping into the groundwater," the spokesperson said.

The third method was to burn the sludge, but this was abandoned because of the high costs involved, while the fourth method was to use a natural process to transform the sludge into compost.

The WRC's research manager, Dr Steve Mitchell, said there was only one problem standing in the way of producing the compost naturally: the presence of heavy metals in the compost.

Mitchell has suggested that council force metal industries to purify their effluent before allowing it to enter the sewage system or that all effluent containing heavy metals be treated at a purification site.

Richards Bay pollution report returns to public

(56) CT (PR) 30/11/98

RAVIN MAHARAJ

Durban — The Indian Ocean Fertiliser (IOF) environmental impact assessment forum agreed last week that the air quality specialist study of the IOF's R870 million expansion programme should be reissued for public comment, the environmental specialists said.

Earlier, incorrect data had been published in an environmental impact report on the proposed expansion at its site in Richards Bay.

Had the incorrect data been used in computer-modelling tests, air pollution levels in the town would have been underestimated by nearly 300 percent. But the IOF said correct data was used to estimate pollution levels.

Industry leaders said the fact that incorrect data had been pub-

lished had cast doubt on crucial aspects of the study and called for an independent reassessment.

Greyling Liaison, the communication facilitators in natural resource management, said the study had subsequently been reviewed. It said the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research had rechecked all the data received and had remodelled the information.

Greyling Liaison said the next step would be to arrange a local and international peer review

of a revised version of the study.

There would also be a reissue of those sections of the draft report and summary report which would be influenced by the new findings.

The public comment period would be from December 4 to January 7, Greyling Liaison said.

Publication of incorrect data had cast doubt on key aspects of study, say industry chiefs

People flock to Vaal River despite risks lurking in polluted water

By EMEKA NWANDIKO

There was a time when the mention of contracting a water-borne disease was enough to put you off any form of aquatic sport for life. But this was not the case for the people who flocked to the polluted shores of the Vaal River over Christmas.

On Christmas Eve, Rand Water put out a report informing enthusiasts of aquatic sports that they ran the risk of bacterial skin infections and stomach disorders if they dared to continue their aquatic pursuits along the Vaal Barrage at Rietsspruit Weir, Rietsspruit and the Riverside Sun hotel.

At one of the most polluted stretches of water where the Klip and Vaal rivers meet at Vosloo Park, anglers and water ski enthusiasts at the Riviera Aquatic Club showed little concern about getting a bout of the runs or breaking out in a rash.

"I would water-ski on the Vaal even if there were dead fish floating in it," declared Greg Brittan (18), who said he had experienced rashes and stomach cramps while on the river. "I do get skin irritations when I leave the river but I did not know it was because of bacteria," said Brittan as he prepared to water-ski with two friends from Johannesburg.



UNPAZED: These holidaymakers weren't put off by report

Also preparing to water-ski, Christo van Wyk expressed concern that he was exposing his young son Jaco to skin infections. "I did not know we were at risk. I was here last Saturday and we did not experience any skin or stomach irritation."

When asked what sort of protection he was using for his son, he replied: "How do you protect yourself?" Before joining his relatives in a speedboat, Van Wyk said: "People who are polluting the river should clean up their act."

A Rand Water official said there was little danger of contracting a serious disease such as cholera. He added that bacteria found in the Vaal and Klip rivers could not be transferred from fish to humans.

Much to the relief of Gary Chuang, his father Linyao and sister Ida, all from Cyrildene in Johannesburg, who often fish at Vosloo Park. "So far we have not had any stomach problems," Gary said.

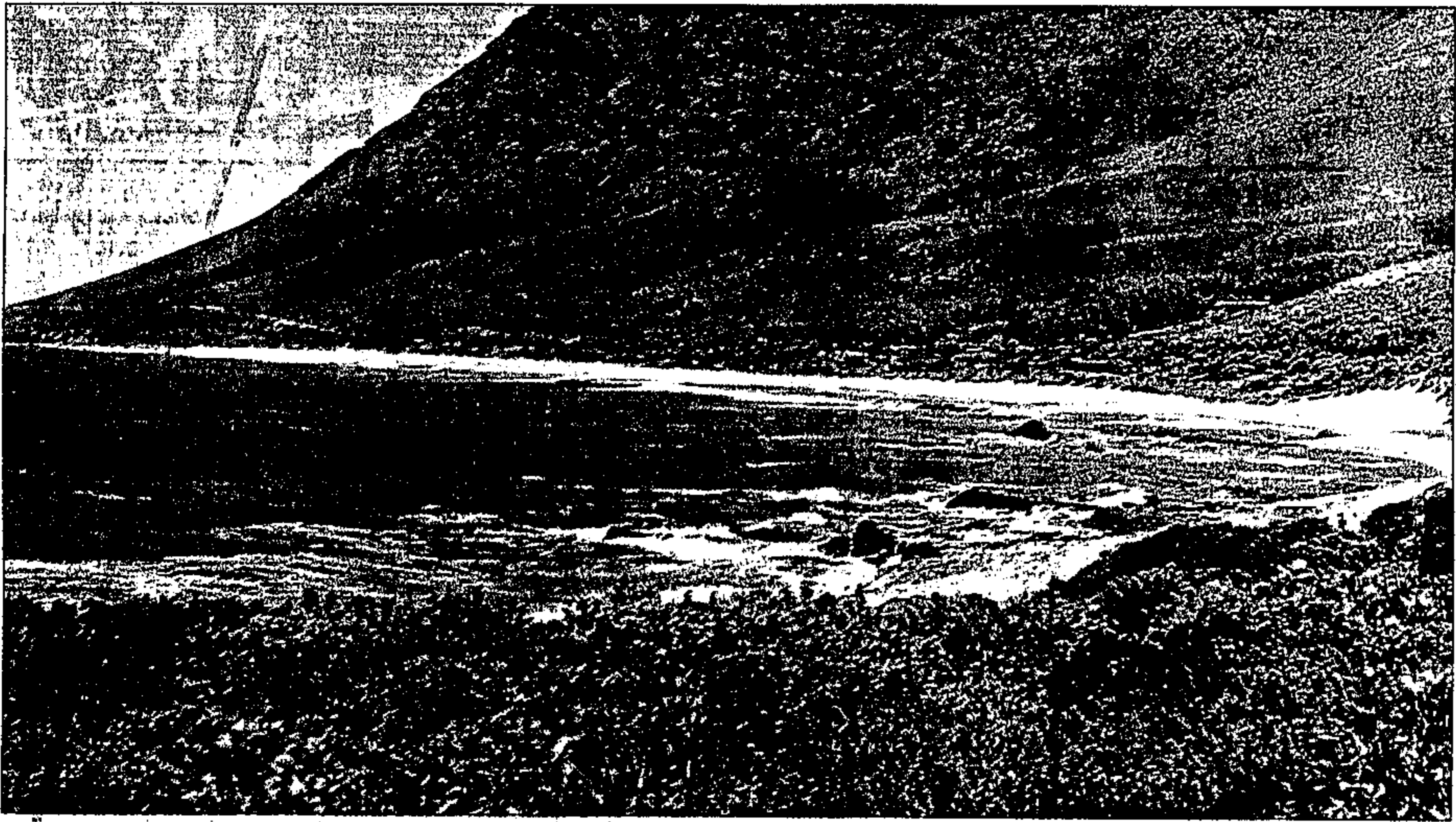
But, judging from the beer cans and plastic bags along the left bank of the Klip River, Chris Bayne was not surprised at the level of pollution in the area. Surveying the scene around him, he said: "All the dirt from Johannesburg is here." As he spoke, his son and daughter were playing barefoot along the riverbank.

Questions about the quality of river water were raised last year after it was discovered in August that rivers to the north of Johannesburg had high levels of pollution. The Jukskei River, which flows past Alexandra, was found to be contaminated to the point that water from the river was declared unsafe to drink.

A court battle looms in the new year between the Ministry of Water Affairs and the Greater Johannesburg Metro Council unless the council can halt the seepage of sewage into the city's water system.

(56)

Star 2/1/99



OPTIONS: Helderberg Municipality has been presented with several options for the future of Kogel Bay, including an Oudekraal-style hotel development on the coast. Unless more public comment to the contrary is received, consultants say, the 'most beneficial financial option' — the hotel — will probably go ahead.

CT. 7/11/99

'Upmarket' hotel mooted for Kogel Bay

(56) *

DAN SIMON

KOGEL BAY, the ecologically sensitive and virtually undeveloped stretch of coastline near Gordon's Bay, has been identified as a potential site for a five-star, Oudekraal-type hotel development.

A hotel development at Kogel Bay, which is renowned for a beach with a dangerous backwash, is one of several scenarios envisaged for this stretch of coastline. These plans aim to free Helderberg ratepayers from the burden of subsidising, at an annual cost of R1,2 million, a small municipal resort they hardly use.

Details of the proposed hotel

development were released yesterday by the consulting firm Bowren Consulting International, which was hired by the Helderberg municipality to investigate and evaluate the financial viability of municipal resorts and amenities.

The company has just completed an audit of Kogel Bay and has found that the area is one of the last remaining stretches of undeveloped coastline within easy reach of Cape Town.

Kogel Bay forms part of the 35km stretch of coastline for which the Helderberg municipality recently assumed responsibility.

According to the findings of the Kogel Bay audit, Bowren Consult-

ing International found that most day visitors to the resort used the facility for braaing.

It also found that more than 90% of visitors were from the Greater Cape Metropolitan area and not from Helderberg.

Demand for the resort in peak season also exceeded its intended capacity.

According to Bowren Consulting International consultant Jon Paine, a number of future scenarios have been identified for Kogel Bay.

These included one of minimal change, where Helderberg ratepayers would continue to fund all users, or doubling the entrance fee from R4 to R8 per adult and R3 to

R6 for vehicles, and the introduction of a season pass for regular visitors.

A third option included a "zoned resort" where a portion of Kogel Bay would be declared "upmarket" and where a much higher entrance fee would be charged.

In terms of buildings, Paine said two options existed, including the development of chalets or a full Oudekraal-style hotel development.

Another option was to remove all buildings and developments at Kogel Bay, rehabilitate the area and integrate it into the Kogelberg biosphere.

Said Paine: "The municipality is interested to hear public comment on the options. Despite media coverage very little comment has been received by the public."

"In the absence of comment, the most beneficial financial option, the Oudekraal-style hotel development, will probably be adopted as it would provide the maximum short term financial benefit to the Helderberg ratepayer."

Anyone wishing to comment on the proposed hotel development should direct their written comments to Paine at PO Box 19, Somerset West, 7129 or e-mail: info@jpdesign.co.za

Gray's lawyers threaten legal action

Kevin O'Grady

LAWYERS acting for suspended Mpumalanga Parks Board CEO Alan Gray said yesterday they would take legal action against Mpumalanga premier Mathews Phosa and the head of the Heath special investigating unit over statements made about their client.

Pieter Swanepoel of Swanepoel & Partners said the case against Phosa and Judge Willem Heath related to recent statements they had made about the depositing of R1,8m, paid out as part of an insurance claim, in a "secret" bank account in Durban.

The money came from a claim for an Ermelo hotel which was recently destroyed by fire.

The unit this week issued an urgent interdict against the bank where the funds are being held, a se-

nior parks board finance official and a financial broker to prevent the money being used or invested.

Reports quoting the unit said unit investigators were concerned that the money was paid into a Nelspruit Development Trust account instead of a parks board account and had since been invested without authorisation from parks board directors.

Swanepoel said Heath's comments "created the impression to the public that Gray has been involved in the misappropriation of these funds".

It was also incorrect that the funds had been invested without the directors' approval and that Gray was the sole trustee of the Nelspruit Development Trust, Swanepoel said.

He said the trust was formed by the parks board and Nedcor Investment Bank to take advantage of

structured financing for the board, which was its sole beneficiary. Gray was appointed trustee in his capacity as CEO along with two other trustees from the bank.

"It has since come to our client's attention that the money was released by the insurance company and paid into an investment account after his suspension as CEO ... and he therefore denies knowledge or involvement in placing these funds into any accounts," Swanepoel said.

Internal parks board memoranda showed that the board's acting executive officer was "fully aware of all dealings and negotiations regarding the payment or reinvestment of the insurance claim.

"As the investments were under control of the board, there was no reason for the unit to issue interdicts against (them)," Swanepoel said.

BD 8/1/99

(56)

Poachers turn parts of coast into no-go zones

~~REPORTING~~
BOBBY JORDAN

ST (CM) 10/1/99
HEAVILY armed poacher gangs are turning long stretches of coastline into lawless zones, police and conservationists said this week.

A senior conservation official, who wished to remain anonymous after receiving death threats, said poachers had set-up camp at Buffelsjags near Cape Agulhas and were taking vast quantities of shellfish.

"They're poaching there 24 hours a day and taking out tons. It's far away from any of the law enforcement agencies so it's very difficult to catch them red-handed. The poachers can see anyone approaching from miles away," he said.

The poachers were well-off, drove 4x4 vehicles, used cellphones and sometimes rented houses near the coast.

Gang hierarchy ranged from top business contacts overseas to a "pool" of between 100 and 200 full-time divers, some of whom were kitted out with the latest equipment.

They were based in the Hawston area outside Hermanus — a "no-go" area for police and the scene of violent clashes in the past.

Poachers were now seeking to extend their operations further up the coast because the Hawston coastline had been completely "cleaned-out".

Police said the problem needed to be taken more seriously at a political level.

Suspended parks chief accuses Heath unit of waging vendetta

By JUSTIN ARENSTEIN

Nelspruit – Suspended Mpumalanga Parks Board (MPB) chief executive Alan Gray has lashed out at Judge Willem Heath, accusing him of using his powers to wage personal vendettas.

Gray's outburst follows public statements by both Judge Heath and Mpumalanga Premier Mathews Phosa implying that Gray was aware of the irregular transfer of more than R1,8-million to a secret trust fund account in Durban late last year.

The MPB's insurers paid the money into the Nelspruit Development Trust account after a parks board hotel burnt down during three separate arson attacks in Ermelo.

Judge Heath warned last week that the payment had been unauthorised and issued urgent interdicts against Nedbank and the trust's financial broker to prevent any potential losses. He also interdicted senior MPB financial director Peter Hacket after noting that Hacket had

given the trust total control over how to invest the money.

Although Judge Heath never formally implicated Gray in the scheme, he did note that Gray was the Government's only trustee on the trust.

Gray denied any involvement in the fund transfer and instead

“
**Nothing
sinister or
secret about
the trust**
”

accused Judge Heath of resorting to media sensation and smear campaigns to boost his public image.

Insisting that the trust fund had been legally set up by the MPB and Nedcor Investment Bank to take advantage of structured financing for the cash-

strapped parastatal, Gray conceded that he was a trustee but denied he was a beneficiary.

“(I) was appointed as trustee in (my) capacity as chief executive officer of the MPB and not in any personal capacity ... the MPB is the sole beneficiary,” said Gray in a three-page statement issued by his attorneys late last week. “There is nothing sinister or secret regarding the trust. It was created with the full knowledge of the board and the MEC.”

Gray also challenged Judge Heath to publicly release forensic reports proving that the signature of former finance MEC Jacques Modipane had been forged on three disputed promissory notes under investigation by Judge Heath. Modipane has repeatedly denied signing the notes and Gray said in his statement that Judge Heath also publicly implied that they had been forged.

“The enthusiasm with which he made these statements is not evident in his feedback to the

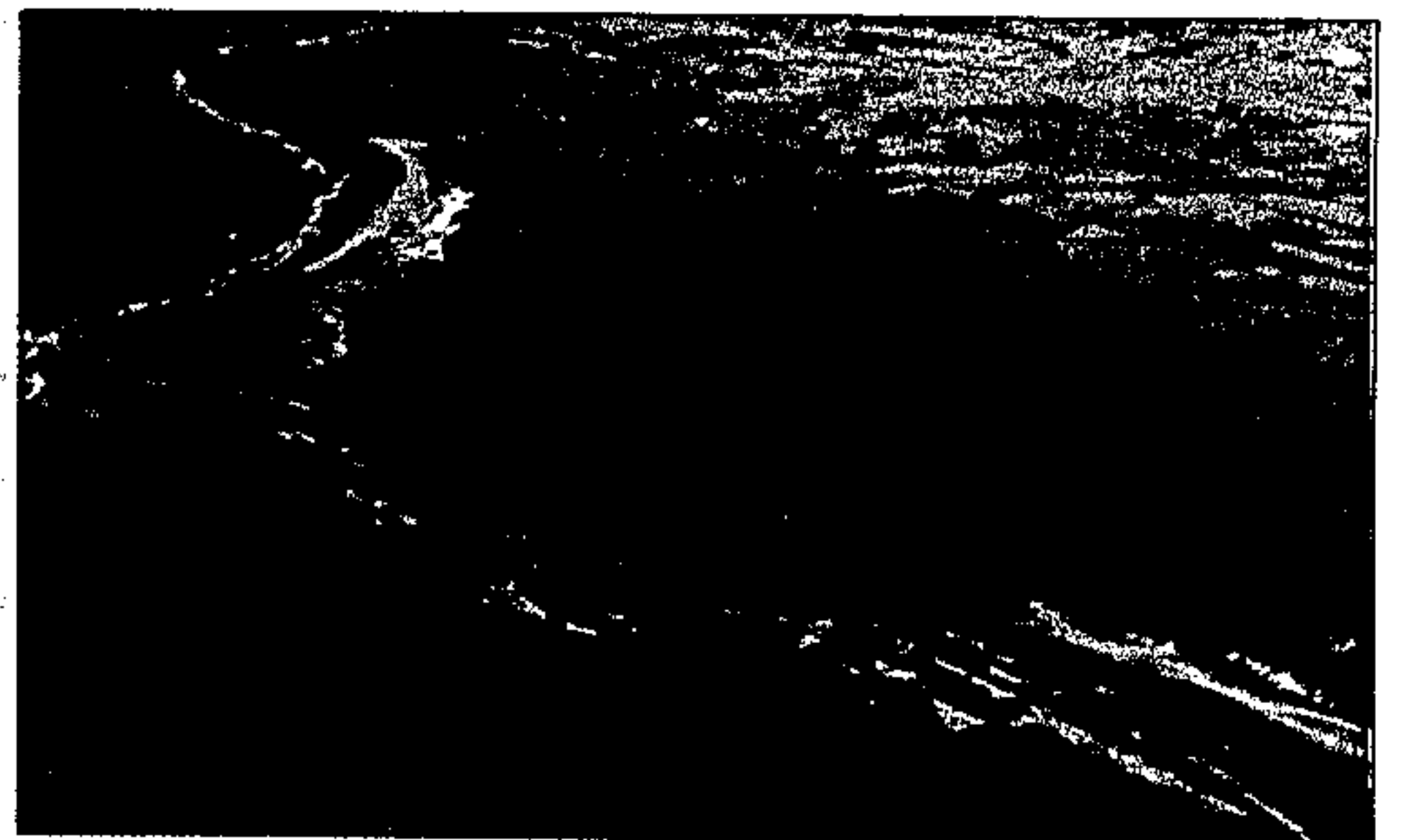
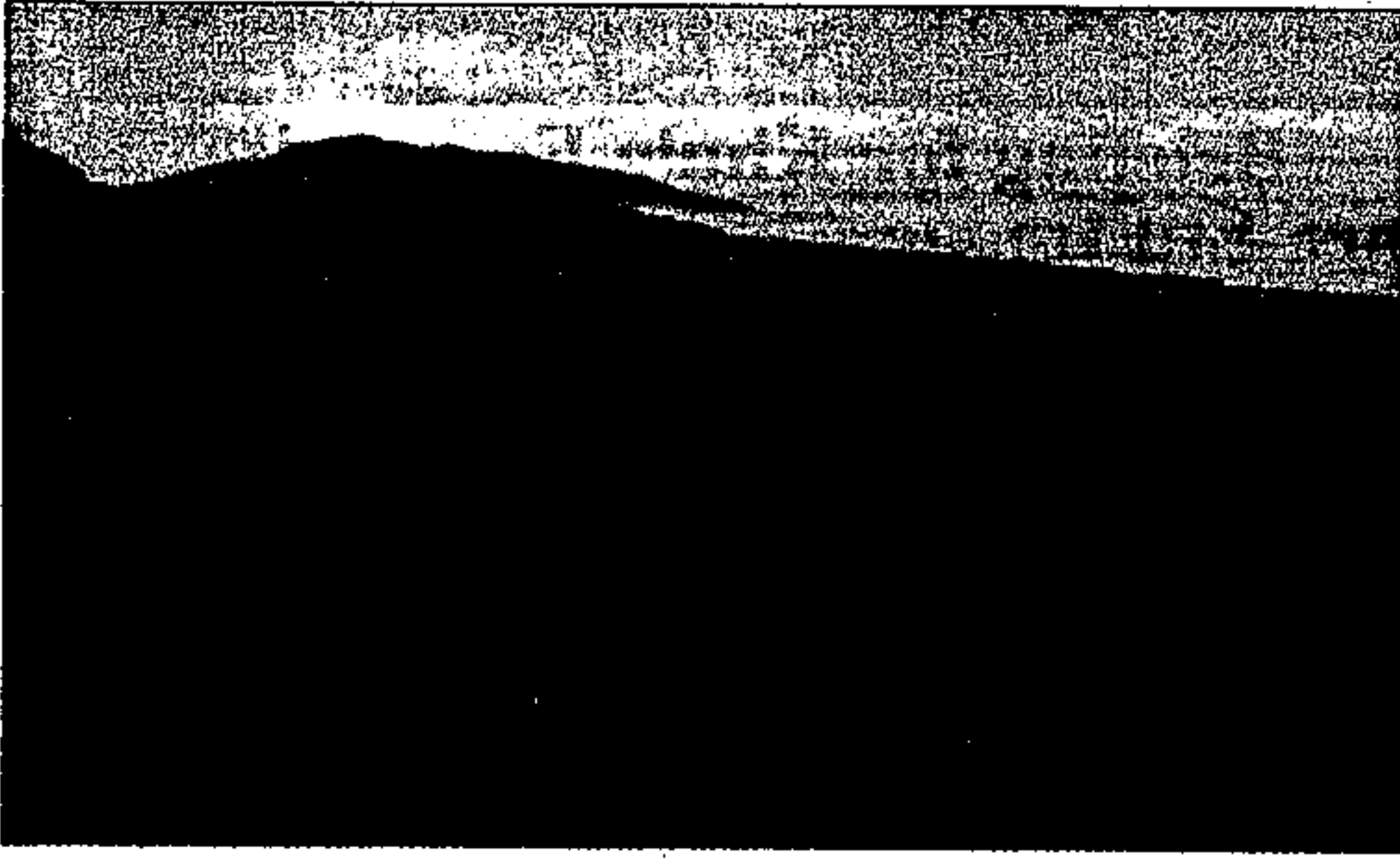
public regarding the forensic tests,” said Gray's attorney Pieter Swanepoel. “He is also not enthusiastic to publicly give feedback about the Reserve Bank's findings on the promissory notes themselves and any transactions preceding their issue.”

Judge Heath's Mpumalanga

“
**He is not
keen to
publicly give
feedback**
”

investigation manager, Jonathan Dutton, denied that the unit had ever implicated Gray in the trust fund scheme, other than confirming that he was a trustee. He said the judge would formulate a detailed response to Gray's statement. – African Eye News Service

SPAR 11/1/99 (56)



Unspoiled, but for how long? The dunes of Wavecrest are rich in titanium, but the local people have resisted the lure of short-term profits from mining

Tribes put peace before profit

(56) MCG 15-21/199

Local tribespeople have rejected a company's bid to mine titanium in a pristine area of the Eastern Cape, but it seems that the company can't take no for an answer,
write **James Black and Arlene Cameron**

On the Wild Coast south of Port St Johns in the Eastern Cape there is a small estuary of extreme beauty and importance. Called Wavecrest, it is the southern-most home of mangrove swamps in the world and its dunes have an irreplaceable forest of indigenous hardwoods. It is also one of the most productive estuaries in the Eastern Cape, and possibly in South Africa.

The three local Xhosa tribes — the Nombanjana, Nxaxo and Cebe — have traditionally used the forest for timber and medicines, but this has had little impact on the forest as they have been careful to restrict their activities. It is as important to them as the fields that sustain their cattle and crops.

There is a small hotel at the mouth of the estuary, built originally to provide accommodation for anglers.

But in 1988 it was discovered that the dunes of Wavecrest contain a curse: they are home to substantial quantities of ill-irradiated titanium. Titanium is a lucrative substance to mine, as it is used as a pigment in the paint industry, in sunblocks and in the aeronautics industry.

The mining lease for the area was bought from the former Transkei government in the 1960s by a company called Kings and Minerals. In 1988 Kings and Minerals sold the lease to Rombos, a mining exploration company.

Rombos approached Anglo American to mine the site. Assessors from the giant company visited the area and realised it was environmentally sensitive. They commissioned Keith Cooper, of the Wildlife and Environment Society, to inspect the site and a week after his report arrived at Anglo American the company made its decision: it would have nothing to do with mining Wavecrest.

Rombos then approached Shell. Again an environmental report was asked for, and Shell decided against mining the area.

Rand Mines was next. It took a little longer to make a decision, but after consulting Cooper and the Endangered Wildlife Trust's John Ledger, it too could not justify the damage that may be caused and declined the opportunity.

Three years later steel giant Iscor was approached by Rombos. Unlike the other companies, it decided that mining Wavecrest was economically feasible and that its potential should be investigated further.

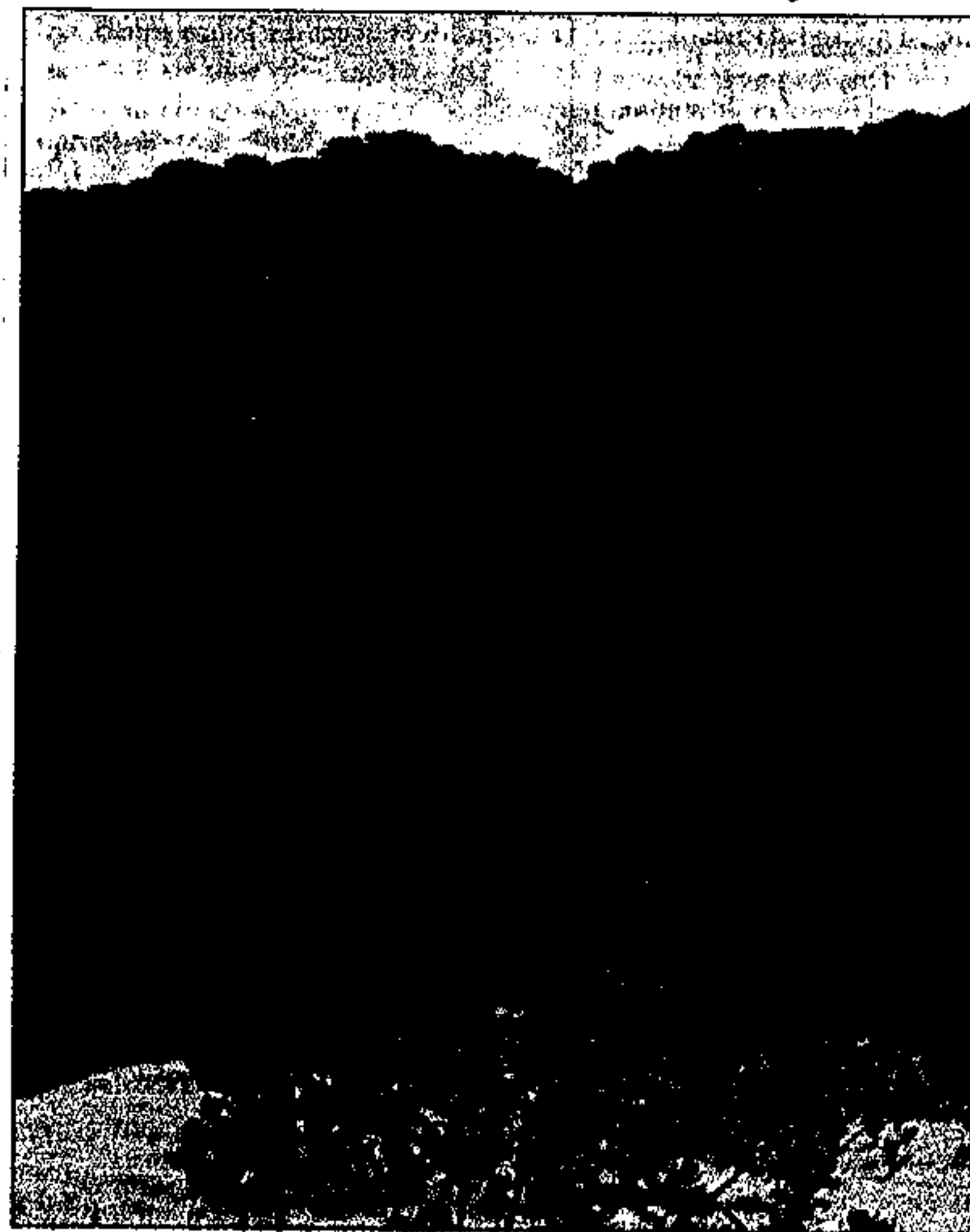
A short time later the Wildlife and Environment Society was approached by a Mr Kekane, a leader from the local communities. He told the society that "a job and wealth is not an inheritance".

Kekane made it clear the local communities would rather forsake the lure of possible financial reward and continue to live in contented peace in their environment, free of the problems associated with ill-considered, inconsiderate development.

But as time has gone by Iscor's determination to mine the area appears to have increased, despite unanimous resistance. The only support for the project so far has come from the Eastern Cape Director of Mineral and Energy Affairs, John Carr, who has been dismissive of all local opposition.

At a five-day symposium in August last year, the three local tribal authorities stressed that the prospect of mining threatened them. They said the temporary jobs and money mining would offer would not constitute an acceptable inheritance for their children.

They pointed out that they did not have the training to do anything more than the most menial tasks, that there would be an influx of job-seekers creating huge informal set-



Plant paradise: The Wavecrest area includes an irreplaceable forest of indigenous hardwoods

tlements and irreversibly disrupting their social order, and that the damage to their environment would be wholly unacceptable.

Instead, the tribal authorities offered the following suggestions: that the provision of potable water was a priority, followed by better education, agricultural support, health services, sustainable job creation, land issues including women's equal rights, improved transportation and natural resource protection.

The concern they had for the illegal felling of hardwoods, poor marine harvesting practices and unauthorised sand mining highly impressed the visiting delegates from development and international aid agencies, and they commented that the efforts the communities had already employed did them proud.

On November 12 a meeting was convened between all affected parties and Iscor officials on a hilltop overlooking Wavecrest's forest canopy. Iscor's representatives, Jacob Maluleke and Hendrik Graham, assured the hundreds of people there that the company's actions were democratic and transparent, and that the company had the full support of the relevant provincial government departments.

Almost immediately they ran into controversy as the deputy director of conservation and forestry, Nokulunga Maswana, pointed out that his department, the technical owner of state forestry, had not been informed of these developments, let alone consulted about them.

He also said it was clear such matters had to be referred to the Depart-

ment of Environmental Affairs and Forestry, and this had not been done.

Maluleke then stepped forward with his address to the crowd. He said the stakeholders, in order of importance, were the government ("the referee" in this case), Iscor, environmental groups and finally the villagers. The Iscor officials suggested the villagers had been "hyped" by environmentalists to reject the company's proposals.

Chief Khumbuzile Jiba asked whether this wasn't "the type of authoritative arrogance that our country is trying to rid itself of", and a short adjournment was called for. A committee representing the local communities then presented a unanimous decision that Iscor and its mining activities were not wanted, and one by one the chiefs left the meeting, taking their people with them.

That evening, in the subdued lights of Wavecrest Hotel's bar, Maluleke and Graham became agitated and threatening. In front of the guests, Maluleke eventually lost his temper and stormed out of the hotel, leaving the patrons with this parting volley: "Regardless what you locals feel, we are going to mine here." Maluleke and Graham disappeared into the night, not to be seen again.

Anneline Fouché, representative of Iscor Mining, commented this week: "This area will not be mined for some time, if at all.

"We are focusing on less sensitive sites in Zululand and Northern Province first. No studies have been done in the Eastern Cape as yet, and this whole issue is premature."

But despite such assurances, small sections of the forest have been cleared, in areas which contain some of the highest ill-irradiated deposits.

A strange coincidence is that a tar road has been built between Butterworth and the village of Kentane. Although it may not be possible to attribute this directly to anticipation of mining activities, it does seem odd that, considering the dismal state of most of the roads in the former Transkei, a tar road has been built to service the small settlement of Kentane and its three hotels.

The owner of the Wavecrest Hotel, Conrad Winterbach, is concerned that there is more than meets the eye.

Table Mountain to become World Heritage Site

56
BOBBY JORDAN

ST (EM) 17/1/99

TABLE Mountain is almost certain to be declared a World Heritage Site — thereby protecting it from future property development — the director of the United Nations World Heritage Centre, Bernd von Droste, said this week.

World Heritage Site status would place severe restrictions on development in the mountain area — and could put an end to the controversial Oudekraal development plan should that area be included in the newly proclaimed Peninsula National Park.

Von Droste, who attended a World Archaeology Congress at UCT this week, said Table Mountain was a prime candidate for Heritage Site status and he was surprised it had not been included on South Africa's short-list of three Heritage Site nominations submitted last year.

"I was quite astonished that Table Mountain was not the very first nomination," Von Droste said.

"I guess it is more problematic than other nominations because it is so close to a rapidly expanding population. The potential for conflict is big."

Nevertheless he felt certain the mountain would be included in a second round of nominations once the first three had been properly assessed.

A successful nomination would place great international pressure on Cape Town landowner Kasper Wiehahn to abandon his development plan for a large slice of his Oudekraal property — which currently lies outside the Peninsula National Park.

World Heritage status would mean mounting pressure for Wiehahn's property to be included in the park.

"The Cape Province is a must to be protected. There's no doubt about the quality of the site. It's more a question of waiting for the right time for nomination," Von Droste said.

The first three SA Heritage Site nominations were the St Lucia Wetland Park in KwaZulu-Natal, the Sterkfontein caves north of Johannesburg and Robben Island.

Von Droste said that to nominate both Robben Island and Table Mountain — both Western Cape sites — may have been deemed politically incorrect.

A larger "tentative" list of potential South African sites had also been submitted to Unesco, he said. Each nomination would be inspected by officials and a final decision would be made in December.

According to Makgolo Makgolo, national co-ordinator for the implementation of the World Heritage Convention, Table Mountain has already been selected as a potential site by the South African World Heritage Convention Committee which convened in March.

"An application for the Peninsula National Park is being prepared at the moment. I think it is likely to be submitted this year," Makgolo said, adding that the only reason it was not included in last year's lists for Unesco was because it was a "natural site" and not a cultural heritage site like Robben Island.

Each submission for heritage status had to include a detailed management plan indicating all potential developments.

"If some of the developments in a management plan are not acceptable to the (World Heritage) committee they would tell us immediately," Makgolo said.

Environmental sources said this week that previous public inquiries into the future of the mountain had recommended that undeveloped parts of the Oudekraal site be incorporated into the Peninsula National Park.

"If it gets included then it will get the protection it deserves," said Cecilia Assad of the Save the Mountain Campaign.

"If World Heritage status comes through then it will put a hold on everything. It will dictate what developers can and cannot do."

She said environmentalists were still eagerly awaiting a Table Mountain management plan from the National Parks Board.

"That's going to be very important. It's what we've been waiting for but they haven't come forward with it yet," Assad said.

Robben Island has the world heritage jitters

Evaluation due in two weeks

JAN VELD
Environment Reporter

South Africa's application to have Robben Island accorded World Heritage status is to be evaluated in a fortnight's time, and could be approved by the World Heritage Committee at its next meeting in December.

Robben Island is one of three local sites nominated for inclusion on the World Heritage List, following South Africa's readmission as a member of Unesco (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) and its ratification of the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage - more commonly just called the World Heritage Convention - in 1997.

The other two nominations are the Sterkfontein caves complex in Gauteng, scene of major hominid fossil discoveries this century, and Lake St Lucia in KwaZulu Natal.

The World Heritage Convention, adopted by Unesco in 1972, is

designed to identify and protect items of natural and cultural heritage considered to be of outstanding universal value.

At present some 552 cultural and natural sites - and some a mixture of the two - are listed under the convention.

They include Stonehenge in Britain, the Grand Canyon in the United States, Ngorongoro Crater in Tanzania, the Pyramids of Egypt, the Taj Mahal in India, remains of the ancient Inca civilisation in the Andes, Auschwitz concentration camp in Poland, old towns of Djenné in Mali, the Acropolis in Athens (Greece), and Australia's Great Barrier Reef.

Robben Island's heritage resource manager, Juanita Pastor-Makhurane, told a symposium of the 4th World Archaeological Conference held at the University of Cape Town that the application for World Heritage Site status, which had been filed last year by the National Monuments Council, was to be assessed in a

fortnight's time. "So we're still busy planning quite intensively," she said.

"Robben Island is the first World Heritage project of our new democracy in South Africa, and as such we are facing a lot of challenges."

Mrs Pastor-Makhurane read the justification for the island's nomination, which included the words: "Robben Island, with its past history of the subjugation of the human spirit by means of banishment, imprisonment and suffering, has come to symbolise, not only for South Africa or even the African continent, but also the entire world, the miracle of the triumph of the human spirit over enormous hardship and adversity."

The evaluation of the nomination will be done by representatives of the regional committee of Icosmos (International Council of Monuments and Sites), one of two non-government organisations which advise the World Heritage Committee on whether a site deserves to be inscribed on the World Heritage List.

■ South Africa's second round of applications for World Heritage Site status, which will include the Cape Peninsula National Park, are due to be made this year.



Island shrine: symbolising freedom and the indomitable spirit of some of its prisoners over centuries, Robben Island could become a World Heritage Site by the end of the year



Gray to defy suspension as parks board

NELSPRUIT — The Mpumalanga Parks Board's suspended CE, Alan Gray, intends defying his detractors and threats of arrest on trespassing charges by returning to work today.

Gray told Premier Mathews Phosa in a legal letter on Friday that he planned to report for duty at the board's Nelspruit head office.

Gray said in the letter from his attorney, Pieter Swanepoel, that the government's decision to cancel a proposed commission of inquiry into corruption at the board had effectively nullified his suspension.

Premier Mathews Phosa told in a letter on Friday that he planned to report for duty today

Board chairman Francis Legodi said the charges against Gray were never dependent on the commission but were directly related to a broad range of misconduct charges. "Gray has no legal grounds for deciding his suspension has been lifted."

Gray was suspended almost three months ago following disciplinary charges that he used 31 provincial game reserves as collateral to issue six promissory notes worth over

R1,3-bn to shady financial brokers in return for large offshore loans. Subsequent investigations by the Heath special investigative unit have also revealed a network of front companies and secret bank accounts used to channel state funds through the parks board to the African National Congress (ANC), provincial politicians and a number of Gray's other companies.

Legodi conceded on Friday that

the parks board had still not drawn up specific misconduct charges against Gray but said it had finally appointed an independent labour attorney from Pretoria to do so. The board had appointed an unnamed senior labour advocate to chair a disciplinary hearing into Gray's conduct and expected a report within the next month, said Legodi.

Meanwhile, the ANC conceded on Friday that it had accepted substan-

tial donations from government parastatals such as the Mpumalanga Parks Board.

ANC national spokesman Thabo Masebe said records indicated the ANC Youth League in Mpumalanga received at least R105 000 cash from the parks board last year. The money was irregularly channelled into the league from government via the parks board, two front companies and a series of secret bank accounts.

On Saturday, Mpumalanga Premier Mathews Phosa's office confirmed that Phosa had met top Dolphin Group executives behind closed doors well before the secret R25bn Dolphin deal was signed in November 1996. The briefings had not given the premier any detailed insight into the ill-fated deal.

The meetings were first revealed to Gray on Friday in a statement in which he accused Phosa of lying in public by claiming that he had no insight into the contentious deal before it was signed in 1996. — AENS.

CE

Phosa institutes legal action against Gray

BD 19/11/99

BD 19/11/99 (56)

Kevin O'Grady

MPUMALANGA premier Mathews Phosa fired a new salvo in his escalating dispute with the province's suspended parks board CEO, Alan Gray, yesterday when he instructed his lawyers to sue Gray for defamation.

Phosa's decision came a week after Gray said he was suing Phosa and Judge Willem Heath, the head of the Heath special investigating unit, for defaming him.

The altercations are over who is telling the truth about their involvement in alleged financial irregularities in the Mpumalanga parks board.

Gray said last week that Phosa had lied about his role in the 1996 signing of the R25bn Dolphin deal which gave the foreign company a 50-year development monopoly over some of Mpumalanga's main tourist sites in return for financial aid to the board.

Phosa said yesterday he would "not sit back and allow people to drag my name through the mud in order to divert attention from ongoing investigations into corruption in the province". He confirmed meeting Dolphin representatives before the deal was signed and said there was "nothing secret" about the meeting.

"My job description as premier requires that I meet with all persons, including potential investors, who want to do business in our province. That does not in any way give people the right to either misuse, insult or defame my integrity towards the province and its people," Phosa said.

"At no stage in my term as premier have I met people for personal gain," he said.

Gray's lawyer, Pieter Swanepoel, said he had received no formal notification of Phosa's intention to take legal action against his client. He said Gray's case against Phosa and Heath, for alleging his

involvement in a number of irregularities, would continue as soon as possible.

Swanepoel said Gray had backed down on an earlier threat to return to work yesterday after receiving a letter saying he "would not be allowed on the premises".

"We decided to avoid confrontation but have no choice now but to approach the courts to overturn (Gray's) suspension," Swanepoel said.

Gray was suspended in September last year pending an inquiry into his role in the province's R1,3bn promissory note scandal and other alleged irregularities.

Since then, Phosa announced the inquiry would no longer proceed and instead appointed an auditing firm to probe the board's financial affairs.

Swanepoel said he believed Gray's suspension was now invalid because the inquiry, "which was the reason for his suspension", had been withdrawn.

Gray's claims untrue

By Pamela Dube

CLAIMS by suspended Mpumalanga Parks Board boss Alan Gray that he had direct dealings with President Nelson Mandela have been dismissed as an attempt to authenticate his credibility within the African National Congress.

In a leaked document in which he alleged Mpumalanga Premier Mathews Phosa was privy to negotiations into the controversial R25 billion Dolphin deal, Gray painted himself as a trusted figure in the ANC to the extent that he arranged "sensitive meetings" for Mandela before the 1994 elections.

Among other things, Gray alleged that before the elections he

hosted Mandela at the Bongani Lodge near Nelspruit.

He also claimed he helped with the arrangements for Mandela's first meeting with businessman Dr Bill Venter (who financed the building of a primary school in Mandela's home village of Qunu in Eastern Cape).

Gray alleged that as part of his duties for the ANC, he was "requested to drive VIPs from the (Nelspruit) airport to the lodge as I was trusted".

He said the first meeting between Mandela and the International Olympics Committee was coordinated by himself. He also "flew VIPs including Mr (Thabo) Mbeki to Bongani Lodge to collect Dr Mandela".

"I arranged the venue for a

meeting at the Nelspruit Airport and later flew Mandela to the Matsulu Stadium for a rally. I later flew him back to the airport," said Gray.

These claims were yesterday dismissed by Mandela's former aide, Mr Saki Macozoma, who said the President's office never had any dealings with Gray. "I don't even know Gray. I think he is exaggerating his importance."

Macozoma said Mandela's first meeting with the IOC was organised by the local Olympics committee just before the Barcelona Games in 1992, and not Gray.

He also disputed Gray's claims that he flew and drove Mandela around during his visits to Mpumalanga.

Pay-to-enter Kogel Bay scheme mooted

DAN SIMON

CTA/11/99

(66)

A PAY-AS-YOU-ENTER nature reserve is being mooted for Kogel Bay, following public outrage at the news that this ecologically-sensitive and virtually unspoiled coastline near Gordon's Bay could become the site of a hotel development.

An Oudekraal-style hotel development at Kogel Bay — which could free Helderberg ratepayers from the R1,2 million they have to fork out to maintain a municipal resort they hardly use — is one of several options.

Details of a proposed hotel development were released, through the media, for public comment recently by the consulting firm, Bowren Consulting International, which has been commissioned by the

Helderberg Municipality to investigate and evaluate the financial viability of the municipality's resorts and amenities.

An audit of Kogel Bay, which forms part of the 35km stretch of coastline for which the Helderberg Municipality recently assumed responsibility, found it to be one of the last remaining stretches of totally undeveloped coastline within easy reach of Cape Town.

Said Bowren consultant Jon Paine: "The brief called for all options to be investigated and to obtain the public's response to the possible alternatives. Seven broad scenarios were sketched for Kogel Bay, ranging from intense development (a hotel) to reducing the existing development and restricting future development plans." Another option is to remove all build-

ings and developments at Kogel Bay, rehabilitate the area and integrate it into the Kogelberg biosphere.

Paine said the Helderberg Municipality had identified conservation and the development of the tourism industry as two of its strategic priorities.

"Improved management of the resort including cost control, review of tariffs and the potential from marketing to a new customer base could significantly improve the financial situation in the short-term.

"One perpetual funding scenario that reinforces the tourism aspect with the presence of the Kogelberg biosphere has been identified. The entire biosphere should be considered a special attraction in a similar manner to the Kruger Park or the Cape Point Nature Reserve."

Paine said regular visitors would receive an annual pass at a nominal price. Day visitors would pay for entry to the facility.

"Charging for entry into the biosphere would mean that charging again for entry into the (existing) day camping area would become unnecessary, thus reducing administration costs."

Paine said the concept had found favour with planners, environmentalists and councillors from the Cape Metropolitan Council and the South Peninsula, Cape Town, Tygerberg and Helderberg municipalities who attended a recent congress.

Anyone wishing to comment further on the proposed nature reserve should direct written comments to Jon Paine at PO Box 19, Somerset West, 7129 or e-mailed to: info@jpdesign.co.za

Phosa pushed Dolphin arms deal

(56) MHP 22-28/1/99

Mpumalanga's premier introduced Dolphin president Ketan Somaia to Minister of Defence Joe Modise in connection with an arms deal with Kenya, writes Justin Arenstein

The Dubai-based Dolphin Group wasn't just gunning for Mpumalanga's game reserves when it nailed a secret R25-billion contract with the province's parks board in 1996 — it also tried to buy large quantities of arms from the Ministry of Defence.

The secret weapons bid was facilitated by Mpumalanga Premier Mathews Phosa but failed when Dolphin president Ketan Somaia was unable to convince Minister of Defence Joe Modise that his offer was above board.

Phosa's role in the incident will be questioned by the top-level African National Congress commission currently probing him and other party leaders for possible corruption linked to Dolphin and the Mpumalanga Parks Board.

The commission, which met with the ANC's 32-member provincial executive in Nelspruit on Thursday, is expected to rule on Phosa's political future when it tables its findings next month.

Phosa has repeatedly publicly denied that he was close to Somaia or that he had insight into the 50-year Dolphin deal that granted Dolphin a commercial development monopoly on Mpumalanga's flagship game reserves.

He admitted last week, however, that he did meet Somaia at a series of hotels, restaurants and private dinner functions to discuss the deal at least two months before it was signed in November 1996. He refused to comment about the arms deal meeting this week.

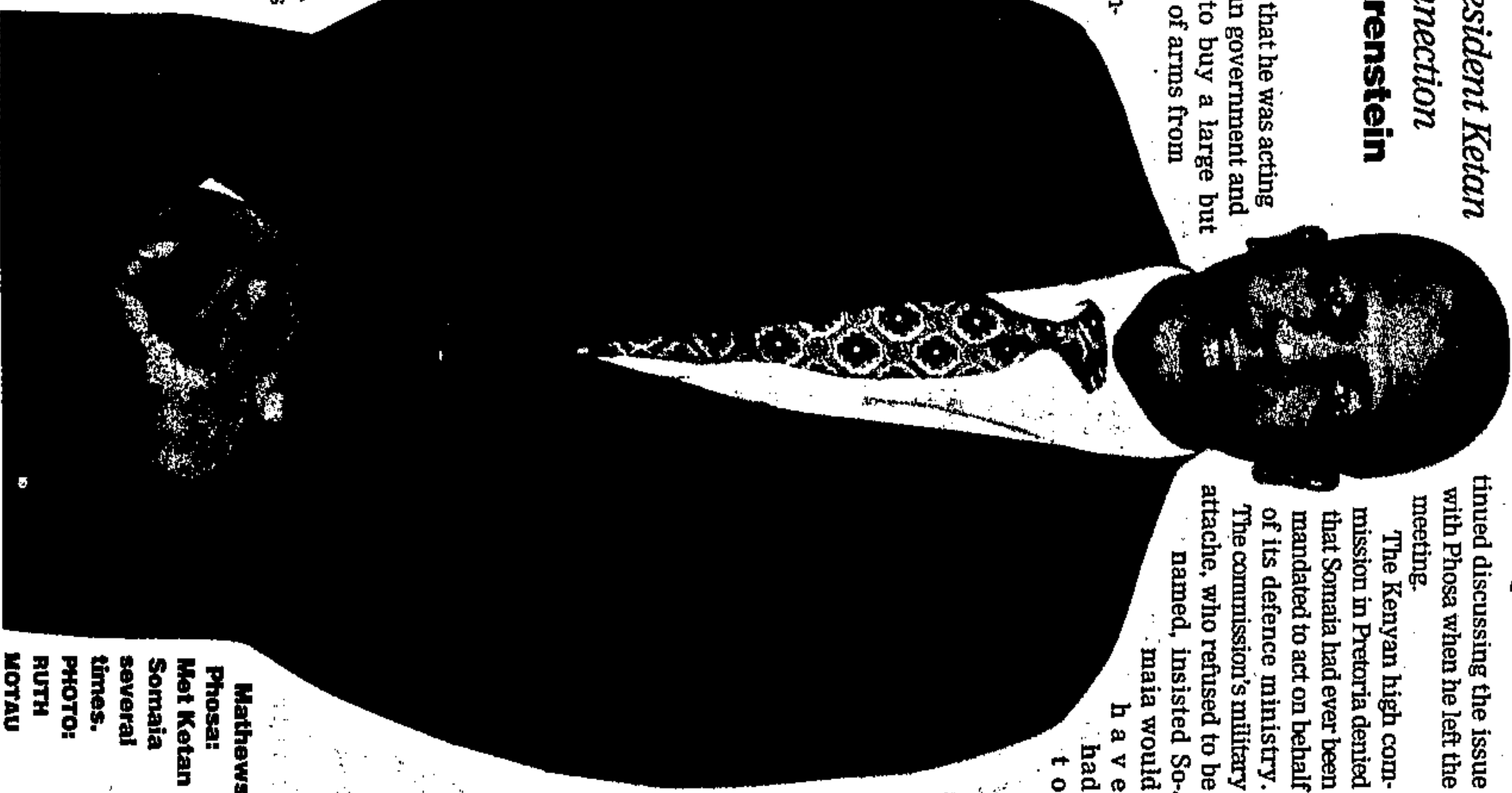
Modise, who serves on the ANC commission, confirmed that Phosa set up a private meeting between him and Somaia at the exclusive Michelangelo hotel in Sandton in September 1996.

Phosa vouched for Somaia's credibility at the meeting and introduced the multinational president as a major foreign investor into South Africa.

Somaia told Modise that he was acting on behalf of the Kenyan government and had been requested to buy a large but unspecified quantity of arms from South Africa.

He was, however, unable to produce a letter of introduction or other credentials and was rebuffed by Modise, who said he told Somaia the government did not work through third parties and would only accept requests for weapons from Kenya's chief of defence or head of the army. "I was also very clear that any request would have to go through the arms control committee in Parliament and through Armscor. I expected him to take the matter up through the proper channels but never heard anything again," said Modise.

Modise added that Somaia also displayed an interest in buying massive quantities of maize for resale in Kenya and had con-



tinued discussing the issue with Phosa when he left the meeting.

The Kenyan high commission in Pretoria denied that Somaia had ever been mandated to act on behalf of its defence ministry.

The commission's military attache, who refused to be named, insisted Somaia would have had

to be accredited by the commission before he was allowed to approach any South African authorities.

"Kenya has very clear procurement policies and procedures for this kind of thing. There is absolutely no way that Somaia or anyone else could have been mandated to buy weapons on our behalf without letters from both us and the defence ministry," said the attache. "Anything else was a con job."

The incident isn't Somaia's only attempt to dabble in the arms trade. The former Kenyan citizen is still being pursued by that country's parliamentary public accounts committee for allegedly washing on a R35-million paramilitary equipment contract signed with Kenya's Police Training College in the early 1990s. The Kenyan government paid Somaia as the agent for a group of little-known British companies but never received any of the equipment it ordered.

Somaia refused to testify about the alleged swindle on four separate occasions when the public accounts committee reviewed the matter during the height of Mpumalanga's Dolphin scandal in 1996. Somaia's defiance prompted Kenya's Parliament to call for the government to ban all business with Dolphin-affiliated companies.

Kenya's ruling party representative on the public accounts committee, Suseman Kamolleh, said parliamentarians would be meeting with President Daniel arap Moi's office and the Ministry of Defence on January 26 to try to resolve the matter. Somaia refused to comment on the issue.

Phosa, who was present throughout Somaia's meeting with Modise, was in hospital on Thursday but refused to comment on the issue earlier in the week. "The meeting's got nothing to do with anyone. Why must this meeting be isolated from all other visits by potential investors?" asked Phosa.

His representative, Oupa Pilane, added that it is common for premiers to facilitate meetings for large potential investors or other influential people. — African Eye News Service

Mathews Phosa:

Met Ketan Somaia several times.

PHOTO: RUTH MORTAU

Gray empowerment: Beneficiary list grows, PAGE 6

Gray empowerment: Beneficiary list grows

MHG 22-28/1199(56)

Wally Mbhele

As rivals in the political debate that is engulfing Mpumalanga mounted public attacks against each other — in the wake of a probe launched by the African National Congress into the affairs of the province — more damaging reports about ANC officials' involvement in corruption were leaked this week.

Documents in possession of the *Mail & Guardian* reveal that suspended Mpumalanga Parks Board (MPB) officials — presently pitted against Premier Mathews Phosa — were part of a well-organised and extremely sophisticated group of kleptocrats who wasted no opportunity in looting the provincial treasury to enrich themselves and their families.

After suspended MPB chief executive Alan Gray released documents claiming Phosa knew of a series of corruption scandals currently shaking the province, Phosa instructed his lawyers to sue Gray for defamation.

Gray's allegations about Phosa's involvement in the Dolphin scandal followed yet another controversial document produced by the provincial general secretary of the ANC

Youth League (ANCYL), James Nkambule, who accuses Phosa of corruption. Nkambule was also suspended from the MPB last year after details of his involvement in its front companies were discovered.

Phosa is of the view that the allegations against him stems from the fact that premiers would from this year be appointed by the president. "The only way to get me out is to make me stink," he said this week.

Claiming allegations against him form part of a "version concocted by criminals who want me to retreat", Phosa said: "It is not going to be in the public's interest if I can retreat. There'll be no politician in this country who'll be prepared to fight corruption if I can do that."

Nkambule, ANC provincial organiser Johannes Shabangu, Gray and suspended MPB finance director Nico Krugel are named in the latest report as the main beneficiaries from a series of undercover MPB dealings with non-existent front companies.

These allegations are contained in documents prepared by Judge Willem Heath's special investigative unit detailing how the Mpumalanga ANC and its youth league, particularly

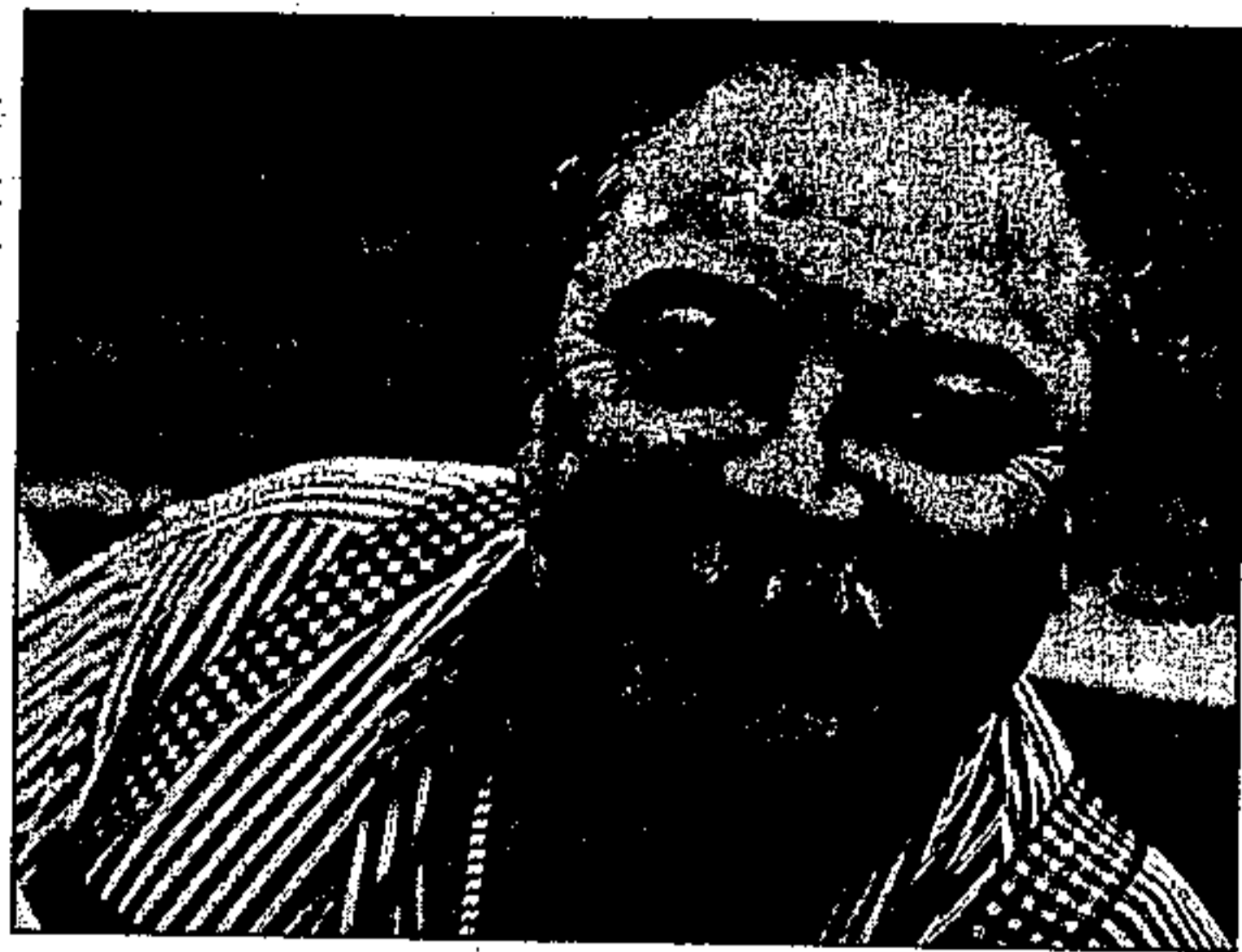
Nkambule, gained handsomely from Gray's generosity through a host of front companies set up to channel funds into individual accounts.

Shabangu is alleged to have received financial support from the MPB for the ANC's conference held in Secunda in 1996. A monthly vehicle allowance was allegedly paid to Shabangu's wife, who was working in the provincial Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism.

"On various occasions Gray instructed his office to provide support for the ANCYL in Mpumalanga at the MPB's expense in the form of, among other things, preparation of conference material, purchase of various items such as gifts, promotional material, frames for certificates and hotel accommodation, as well as transport," it is suggested in documents.

The documents allege that in June 1997, Gray called Krugel and informed him that the ANC had cut the monthly salaries of staff employed in the ANCYL office without prior warning. Krugel was then instructed to assist with "top-up MPB expenses".

The first payment of R9 500 was made to Nkambule out of Krugel's business account. These payments



More dodgy deals: Alan Gray allegedly instructed MPB officials to channel money to the ANC Youth League. PHOTO: STEVE HILTON-BARREN

were continued out of an account in the name of Phambilli Construction. Phambilli Construction is a front company set up by Gray to transfer funds from the MPB into individual accounts. Another monthly payment of R2 000 was provided for the "proprietor" of Phambilli Construction.

"During the existence of this account, it happened a few times when things did not happen automatically for the ANCYL and for Nkambule that the CEO [Gray] became very irritated with Krugel," alleges the document.

Following this, it is alleged that Gray approached Krugel to assist the ANCYL in setting up a structure which could be used as a vehicle for the league to participate in business ventures and generate funds.

In January 1998, Krugel made a presentation and recommended that a trust be formed for that purpose. A draft trust deed was also presented. Krugel was then asked by the ANCYL to continue with setting up the trust.

Nkambule received assistance in the form of direct payments as instructed by Gray. This was in addition to his board fees. Payments on Nkambule's behalf were also made to unspecified suppliers and service providers.

Nkambule was paid a monthly vehicle allowance by the MPB. When the auditor general announced the investigation into MPB activities, Krugel was instructed to prepare log sheets for travelling done on community work. This was to be in support of the travel allowances paid to Nkambule. Such payments to Nkambule continued through the Phambilli account.

Thereafter, Gray decided that the MPB had to buy a Citi Golf (second hand) from Nkambule. It was clear that the Citi Golf did not have an acceptable trade-in value when Nkambule bought a new car. The MPB had to buy the Golf at almost the price of a new vehicle. The purchase of this ve-

hicle was never understood by MPB staff, according to the memorandum.

Shortly thereafter, Nkambule bought a Volkswagen Jetta with his own finance, and some support from the vehicle allowance paid by the MPB. Nkambule was involved in a car accident and the damage was repaired by Alan Hudson Motors. Per Gray's instruction, alleges the document, an amount of R16 107 was paid to the panel beaters on December 18 1996.

Nkambule had another accident in January 1997 on his way to Johannesburg. It is understood that Gray issued instructions for the recovery of a wreckage at the MPB's expense.

"It was discovered that Nkambule had let the insurance cover lapse. Krugel was instructed by Gray to sell the wreck and settle the capital with the financiers. The account, amounting to R73 609,57, was settled with Stannic. Only R14 000 could be recovered from the sale of the wreckage," alleges the document.

Nkambule's personal staff, including a driver and security guard, were also paid for by the MPB, initially as casual staff at about R5 500 per month. It is alleged that Gray also wanted benefits such as medical aid and a provident fund to be arranged for Nkambule's staff.

After Nkambule was charged with burning down his uncle's shop, it is alleged that the MPB paid R40 000 to cover his legal costs. Security structures at his house were allegedly paid for by the MPB. Medical costs for the birth of Nkambule's baby were also paid for by the MPB through Phambilli Construction.

Nkambule last week threatened to sue the *M&G* for suggesting that he is involved in a plot to oust Phosa. Two days later, a Sunday newspaper carried a story based on a document he drafted suggesting that Phosa is involved in a host of illegal activities.

MAIL & GUARDIAN

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National parks to be upgraded

(56) 80 22/1/99
Michael Hartnack

HARARE — A green light is expected soon from the World Bank for a Z\$2,7bn soft loan to upgrade Zimbabwe's vast national parks structure, Willis Makombe, the permanent secretary for the country's crisis-ridden environment ministry, said yesterday.

Much of the money is earmarked to revamp infrastructure including roads and accommodation in the reserves covering a fifth of the country, but Makombe said Z\$200m is committed to the southeast, which tourism experts hope to see linked to SA's Kruger National Park and new reserves in Mozambique.

Elephants from Zimbabwe's heavily poached Gona-re-Zhou National Park, allocated Z\$120m, are known to have crossed the Limpopo into Kruger, confirming ecologists' belief the area should be managed as one for conservation purposes.

Development of Gona-re-Zhou — the place of the elephant — might also relieve tourism pressure on heavily marketed Kruger facilities, say experts.

At present Gona-re-Zhou is accessible only from the Kruger National Park by a 500km drive, much over dirt roads, via Beitbridge.

"It is almost certain the loan will be effected," said Makombe, whose ministry has been racked by a series of resignations and corruption scandals over the past 10 years.

The world's last remaining wild population of 2 000 black rhinoceros, in the middle Zambezi valley, were wiped out by Zambian-based syndicates as the ministry lost its "rhino war" due to lack of funding and leadership.

Makombe said all conditions for the World Bank loan have been met.

"We are ready to go if they respond to our submissions," he said. "We now have an implementation

manual for the project."

South Eastern Zimbabwe's share involves development of sites such as the Chilojo Cliffs and Chivarira Falls on the Save River.

The overall plan ranges from computerisation of tourism facilities to more sophisticated wild life management projects.

Zimbabwe's eight year fight to overturn the 1989 ban on trade in ivory and elephant products was hindered by allegations it was "double counting" a migratory elephant population put between 70 000 and 85 000, many of which cross seasonally into Botswana.

The Southern African Development Community believes tourism is one industry in which countries of the region might co-operate without exacerbating rivalries, particularly as "long haul" visitors from Europe, North America, the Far East or Australasia usually wish to see attractions in more than one country.

Reserve gains status to fight off poachers

International profile bolsters conservation efforts

BOBBY JORDAN

are hard-pressed to preserve the dwindling populations of perlemoen and crayfish.

THE war against poachers on the Cape south coast looks set to move up a gear with the formal declaration this week of the 92 000ha Kogelberg Biosphere Reserve.

The reserve — the first internationally registered conservation area in South Africa — stretches from Gordon's Bay to the Bot River lagoon east of Kleinmond and includes the marine area up to two nautical miles from the coast.

This incorporates poaching "hot spots" Betty's Bay and Cape Hangklip, where law enforcers

help solve the poaching problem — through local and international funding," Hamman said.

"At the moment there's a shortage of funding. People need resources to empower local communities — to educate them about possible alternative sources of income."

Ruida Pool, a spokeswoman for CNC Scientific Services, said the reserve's policy would be aimed at the sustainable use of marine resources.

The reserve also incorporates much of the catchment area of the Palmiet River, earmarked for a major dam development.

Conservation officials said development would have an irreversible impact on the environ-

ment and would not be allowed. "We're very excited about what we've achieved," Hamman said.

"The concept of a biosphere reserve provides an excellent basis for good planning and sustainable utilisation in the broadest sense."

Hamman also announced the constitution of the long-awaited CNC board that will turn Cape Nature Conservation into a parastatal — similar to the Natal Parks Board — that will be able to enter into joint ventures with the private sector and generate its own income. The board would facilitate the use of private expertise and community involvement.

Nyati would 'welcome' probe

BD 27/11/99 (56)

Deborah Fine

CONTROVERSIAL political analyst Eugene Nyati said yesterday that he would welcome a probe by the Heath special investigative unit into payments he received from the Mpumalanga Parks Board in 1996.

Speaking after his first news conference in three years, he said he wanted the unit to extend its investigation to include "all the work" he had done for the province.

Nyati was discredited in 1995 after it was disclosed that he had paid himself up to R15 000 per day at state expense to restructure the Parks Board and the Mpumalanga

Development Corporation.

He was accused at the time of abusing his position for financial gain.

Insisting that all payments he had received from the province were above board, he said he was never criminally charged with fraud.

His statement followed a request by Mpumalanga Premier Mathews Phosa earlier this week asking the unit to probe media reports which suggested that Nyati had been secretly employed as a consultant in 1996 by suspended Parks Board CE Alan Gray to establish a representative office in Malaysia.

Nyati said he had held several

discussions about the short-lived Malaysia venture with discredited former Mpumalanga environmental affairs MEC David Mkhwanazi.

Gray and the parks board are being investigated for alleged financial irregularities involving millions of rands.

Nyati accused Phosa of "somer-saulting" and "flip-flopping" on issues at the first sign of controversy.

AENS reports that Nyati also claimed at the news conference that he was secretly contracted to fine-tune Mpumalanga's R5m provincial budget in 1996, and to write legislature speeches for former finance MEC Jacques Modipane.

SA's natural treasures stake world-class claim

JOHN YELD
ENVIRONMENT REPORTER

The evaluation process which could lead to the first South African sites being added to the World Heritage List – described as conservation's Nobel Prize – is in full swing.

South Africa signed the World Heritage Convention of Unesco (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) in 1997, and last year nominated its first three sites: Lake St Lucia, Robben Island and the Sterkfontein caves in Gauteng, scene of key archaeological finds.

The nominations will be considered by Unesco's World Heritage committee at its next meeting in Morocco in early December.

But an evaluation of each nomination and a recommendation for its listing is done beforehand by one of two non-government organisations: the World Conservation Union, which considers natural sites, and the International Council of Monuments and Sites, which evaluates cultural sites.

Last week, senior conservation union

official Jim Thorsell, who has evaluated 160 nominations for World Heritage List status, spent five days looking at the nomination for Lake St Lucia.

Today, a representative of the African regional committee of the Council of Monuments and Sites will start a three-day evaluation of the Sterkfontein site, and will visit Robben Island for a similar exercise next week.

The World Heritage Convention has been signed by 153 countries, and 552 cultural and natural sites are on the World Heritage List.

They include many of the world's great natural treasures and sites of cultural significance – considered "of outstanding universal value" – such as Stonehenge in England, the Grand Canyon in the United States, Ngorongoro Crater in Tanzania, the Pyramids of Egypt, the Taj Mahal in India, remains of the Inca civilisation in the Andes, Auschwitz concentration camp in Poland, the Acropolis in Athens, Australia's Great Barrier Reef, the town of Timbuktu in Mali, Notre Dame Cathedral in France and the Kremlin and Red Square in Russia.

Dr Thorsell said World Heritage List status was considered conservation's equivalent of the Nobel Prize, or "Nature's hall of fame".

"It's not easy to get on the World Heritage List – only about 50% of new nominations succeed," he said.

According to Unesco, one of the driving forces for the establishment of the World Heritage Convention was the increasing threat of destruction to much of the world's natural and cultural heritage, because of both traditional decay and changing social and economic conditions.

There are significant benefits – economic, environmental and educational – associated with sites being added to the World Heritage List.

Dr Thorsell said an analysis of listed sites had found that, almost without exception, there had been an increase in tourism and jobs in the area.

Also, listed sites become eligible for financial support from the World Heritage Fund and donors such as the World Bank through its Global Environmental Facility.

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ARG 28/11/99



Toxic waste might go back to the US

Star 23/1/99
(56)

By SHARDA NAIDOO

Thousands of tons of toxic waste being stored at the controversy-ridden Thor Chemicals plant at Cato Ridge near Durban could be shipped back to the United States if the court application against the supplier is successful.

The US Department of Justice has information to prosecute Borden Chemicals & Plastics, a US-based company that exported the hazardous mercury waste.

If the US government wins the case against the chemical company - which shipped more than 2 500 drums of mercury waste to Thor Chemicals between 1991 and 1994 - the toxic waste will be sent back, says Environmental Justice Networking Forum spokesperson Bobby Peek.

The forum is in partnership with other similar organisations in the US and is represented on the South African government-chaired steering committee which is investigating the fate of the waste.

Thor Chemicals has been the focus of several criminal and civil investigations in SA for being responsible for mercury contamination of both its workers and the environment surrounding its plant.

"At present the SA government is responsible for the chemicals and will have to foot the bill to remove it. But if the case is in our favour, taxpayers' money will be saved," said Peek. He believes the legal action by the US government would send a strong signal on its approach to dealing with matters of hazardous waste trade.

Thor Chemicals managing director Barry Longden said: "What happens in the US is not our business."

New project to (nb) protect wetlands gets under way

Star 2/2/99
BY VIVIAN WARBY

A new project to protect local wetlands gets under way today to coincide with the celebration of World Wetlands Day.

The project involved a study to develop a plan for the sustainable use and protection of wetlands, said Sue Adams of the Highlands Crane Group.

The Highlands Crane Group, a working group of the Endangered Wildlife Trust and based in the Dullstroom/Steenkampsberg area, had become increasingly concerned about the proliferation of dams and developments that affect wetlands.

The group employed a wetlands consultant to develop a plan for the protection, maintenance and wise use of wetlands.

The group reiterated that the project did not aim to stop dam-building and flyfishing.

The study will form the foundation for further work, give guidelines on the siting of dams and give decision-makers basic information on which they can base their decisions.

is unwise of govt,

Carte blanche to SA Heritage Agency

Dustin Chick

THE SA Property Owners Association (Sapoa) is totally opposed to the National Heritage Bill proposed by the arts, culture, science and technology department.

Sapoa president Anton Musgrave said that while Sapoa, as the representative of the local commercial property industry, supported whole heartedly the concept that the country's heritage resources should be protected, the bill in its present form displayed a total disregard of private initiative and the property rights protected by the constitution.

In its comments on the bill, Sapoa said it would encourage developers to disguise the discovery of a heritage object rather than

Buildings older than 60 years will attract council attention and may not be altered or

BD 3|2|99

56

share the discovery with the rest of the world.

Musgrave said that were the bill to be differently worded, so as to encourage developers to be proud of the discovery while at the same time not being financially prejudiced, Sapoa would welcome the legislation.

Structures proposed to protect the heritage "portray a total misconception" of what is actually reasonably necessary.

"The minister, who is responsible to government, should be the main functionary and not the proposed SA Heritage Agency, which to all intents and purposes is the former National Monuments Council in a new guise and in an

attempt to perpetuate itself," Musgrave said.

The association had little difficulty with the creation of an agency to advise the minister on the protection of "the national estate".

But it disagreed with the granting of a juristic personality to the agency and its capacity to prescribe regulations applicable to heritage management.

The agency had no constituency and no accountability, and would usurp the functions of the registrar of deeds and the surveyor general.

Sapoa's major concern was that the bill in its current form would stifle or delay devel-

opment initiatives, which would be detrimental for job creation.

According to the proposed legislation, the National Heritage Council could, by notice, declare any place a heritage site. Before such a declaration, the owner had to be notified to enable him to make representations.

From the declaration date, the property was effectively "sterilised" for six months and if the owner objected the "protection" could be extended for a further six months. There was no provision for compensation to the owner.

Musgrave said that if a property was declared a heritage site, the decision could affect

demolished without a permit

a neighbouring property as well. A neighbouring property could also become a "protected area" and the owner could, without compensation, be prohibited from subdividing or developing his property.

If a property was "provisionally protected" — which meant the land had to be investigated to determine whether it was worthy of being declared a heritage site — development or alteration could be prohibited for a maximum period of five years. This would also be without compensation.

Any property older than 60 years could not be altered or demolished without a permit.

Musgrave said little cognisance had been taken of the rights of the owner or developer in the drafting of the bill.

It stipulated that a heritage site — which had been declared with no compensation payable to the owner — had to be maintained by the owner. If he allowed the building to fall into disrepair, the authorities could repair it and recover the costs from the owner.

Musgrave said Sapoa believed that if incentives were offered to owners and developers the protection of the national heritage would be welcomed.

"As it is now, developers' interests are totally ignored and consequently they have absolutely no interest in revealing any valuable discoveries they might make."

SOUTH AFRICA

CT 4/1/99
**Thor loses appeal,
case to proceed** (56)

THE Court of Appeal in London yesterday refused Thor Chemicals Holdings leave to appeal against a decision by the London High Court in 1997 that damages action brought by South African victims of mercury poisoning should be heard in Britain.

This was the third unsuccessful attempt Thor had made to halt damages action brought by workers from Cato Ridge who were exposed to high levels of mercury and suffered physical and psychological harm while employed at Thor's plant there.

Plea to farmers: Stop poisoning our birds of prey

(56) CT 4/2/99

DURBAN: The recent mass poisoning of 22 vultures has sparked a nationwide appeal to farmers to stop using old poison collars which inadvertently kill birds of prey.

Poison collars are fitted to sheep and other stock to kill "problem animals" like jackals and caracals in several parts of the country.

Although they are specifically designed and targeted to kill problem

animals only, some older versions are extremely poisonous and also cause the secondary death of scavenger birds like vultures.

Dr Gerhard Verdoorn of the Poison Working Group of the Endangered Wildlife Trust said 20 white-backed vultures and two lappet-faced vultures died recently on a farm in the Postmasburg district of the Kalahari.

The birds died after eating a sheep

killed by a jackal. The sheep in question was fitted with an old version carbofuran poison collar.

Verdoorn appealed to all farmers to buy the more modern 1080 (sodium monofluoroacetate) poison collar or the King collar, which are considered less dangerous to vultures.

He is available to offer more detailed advice on 082-446-8946 —
Own Correspondent

Poisoned vlei opened up as rescue begins

**JOHN
YELD**



ENVIRONMENT REPORTER

Taking advantage of the spring high tides associated with this week's full moon, environmental officials have successfully dredged open the mouth of Wildevoëlvlei.

The vlei, near Kommetjie, has been in a highly toxic state for the past two months because of a new outbreak of poisonous blue-green algae.

Algae was eliminated last April after the vlei system was "salt-bombed" from a helicopter.

But it reappeared in the upper (eastern) of the two vleis in late November.

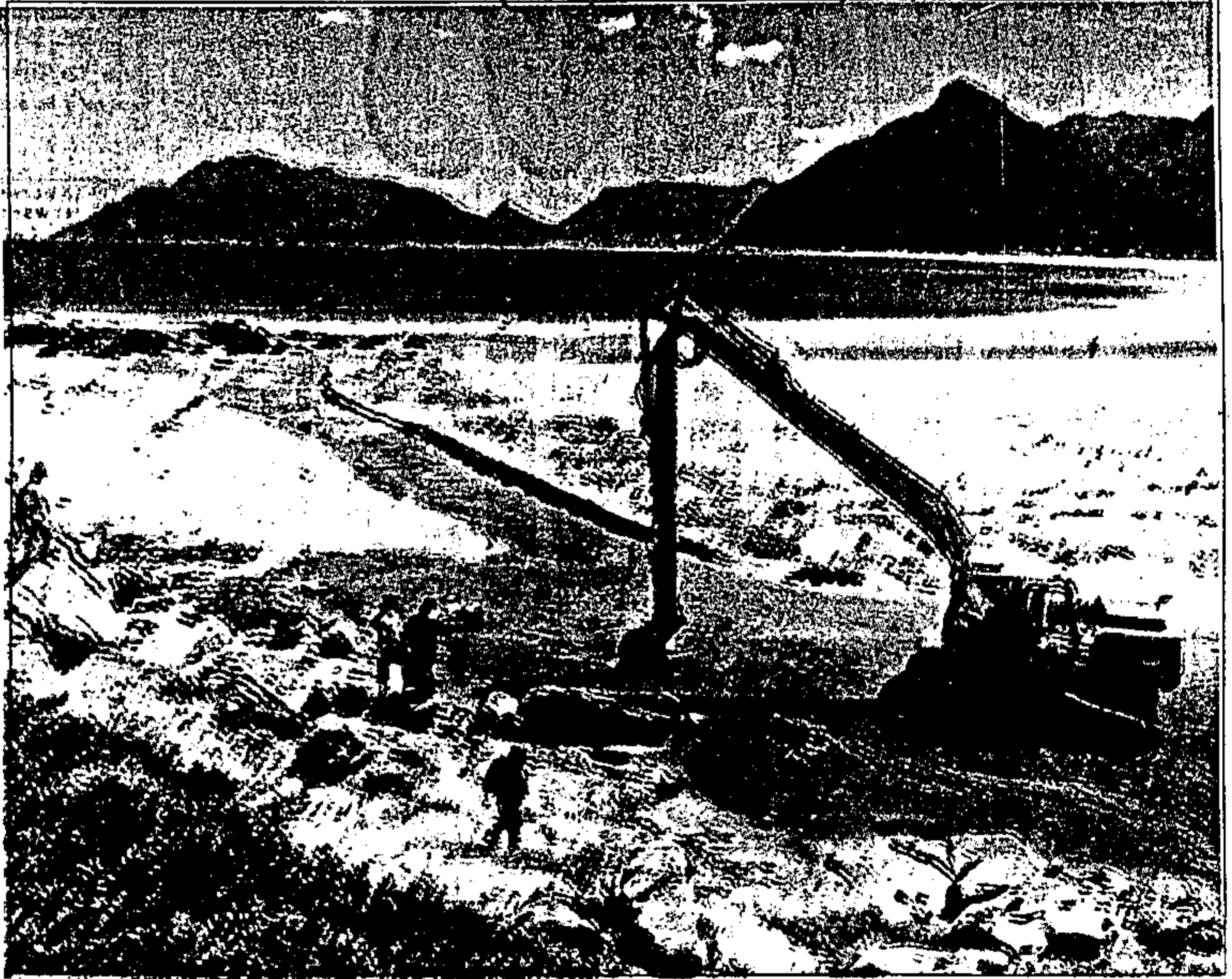
It has since spread through the system, including the nearby beach lagoon.

The extensive mussel beds at the mouth of the vlei are being tested, but they are believed to have been affected by the toxins after the opening on Wednesday morning and collecting has been banned.

Warning notices have been posted and the South Peninsula Municipality has distributed pamphlets to residents in Kommetjie and Ocean View, telling them not to eat the mussels.

The decision to dredge open the mouth was taken after water-quality monitoring and consultation between local authority officials, ecologists, environmentalists and landowners. It was unanimously decided to open the vlei system to the sea.

"We're trying to lower the water levels in the vleis by about one metre, or about one-third to one-half of what they were," said municipality environmental management officer Julia Wood.



Clean green: the mouth of the toxic Wildevoëlvlei, poisoned by blue-green algae, is dredged open at Noordhoek beach

IAN GILDENHUIS

"This will stress the blue-green algae and reduce the volume of the water body for the addition of salt, should this become necessary."

"The opening had gone "very well" and had been quicker than anticipated, said Ms Wood.

"We made a channel of about 5m, and when we went back to check later, we found that the flow had widened it to about 15m."

The two vleis would be left to drain for a couple of weeks, exposing some

of the thick sediments which contain super-concentrations of nutrients from the nearby sewerage works and which are a major cause of the blue-green algae outbreaks.

"As these sediments are exposed, we will analyse them and then we'll be able to do a proper assessment and decide what to do - for example, do we dredge up these sediments and, if so, where do we send them?"

"But before we can do that, we also need some of the results of the catch-

ment management study which is underway for the whole Noordhoek basin."

The mussels would be tested weekly until they were safe to eat, said Ms Wood.

The beach lagoon at Noordhoek, which is connected to the Wildevoëlvlei system and which has also become toxic, would drain much more slowly than the vleis, and the remaining water in the lagoon would eventually evaporate.

Langebaan bird life might be at risk in quest for water

CT 5/2/99

(56)

MELANIE GOSLING
ENVIRONMENT WRITER

THE delicate ecological balance of the Langebaan lagoon, an international conservation site because of its vast and varied bird life, could be forever altered if the authorities start pumping water from underground water supplies, claim conservationists.

West Coast farmers are also worried that pumping on such a large scale may deplete the borehole water supply they use for agriculture.

But scientists from the CSIR say the risk to the lagoon is almost zero.

The West Coast Regional Services Council has been given permission to pump 4 000 cubic metres a day from the Langebaanweg aquifer to help supply the rapidly expanding industrial sector at Saldanha and Vredenburg — a decision based on the findings of a feasibility study done by the CSIR.

South African National Parks, which runs the West Coast National Park that incorporates Langebaan Lagoon, fears that the go-ahead has been given without sufficient study into the future impacts of this move.

National Parks spokesperson Nic Geldenhuys said his organisation was worried that the CSIR did not correctly interpret previous studies on the underground water supply in the region.

"Their report is vague. We've now appointed a special consultant to give us an opinion on whether the two underground water bodies, the Langebaanweg and the Elandsfontein aquifers, are connected or not and what impact pumping from the one will have on the other.

"The Elandsfontein aquifer feeds into Langebaan Lagoon at its southern end and maintains the mixture of fresh and seawater in the lagoon. The dynamics of the salt marshes, which are the driving force of the lagoon's ecosystem, depend on this balance. If it is changed, the entire ecosystem will change.

"And Langebaan is a Ramsar site — an internationally recognised conservation site — which has the second most extensive salt marshes in the country after St Lucia," Geldenhuys said.

Langebaan mayor W T Malherbe expressed concern that demands to pump thousands of cubic metres a day from Langebaanweg were being made before adequate studies had been done.

"If the aquifers are all inter-connected, when they start pumping from the

Langebaanweg aquifer will they also start sucking the Elandsfontein dry?" he asked.

Martin Fourie, a member of the Saldanha Steel Environmental Monitoring Committee, said the CSIR's impact report contained "some

rather contentious statements".

John Weaver, who did the feasibility study for the CSIR, said the Langebaanweg and Elandsfontein aquifers were inter-connected.

"But at the point where the well field will be sited means the risk of the pumping affecting the lagoon is so low it can be considered nil," Weaver said.

He said he welcomed National Parks appointing its own consultant.

'This site ... has the second most extensive salt marshes in the country after St Lucia.'

Alan Gray charged on 54 counts

JUSTIN ARENSTEIN

(56)

ST 7/2/99

MPUMALANGA's prince of the dodgy deal, parks chief Alan Gray, seems set to finally get his day in the dock.

Gray was charged with 54 counts of misconduct and the abuse of power by the Mpumalanga Parks Board on Friday after being suspended on a full salary of R45 000 a month in August.

He also faces 40 alternative charges of misconduct and is still being investigated by the police fraud unit, Judge Willem Heath and forensic auditors Gobodo Inc.

Parks board chairman Francis Legodi confirmed on Friday that Gray had been given 10 days to respond to the litany of charges, ranging from his role in signing six illegal promissory notes worth more than R1,3-billion to funnelling state funds to the ANC.

He will be hauled before an independent disciplinary hearing if he fails to answer or denies the charges.

"We have all the necessary proof and we are ready to finalise this unfortunate episode," said Legodi.

Gray was suspended following revelations that he irregularly used more than 31 game reserves in Mpumalanga as collateral for six promissory notes issued to a series of shady financial brokers.

The brokers promised offshore loans of between R300-million and R500-million each in return.

Gray failed, however, to obtain approval for the deals from the Reserve Bank, the national loans co-ordinating committee or the relevant minister.

Gray insists that his actions were approved by his political bosses. He also says that he was forced into seemingly irregular deals by the ANC and the provincial cabinet.

ART 8/2/99

(56)

CAF

Preserving the Cape's grand heritage

Terraced homes, Spolander House listed

BEAUREGARD THOMP
STAFF REPORTER

The Bo-Kaap and District Six are high priority for the National Monuments Council, which include several properties in the two areas on the latest list of 29 new national monuments.

Fourth on the list are the terrace houses in Osborne and Francis streets in District Six, which date back to 1850.

Also firmly protected now for the future is Spolander House, sometimes called the Gateway to the Bo-Kaap and one of the last remaining "thatch roofline" architecture. The new sites were approved last Friday.

All national monuments must be 50 years or older and must be considered of national interest because of their historical or cultural significance.

cance to the people of South Africa.

The Osborne Street and Francis Street terrace houses date back to 1850 and are the last remaining occupied homes in the area to have survived the forced removals campaign which destroyed District Six.

In January 1996 the tenants were faced with a new threat when the owner wanted to sell the houses.

But after a struggle, and with the support of the District Six Association, National Monuments Council and the District Six Museum Foundation, the tenants bought the cottages and a foundation was formed to monitor their upgrading.

Also making the list is the property at 108 Shortmarket Street, which dates back to 1776 and is an example of Dutch and Georgian detailing.

The Robben Island embarkation point and a section of the quay is included for its historical and political significance.

The largest site on the list is the Robberg Nature Reserve near Plettenberg Bay, which has evidence of having been occupied during the Early, Middle and Later Stone Age.

Artifacts from the more than 20 caves on the site are now on display in the South African Museum. The caves, in which more than 50 people are buried, have rock paintings on stones, walls and floors.

The Cape St Blaize Cave near Mossel Bay also made the list because of its important link with the history of the indigenous people of the South Cape, who first occupied the area about 120 000 years ago and are direct predecessors of the San people.

Much of the evidence of human occupation is thought to have been removed by guano diggers at the end of the 19th century.

It was particularly important to declare the site a national monument to ensure the remaining artifacts are preserved.

The former house of President Mandela in Orlando West in Soweto also made the list.

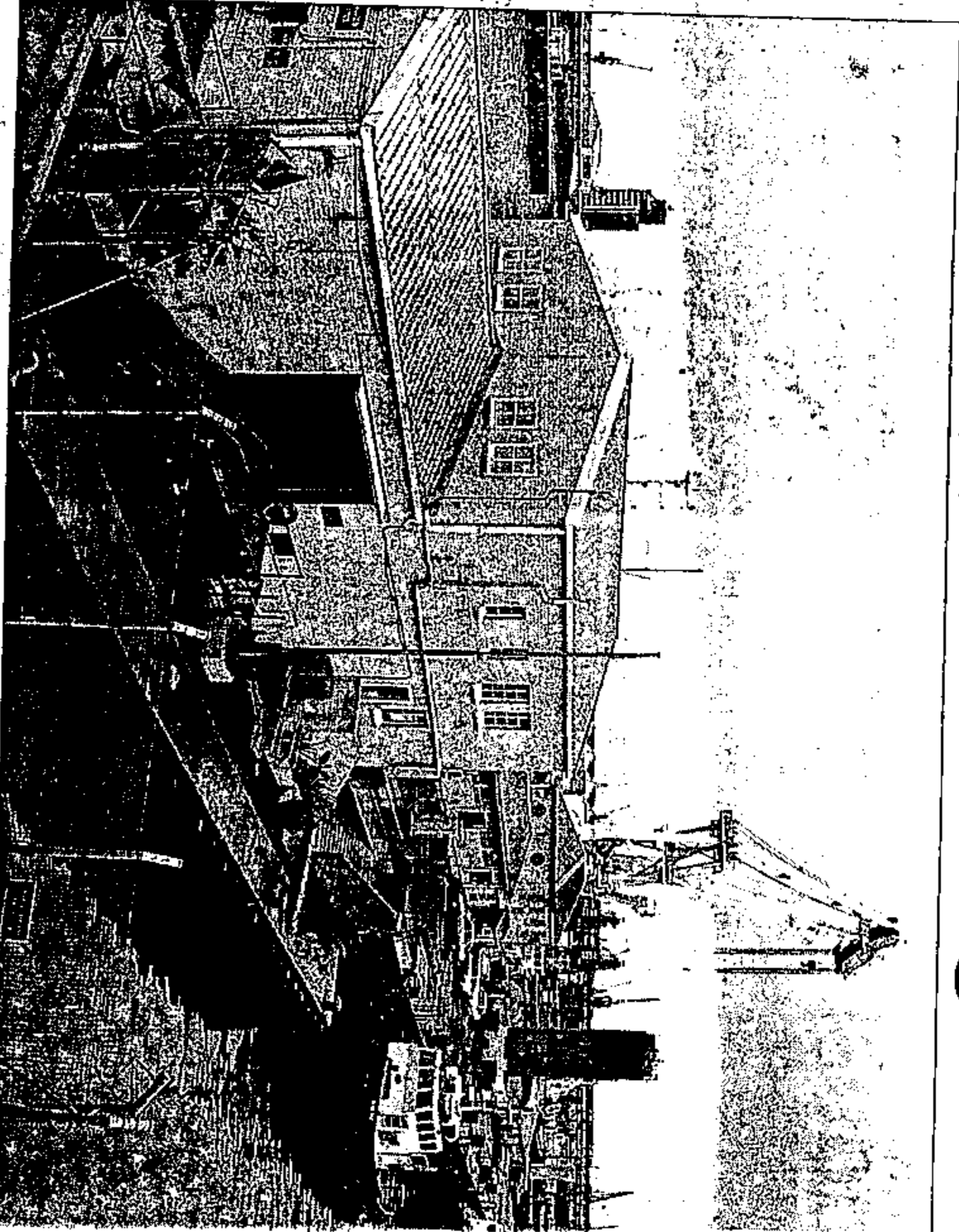
He lived there with his first wife Evelyn during the most active years of his political career.

The president returned to the house after his release from prison in 1990 and makes reference to it in his book *Long Walk to Freedom*.

President Mandela wrote: "That night I returned with Winnie to no 8115 in Orlando West. It was only then that I knew my heart had left prison."

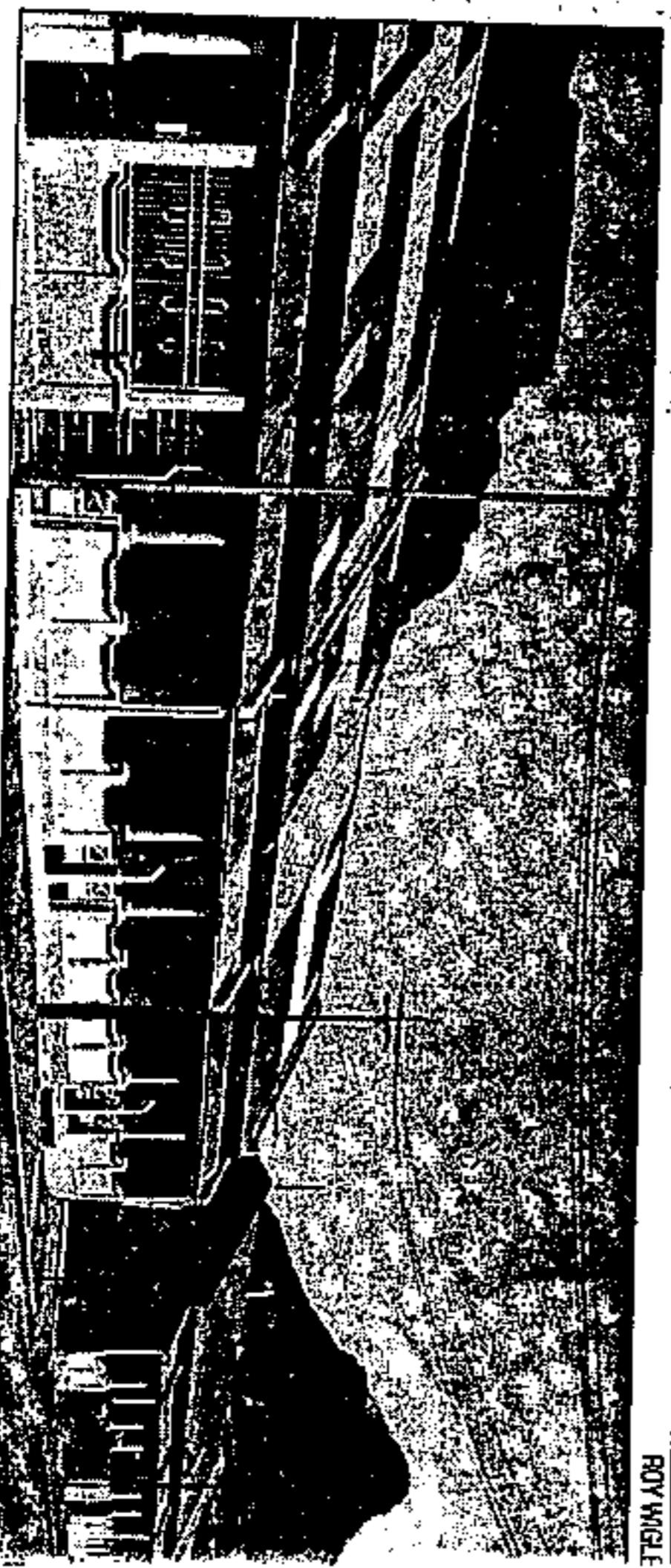
... Compared with my cottage at Victor Verster, no 8115 could have been the servant's quarters at the back.

"But any house in which a man is free is a castle when compared with even the plushiest prison."

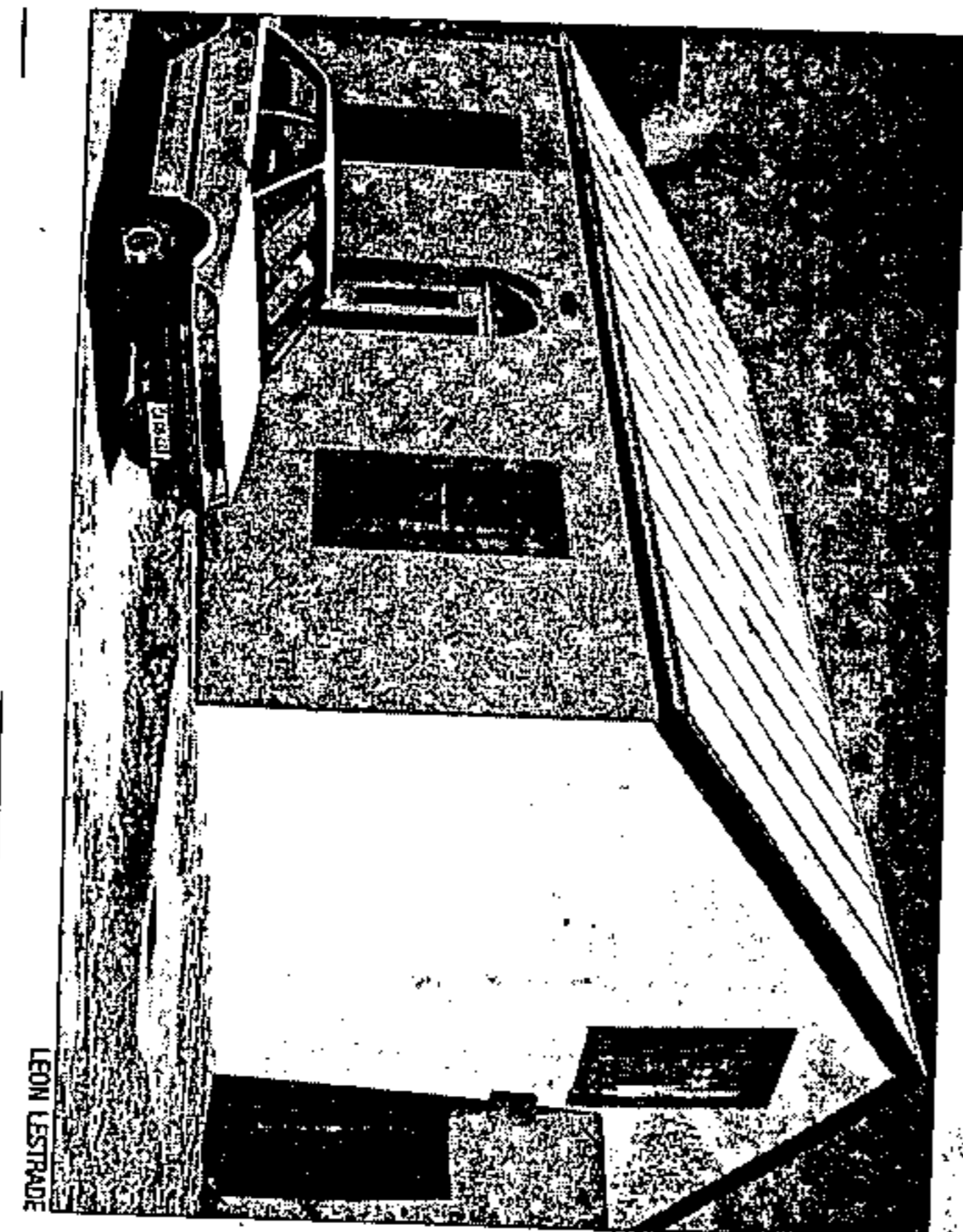


ROY WIGLE

Future secured: the original Robben Island ferry building at the V&A Waterfront, above, Spolander House, also known as the Gateway to the Bo-Kaap, left, and the terraced houses in Osborne Street, District Six, are among 29 additions to the National Monuments Council list of monuments



LEON ESTRINE



LEON ESTRINE

Parks board cash siphoned off to ANC

Financial records indicate leaders used board as personal bank to pay their private medical, legal, housing and clothing bills

NELSPRUIT — The African National Congress (ANC) secretly bankrolled many of its daily activities in Mpumalanga with state funds it siphoned out of the province's corruption riddled parks board, evidence in suspended board CEO Alan Gray's disciplinary hearing shows.

Financial records indicate also that senior ANC leaders used the board as a personal bank to pay private medical, legal, housing and clothing bills.

The evidence is part of a detailed docket of 54 misconduct and abuse of power charges against suspended Gray. The invoices, banks records and cheque stubs indicate

that the board secretly donated cash amounts of up to R105 000 to the ANC youth league while simultaneously channeling additional funds to the party and its affiliates through secret front companies.

The board paid directly for even such expenses as the printing of T-shirts, caps and briefcases emblazoned with the ANC's logo and footed the bill also for bigger ticket items such as luxury hotels and helicopter flips.

However none of the evidence has been requested by the ANC's own high-level probe into the abuse.

The chairman of the ANC committee investigating the allegations, Nosiviwe

Mapisa-Nqakula, has instead cleared some of those implicated. Board chairman Francis Legodi confirmed on Saturday that the subcommittee had not approached the parastatal for confirmation or background information on any of the charges it was investigating.

Some of the newer evidence indicates that the board secretly used state funds to pay for ANC national organiser, Johannes ka Shabangu, to live it up at a luxury Sandton flat for six months in 1996. Investigators have copies of three rent cheques for unit 20 at Majuba Apartments in Alice Street, Sandton, signed by suspended Mpumalanga Parks

Board finance director Nico Krugel.

There is evidence also of R1,4m having been channelled through a White River front company, Phambili Construction, as late as June last year. The money was used to pay for everything from wedding and political gifts on behalf of either Gray or the ANC and was supervised by the Youth League's provincial organiser, Mandla Thumbathi, who served as a director on Phambili.

Payments to provincial ANC Youth League secretary James Nkambule were made through the Rustenburg bank account of a fast food front company owned by Krugel. The company apparently received

roughly R800 000 from the board.

Judge Willem Heath's special investigating unit is investigating all the charges and expects to recoup at least R1,7m that was channelled through the two front companies identified so far.

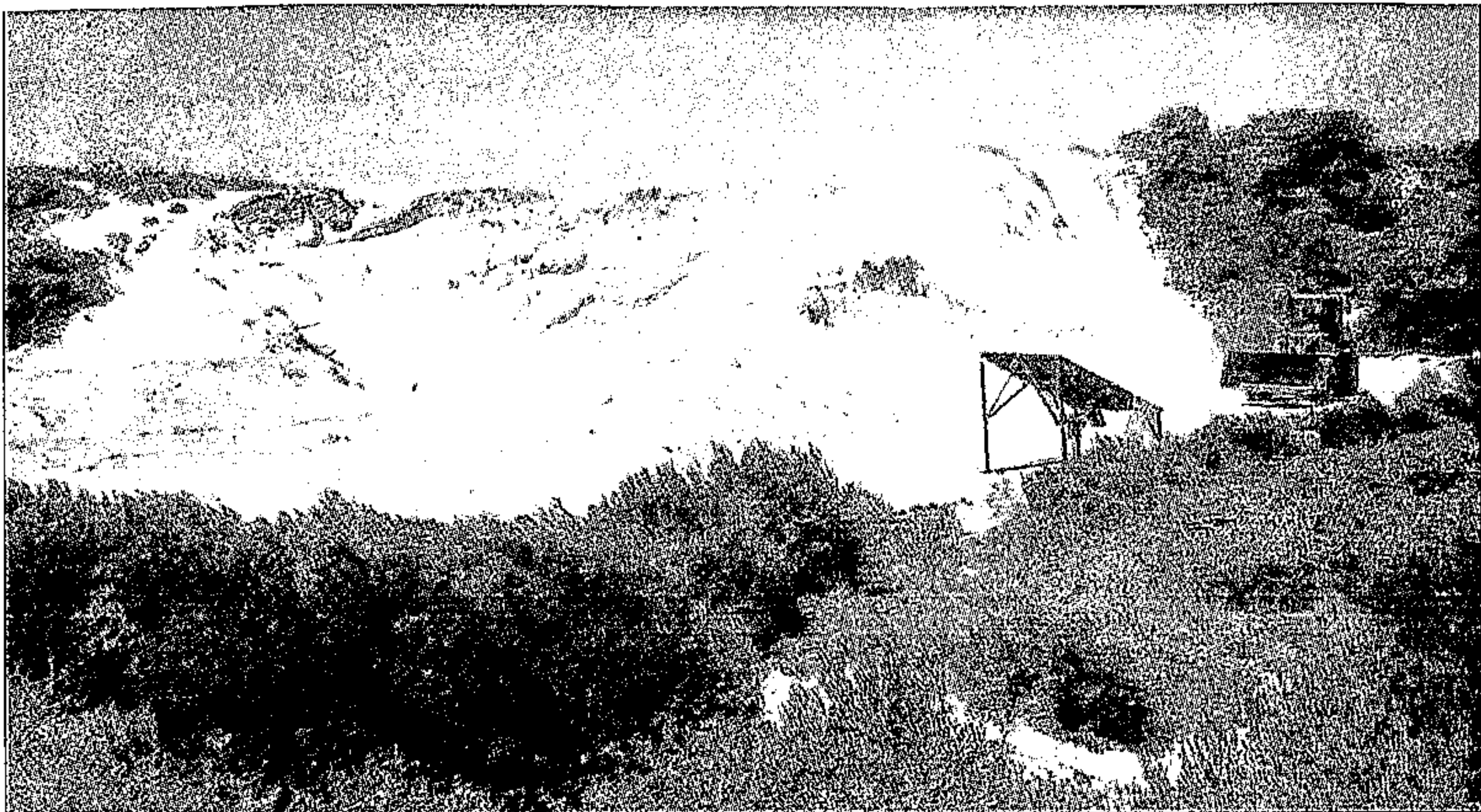
A separate forensic audit by Gauteng-based Gobodo Inc is also tracking the web of payments.

The ANC's subcommittee is expected to make its final consolidated ruling on the involvement of ANC leaders in corruption or misconduct in Mpumalanga before the party's NEC list committee sits on February 12.

—AENS.

PD 8/2/99

bodies



Disputed operation: Blaauwberg Municipality is asking for a High Court interdict to stop mining on this West Coast sand dune

Dust-up over sand mine next to reserve

(56) ARG 10/2/99

Blaauwberg Municipality seeks interdict

Blaauwberg Municipality is applying for an urgent interdict in the Cape High Court to stop sand mining on a property which borders its proclaimed new nature area.

The municipality is also asking for an order compelling the miner – Jacobus Vlok of Dolphin Beach, Table View – to rehabilitate the mined dune, regarded as “a natural feature worth preserving”.

The municipality argues that because the property is zoned rural, mining has to be approved by it in terms of the Zoning Scheme and the Land Use Planning Ordinance, even if a mining permit has been granted by the Department of Minerals and Energy.

The municipality also argues that a process of public participation might be necessary before it can consider such an application.

But Mr Vlok has told the municipality through his lawyers that while he will be guided by legal opinion he intends to continue mining until he is ordered to stop by a court.

Two other respondents in the municipality's application are the Department of Land Affairs, which owns the property, and the Department of Minerals and Energy, which at the end of November

**JOHN
YELD**



ENVIRONMENT REPORTER

granted Mr Vlok a permit to mine the part of the sand dune which falls outside the nature area.

The municipality, which strongly opposed the issuing of the permit when asked for comment by the department early last year, was alerted on January 12 by a worried Melkbosstrand resident.

He reported seeing “numerous trucks” loaded with sand excavated from the property.

Two days later, a municipal law enforcement officer served a notice on Mr Vlok, ordering him to stop mining because he had not applied to the municipality.

But the following day Mr Vlok's lawyers told the municipality that their client did not believe he had to apply for municipal permission. Papers were served on Mr Vlok on Friday and on his lawyers and the other respondents on Monday, and the application was due to be heard today.

In a founding affidavit, Trevor

Hollis-Turner, the municipality's Executive Director: Administration, said the property concerned abutted the West Coast Road.

“The mining operations are on a part of the property which borders another part of the property declared a nature area by the National Monuments Council.

“It is clear that, in terms of the provisions of the Zoning Scheme, no person may conduct mining activities on the property without the municipality's consent.”

Mr Vlok had told Charles Rudman, the municipality's Manager for Urban Planning and Economic Development, who visited the site on January 20 and February 1, that he intended to continue mining.

“Mr Rudman observed on both occasions that sand mining was continuing apace with the use of a bulldozer and a number of trucks which carried the sand away,” said Mr Hollis-Turner.

It appeared that any application to mine on the property might be required to be advertised.

Mr Turner said it would be unfair to residents affected by Mr Vlok's sand mining operations if he was permitted to continue mining “in cynical disregard of the procedure which must be followed to obtain municipal consent”.

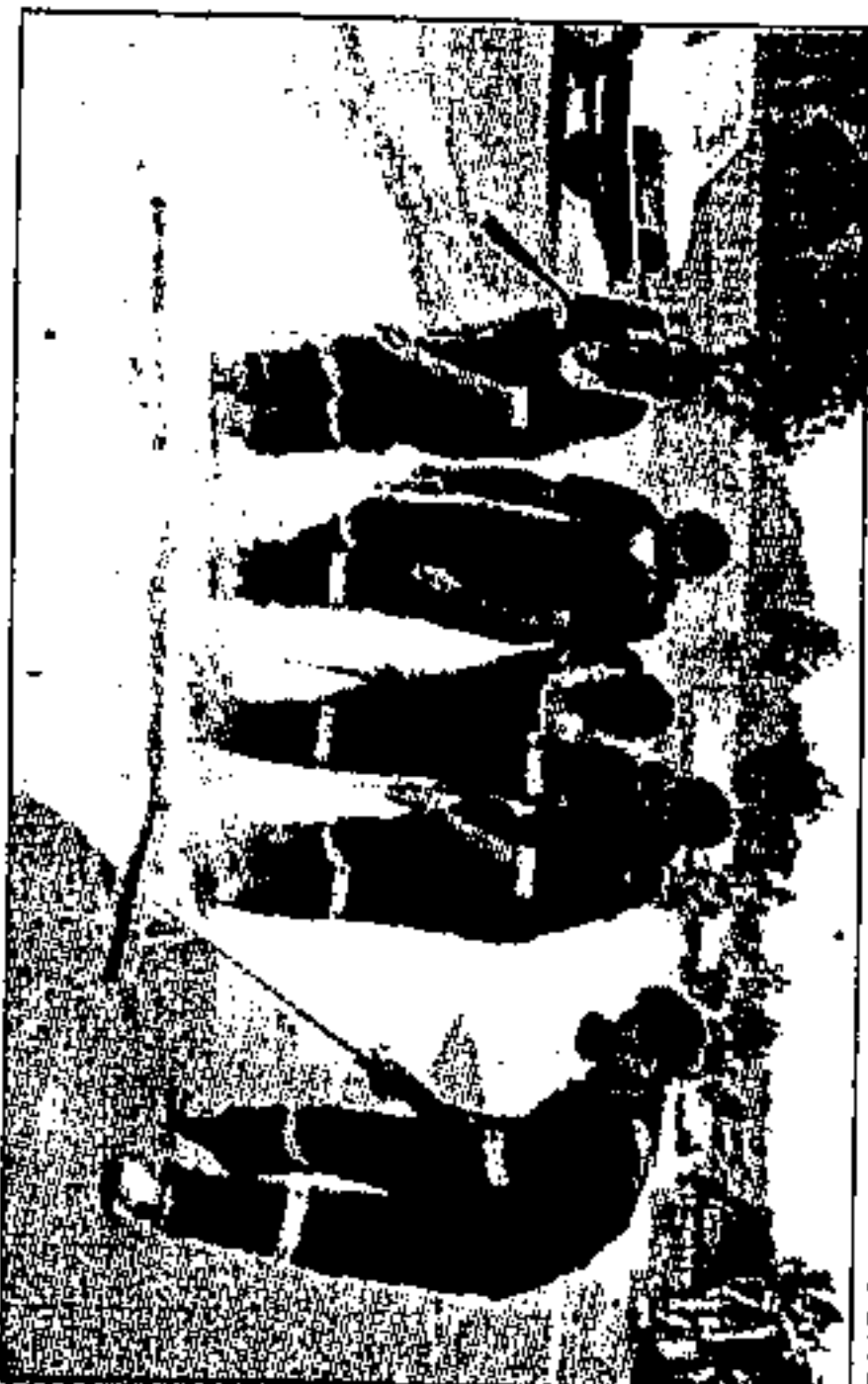


ANDREW INGRAM

A greasy mess... furnace oil spilt on the road outside the Caltex refinery near Cape Town.



Clean up... a member of a hazardous chemical team deans up a section of the N12 near Boksburg in March after drums containing poison fell off a truck.



LINDSAY YOUNG

Battling acid... specialist emergency workers from the Midrand Fire Department spent hours cleaning a sulphuric acid spill in January last year.

Ban these killers from roads, say activists

Environmental activists this week called for tighter control over the transportation of hazardous material.

They also warned that motorists dice with death each day as millions of dangerous substances are transported on South African roads.

Their warning came after the latest in a long list of near disasters involving chemical transport carriers. Since January there have been numerous incidents including a spill last week when a trailer transporting xanthate powder overturned on the N1 highway near

Warmbaths. Residents in the vicinity had to be evacuated from their homes as a precaution against contact with the poisonous powder.

In less than a year, nine major spills have been reported.

Environmentalists and the South African Bureau of Standards have warned of potential disaster unless there is tighter control over transportation of dangerous substances. These include lethal explosives, radioactive chemicals and flammable fuels like diesel, petrol and paraffin.

There could be no compromise

on the safety of South Africans, said Lillibeth Moolman from the South African National Consumer Union.

"We demand that hazardous substances that can destroy whole environments and are dangerous to people be strictly controlled," she said.

Environmental organisations have for years been calling for better legislation to regulate the hazardous chemical industry because of the high number of accidents involving vehicles carrying hazardous substances.

Deidre Briesch, section manager, traffic legislation, said the

department hoped to have legislation in place "early this year" that would control the transportation of hazardous substances in all vehicles.

Current legislation only regulates the transport of hazardous substances in road tankers carrying more than 500 litres of hazardous substances.

There is almost no control over individuals transporting chemicals in the boots of their cars, farmers transporting pesticides or liquid gas on the backs of open bakkies or even companies transporting a

cocktail of chemicals in barrels on the back of open trucks.

New legislation would make provision for more detailed road inspections on chemical carriers and would give traffic officers and policemen the power to enforce the law, Briesch said.

But there are those who believe these steps come a little too late. A Department of Health official noted that there were already millions of vehicles on the road which do not meet international safety standards regarding the transportation of hazardous substances.

Groups seek more controls on transporting hazardous material, writes Environment Reporter Melanie-Ann Ferris

Trail of chemical nightmare

Hundreds of accidents involving chemical transport vehicles occur on the country's roads every year.

These are only some of the many that have occurred in less than a year.

On January 28 last year 50 000 litres of diesel was spilt on the R103/R66 intersection in Gingsindlovu in KwaZulu Natal when a bakkie drove into the back of a diesel tanker. Clean-up operations lasted five days.

Five hundred litres of highly toxic sulphuric acid was spilled along Ikem of public road in Midrand on January 30 last year. The spill, in an industrial park off the Old Pretoria Road, was believed to have been caused by a fracture in the tanker.

On March 3 last year a truck transporting ammonium nitrate fertiliser overturned in Zamdela in the Free State, seriously injuring a child and his mother. The impact of the crash caused the transportation container to burst, spilling the fertiliser over nearby shacks.

On March 5 last year 600 litres of dichlorophenol (DCP) was spilt on the N12 highway near Boksburg, when several drums of chemicals fell off the back of an open truck.

The North-bound M1 freeway was closed between the Southgate and Xavier Road off-ramps on March 7 due to a skin long diesel spill from a tanker.

Thousands of litres of highly flammable acetone ignited into a ball of flame when the tanker transporting the chemical hit a stationary vehicle on the N3 in Ashburton, Pietermaritzburg, on July 8.

On the same day a tanker loaded with thousands of litres of paraffin overturned near Port Shepstone. Although no spillage occurred from the vehicle to avoid a possible disaster.

Last week, the N1 highway outside Warmbaths had to be closed for most of the day while hazardous waste disposal experts cleaned up a highly poisonous powder - xanthate - which fell onto the road when a trailer overturned. Mixed with water, cement or concrete, xanthate could release a highly flammable toxic vapour.

On Monday cleanup teams were kept busy clearing up a sulphuric acid spill on the Leonardale road, near Vosloorus on the East Rand. The chemical causes respiratory problems and eye and skin irritations.

CMC puts on 'green scene' to promote protection of nature

(76)

ART 11/2/99

Public asked to help draft environmental policy

JOHN YELD
ENVIRONMENT WRITER

It's all systems go for a unique "green" event: the Cape Metropolitan Festival of the Environment, which is being hosted at the River Club in Observatory in two weeks.

The six-day festival, the first of its kind in the country, and probably in Africa, is being organised by the Cape Metropolitan Council (CMC) to draw public attention to its draft Integrated Environmental Policy document, and to promote protection of the environment.

It includes a workshop that will initiate public participation in the policy-drafting process.

The new environmental policy, also a unique development for Cape Town, would ultimately be used as a tool by local government to guide its constitutional responsibility, said CMC executive committee chairman Pierre Uys.

Such responsibility was to secure ecologically sustainable growth and the use of natural resources within the Cape metro-

politan area, in conjunction with efforts to promote economic and social development.

"The entire policy development process has been focused on the long-term sustainable management of our natural, cultural and built environments," said Mr Uys.

"Now the public can have its say and, in so doing, take ownership and responsibility of the eventual policy document."

The festival, which is being organised in conjunction with all six local councils and other groups and organisations like Cape Nature Conservation and the National Monuments Council, begins on Tuesday, February 23.

It includes activities ranging from an attempt on the world 100m record by a cheetah, to fashion shows by models in garments fashioned from re-cyclable material like tin cans, plastic and wire.

There will also be sunset concerts featuring a range of musicians and the Cape Town Philharmonic Orchestra, lunch-time and evening lectures by top environmentalists, an organic food mar-

ket, fun runs, and a holistic fair and crafts market.

Judge and former television presenter Mr Justice Dennis Davis will host a public debate, "Politics and the environment", featuring representatives from all political parties.

Cape Metropolitan Mayor William Bantam said yesterday that many of the activities - such as the discussions and debates leading to the workshop on environmental policy - needed substantial public input.

"This will guarantee their relevance and value for the long-term protection and management of the abundant natural, cultural and built environments that we sometimes tend to take for granted in this region," he said.

■ The full festival programme will be published in the Weekend Argus and is available on the Internet at www.cmc.gov.za/environment/festival/

For more information, contact Arlene Thwaites of the Cape Metropolitan Council, 487 2828, or Rosemary Hare at 685 7862.

Maccassar in a stink over sewage

CMC urged to upgrade purification works after two spillages in a week

NORMAN JOSEPH
METRO REPORTER

A Maccassar community has challenged the Cape Metropolitan Council to upgrade a sewerage plant after the spillage of raw sewage on to properties in the area and in to the Kullis River, causing an unbearable stench.

Residents of Sandvlei are up in arms over spillages twice last week. This follows sewage spills last year, apparently caused by malfunctions at the Zandvliet waste-water treatment works.

They have called on the CMC to prevent this happening again. The spillages have also affected Kramat, a suburb neighbouring Sandvlei.

The plant, on the corner of Baden Powell Drive and Maccassar arterial road, is controlled by the CMC's waste-water department.

Halderberg councillor Heinrich Magerman said that after the December 1995 sulphur fire - the suffocating fumes of which led to two deaths in Maccassar - the community was now faced with effluent which posed a health hazard, and could damage property and harm livestock.

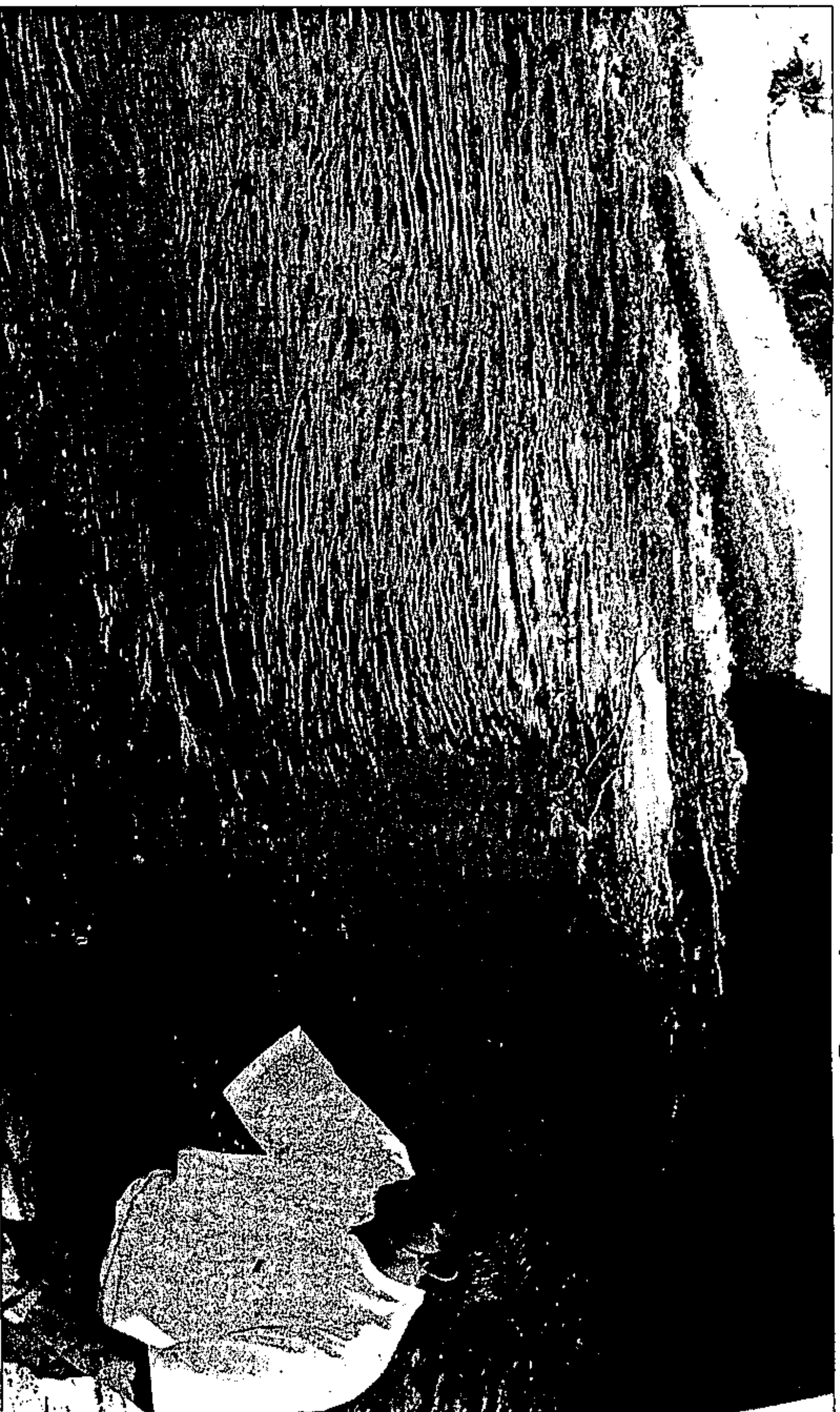
Small-scale farmers took evasive action several times last week to stop their cattle from drinking the raw sewage.

Property owners cleared their premises and shack-dwellers in Madala Bush tried to prevent the sewage from spreading.

Angry residents said these spills happened several times last year. In December, the Maccassar arterial road was flooded with raw sewage.

Spillage has also contaminated the Kullis River and flowed in to the Eerste River and from there in to False Bay.

On Monday, an eight-member delegation from Sandvlei met the CMC's waste-water officials, water engineering experts, conservation officials and councillors at Som-



JACK LESTRADE

Polluted river: Sandvlei community worker Ganief Darries shows part of the Kullis River contaminated regularly by raw sewage.

chem's premises near Maccassar to discuss the problem. Last week's pollution was caused when the capacity of the plant was exceeded, there was a dip in electricity supply and the purifiers were eventually unable to handle the vast volumes of raw sewage.

Coupled to this, there was an "operation failure" at the sludge storage lagoons.

The plant absorbs sewage from the Khayelitsha, Blue Downs and Monwabisi pump stations.

Resident Ganief Darries said that many times when Eskom workers

were busy on the Khayelitsha sub-station, the Zandvliet plant was switched off and this also caused a huge overflow, resulting in spillages.

Yesterday, the delegation asked experts and the CMC to form a contingency plan to prevent the smelly pollution from happening again.

Officials agreed to divert flows to the Maccassar works, a holding facility for sewage.

CMC waste-water expert Mark Tajaard told the meeting: "We are looking at diverting some flows."

CMC officials said that because the plant did not have a back-up sys-

tem in the event of a power failure, a standby generator would have to be hired.

This was a short-term "matter of urgency" measure.

The CMC might also build a retention pond at the plant.

Mr Tajaard conceded there were sludge handling problems at the plant.

He told the meeting: "We used to take about 40 megalitres a day. Now it has increased to 50 megalitres. The plant will be able to take about 120 megalitres a day, but the design will have to be expanded in stages."

The treatment works was designed to treat 40 megalitres of raw waste water, discharging the purified effluent in to the Kullis River and storing the stabilised waste sludge on site in lagoons.

Monday's meeting was chaired by Sandvlei community worker Nazeem Braaf who appealed to all officials to consult with the community.

Mr Darries said: "The CMC must come to us when implementing measures. "We know the historical and cultural background of the area."

ART 11/2/99

(57)

Charges against Gray selective, says attorney

NELSPRUIT — The list of 113 disciplinary charges against suspended Mpumalanga Parks Board chief, Alan Gray was selective and designed to sensationalise the issue for political purposes, Gray's attorney Pieter Swanepoel said yesterday.

At least 28 of the 113 charges were based on alleged financial and other support from Gray for provincial African National Congress (ANC) youth league secretary James Nkambule. Swanepoel asked why no charges for similar support for premier Mathews Phosa had been laid.

"We find it strange that not a single charge relates to the board's support of Phosa, in particular the financial support granted for the security wall, garden landscaping and irrigation system at his official residence," Swanepoel said. The support apparently cost the parks board hundreds of thousands of rand.

"It is obvious that the so called charges were specifically selected and were then leaked to the press before Gray received them," Swanepoel said.

The leaks and public statements

by parks board chairman Francis Legodi had prejudiced Gray's right to a fair disciplinary hearing, he said.

Legodi denied that the parks board was persecuting Gray or had selectively formulated charges.

"I have not leaked anything to anyone and only spoke to the press after sending the charges to Gray."

Gray has 10 days from Monday to answer the charges against him before he will be called to respond to the allegations before an internal disciplinary hearing chaired by an independent attorney. — Aens.

MS 11/2/99

(56)

Report aims to assess state of the nation's environment

By MELANIE-ANN FERIS
Environment Reporter

The country's first national "state of the environment" report is being drawn up.

No such document exists, and information on the country's environment is fragmented – and in many cases non-existent.

So far only four provinces – Gauteng, North West, Mpumalanga and KwaZulu Natal – have completed preliminary state-of-the-environment reports.

Gauteng's preliminary report, released last year, sounded alarm bells over the state of the

province's water and air. The report also highlighted the gaps in information and a lack of proper guidelines to identify and deal with sources of pollution.

The Department of Environmental Affairs said yesterday that the national report should be completed by the end of this year. It will include information on pressures on the environment and recommendations for sustainable management of the environment.

Rudi Pretorius, the department's director for sustainable development, said the report would act as a tool to address

environmental problems.

"The report will make it easier to know what the condition of the environment is, what is causing the problems and how we are dealing with these problems," he said.

Funding for the project has been provided by a Norwegian funding agency which has assisted 25 other countries with similar projects. The report is being drawn up in conjunction with the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research.

CSIR co-ordinator Anna Ballance said the project would run in conjunction with the

Cities State of the Environment Internet Project, which will evaluate the state of cities in South Africa.

The pilot cities involved will be Johannesburg, Pretoria, Durban and Cape Town.

According to Ballance, issues of global concern including atmospheric change, ozone depletion, acidification, the depletion of natural resources, and pollution will also be included in the national report.

The report is open to the public for comment and can be accessed on the Internet at <http://fred.csir.co.za/www/deat/soe>.

(36) Star 12/2/99

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Phosa garden: Gray faces more charges

(76)
(10/11/11)

Claims concerning irregular landscaping payments swell complaints to 116

BY JUSTIN ARENSTEIN
Nelspruit

Suspended Mpumalanga Parks Board (MPB) chief Alan Gray has been served with three new misconduct charges for allegedly paying private contractors to landscape Premier Mathews Phosa's garden.

The new charges were served on Gray at about 1pm yesterday after his attorney, Pieter Swanepoel, surrendered documentary evidence detailing the landscaping contracts.

Gray now faces a total of 116 disciplinary charges, ranging from allegations that he used state funds to bankroll the ANC and its leaders, to accusations that he secretly awarded lucrative contracts to his own companies.

MPB chairperson Francis Legodi said all the charges were based on documentary evidence.

The latest charges follow allegations by Gray earlier this week that the MPB was trying to protect Phosa and had focused its investigations on financial aid only to ANC leaders opposed to the premier.

Gray complained in a press statement on Wednesday that 28 of the charges against him were based on financial assist-

ance to Phosa's most outspoken critic, Mpumalanga ANC Youth League secretary James Nkam-bule.

Gray said the MPB had also helped to channel R1,3-million for work at Phosa's official residence. The work included more than R835 000 paid for a controversial 4m security wall around Phosa's house, R400 000 for an electric fence, R109 000 for landscaping work, R13 800 for rainwater tanks and R14 600 for a garden irrigation system.

Both Judge Willem Heath's special investigating unit and Legodi's investigators swooped on Gray's attorney immediately to request proof of the expenditure.

"We never charged him before because we never had any proof about the contracts. But Gray has generously given us copies of various invoices and other documents now, so we have charged him," said Legodi.

The new charges concentrate on only a portion of the expenditure, totalling R328 400, paid to Path Construction, Lowveld Garden Services and a Mr A Milazi.

Gray has another 10 days to answer the new charges before he is summoned to explain his conduct before an independent disciplinary hearing. - African Eye News Service

9/11/11
10/11/11

Bushmen to get back park land

A HISTORIC agreement returning part of the Kalahari Gemsbok National Park to the Bushmen who once lived there is expected to be signed next month, Land Affairs Minister Mr Derek Hanekom said yesterday.

The claim had reached "the point of settlement" and he was confident the signing ceremony would take place at the park on March 21, in the presence of Deputy President Thabo Mbeki, he told a media briefing in Cape Town.

Under the agreement the Bushmen will get part of the park, plus additional land of their own.

"For the first time they will have their own land and they will enjoy all sorts of opportunities along with that," Hanekom said.

The Kalahari Bushmen had not only been victims of systematic dispossession of land, but also had their culture destroyed, he said.

They had almost become a special caste and were treated with disdain by black people in the area where they

now lived.

"They really are treated like animals by other black people in the area, which is a disgrace."

Although Hanekom did not give more details at the briefing, it was reported last year that the deal would entitle the Bushmen to jointly own and manage more than 1 000 square kilometres of the park. They originally claimed 4 000 square kilometres, almost half the park.

In addition, the Department of Land Affairs would buy 25 000ha of private land outside the park, some of which would be used for agricultural and commercial purposes, and the rest for a cultural reserve and game farming.

The 300-strong community of Kalahari Bushmen lived in the area for generations until it was proclaimed a national park in 1931. They were eventually reclassified as coloured and resettled in a coloured reserve in 1973.

Hanekom also said Cape Town's District Six claims should be finalised by the end of this year. - Sapa.

Sowetan 12/2/99

(h6)

Laws needed to end abuse of SA's wildlife, foundation warns

BY ROSS HERBERT

(52) Spar 13/2/99

Ongoing abuse of wildlife in South Africa and the fallout from the long-running legal battle over a group of baby elephants at Brits led to a call this week for new legislation and enforcement of an industry-wide code of practice.

The country's game-ranching and hunting industry, which earned some R100-million last year, is putting SA's reputation and tourist trade at risk through the abuse of wildlife, the Rhino and Elephant

Foundation warned.

"Welfare transgressions in the wildlife industry occur with monotonous regularity. Antelope die of heat in unsuitable transport crates. Rhinos arrive with their horns broken off. Deaths occur due to capture-stress. Animals die in sordid auction pens. This situation must stop. There is too much at stake," said foundation director Andrew McKenzie.

The scope of SA's enforcement problem is massive, with more than 8 000 private game reserves

and ranches operating.

Last year SA held at least 32 live game auctions. An estimated 40 000 to 50 000 wild animals were captured and transported, most for the restocking of game ranches, parks and hunting areas.

Under statute, the wildlife unit of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (NSPCA) has responsibility for protecting animal welfare and is empowered to inspect and intervene whenever animals are mistreated. However, its resources are

inadequate to the task.

"The NSPCA ... cannot monitor every sale. You have to have help from the provincial parks boards," said Rozanne Savory, a member of the NSPCA wildlife unit and former Rhino and Elephant Foundation member.

Mckenzie called for the creation of a training and licensing system, adoption of an industry code, and the creation of a wildlife welfare enforcement agency to clean up the industry.

Calls for reform began in August

after the NSPCA intervened over 30 baby elephants that had been captured in Botswana and transported to South Africa.

The odds of successful reform and enforcement are long, because of bitter mistrust between animal welfare and industry groups. The NSPCA said it was not consulted over the welfare agency proposal. And the Department of Agriculture, which is responsible for animal welfare, has too few staff and no budget to analyse the issues and draft effective legislation.

Kruger Park lions



WOUNDED PRIDE: At least 95 percent of lions in the southern Kruger National Park have deadly TB and perhaps 80 percent have been exposed to an HIV-like virus.

Pictures: NICKY DE BLOIS

Scientists and private game operators seek radical solutions as disease cuts a swathe through parks

MICHAEL SCHMIDT

MORE than a third of the lions in the Kruger National Park are now infected with the killer tuberculosis bacteria.

The Sunday Times first reported on the plight of the big cats in September last year. Since then the disease, which is also present in buffalo on which the lions feed, has swept 104km north from the central Letaba camp to near the Shingwedzi camp.

This means the disease has travelled 260km beyond the southern border where it was first introduced by infected cattle in the late '50s. Ninety-five percent of lions in the south are now infected.

Dr Dewald Keet, the chief state veterinarian at Kruger, said this week that private game farms like Timbavati, Mala Mala, Sabi Sand, Londolozi and Sabi-Sabi, which are unfenced where they adjoin the park, were already infected with TB.

The Manyeleti reserve, run by the Northern Province, is also infected.

Keet said this week that between 60 to 80 percent of the Kruger Park's 2 000-strong lion population had also been exposed to a feline immunodeficiency-like virus, or FIV, the cat version of HIV.

The virus may weaken the immune system, making the lions more susceptible to TB, which in turn causes them to waste away to the point where they can't fend for themselves.

Keet said almost half the lions in the central park were infected, and about 30 had been put down since September 1995.

"Three-quarters of the park is infected with TB. Once you see it in an area, you can consider it lost ground, although we probably won't really see the effects until the whole park is heavily infected in perhaps 20 years' time," he said.

Last month, the first of nine adult lions which were radio-tagged last year to monitor the

advance of TB, died of the disease near Crocodile Bridge. "He was in good condition when we tagged him in April," said Keet.

Scientists do not expect a vaccine to be developed for another decade or so.

The lions contract the disease when they feed on infected buffalo. Of the park's 21 000 buffalo, 60 percent in the south have TB, up to 14 percent in the central district have it, and three herds in the north are infected.

In the Hluhluwe-Umfolozi Park, in KwaZulu-Natal, about 20 percent of the 85 lions and 4 200 buffalo are infected with TB.

Dr David Cooper, the vet for the KwaZulu-Natal Nature Conservation Service, said: "It's worrying. In the last year alone, I've had to put down eight lions. They all had TB and six of them were dying of it."

Other Kruger animals which are known to have come down with TB include two of the 173 cheetah, a troop of baboons,

nine of the 7 000 kudu and the leopard which killed a ranger near Berg-en-Dal last August.

"A single infected animal in a herd represents a risk," warned Keet. "A sick buffalo bull moving erratically can spread the infection over long distances."

Between September and November last year, Kruger Park scientists killed 600 buffalo and took tissue samples, which are being tested for TB.

The results, which should be available soon, will be used to devise a plan to combat TB. It may involve fencing the park into quarantine zones.

The country's private luxury game lodges are demanding that the state veterinary service ban the movement of wild animals to prevent the spread of TB.

But conservationists fear that this drastic quarantine measure may result in the renewed culling of elephants after a break of three and a half years.

The Directorate of Animal Health in the Department of Agri-

culture, is expected to meet within two months with the private park lobby, wildlife experts and veterinarians to consider a ban on moving wild animals between all the parks.

Dr Leo Braack, the general manager for conservation development in Kruger, said the only short-term solution was to "minimise the spread of the disease by containment until we come up with a vaccine".

A 2.4m-high barbed wire fence, topped with electric wire, is being built around Kruger, at a cost to the taxpayer of R10-million, to protect adjoining farms from TB.

Braack said he hoped the directorate would not issue a blanket ban on the movement of animals because species such as elephant and rhino, which were not known TB hosts, needed to be relocated to areas where their numbers were depleted.

Dr Andrew McKenzie, the director of the Rhino and Elephant Foundation, said he was concerned that a ban would lead to an increase in culling as

rangers are forced to put down surplus animals they can't relocate, as well as healthy animals which they cannot move away from infected herds.

On March 12 the Kruger Park board is due to decide whether to resume culling some of its 8 800 elephants after a three-and-a-half-year break.

McKenzie said he was worried that the TB epidemic in Kruger might cross to elephants through waterholes or vegetation tainted by sick buffalo.

"There is no evidence of TB in elephants yet — but we have no way to test them and so no way to be sure," McKenzie said.

"They are very gregarious animals and they always have their trunks in each other's mouths, so once one elephant contracted TB, the entire herd would get it very rapidly."

Keet agreed: "The fear of TB spreading to those species is a concern, especially when they are high-profile species which are often translocated."

(56) ST 14/2/99



TESTING TIMES: Dr Dewald Keet with a sample of a buffalo killed in the Kruger Park which is being tested for TB as part of the campaign to find a solution

Fairest Cape fast becoming the dirtiest

'Clean up for tourists'

JOHN YELD
Environment Writer

Let's develop a civic pride in the Cape's natural environment and show that we really care about this unique and precious heritage.

That's the call by University of Cape Town botany professor Richard Cowling, who is exasperated by the seemingly indifferent attitude of most authorities - especially when it comes to maintaining the state of the Cape's important scenic routes.

Professor Cowling, head of UCT's Institute of Plant Conservation and one of South Africa's most respected environmentalists, said many of these roadsides had been subjected to repeated littering and dumping.

Their present "appalling" state was the result of years of neglect by the authorities.

These were the routes used by most tourists visiting the Cape, many of whom were highly conscious of environmental quality.

These tourists would gain their initial - and often lasting - impressions of the region through the windows of buses or cars, said Professor Cowling. "The odds are very high that they'll be negatively influenced by roadside squalor."

It was quite conceivable that the poor quality of the roadsides would have an overall negative effect on tourism, which was the region's fastest growing industry and its most important sustainable economic asset.

Pointing out that the Western Cape had taken its "rightful" position as South Africa's leading tourist des-

ination, boasting seven of the country's top 10 tourist attractions, he said: "Clearly, the primary culprit is human indifference and the absence of civic pride. It's quite amazing that people can litter and dump on an infrastructure that may be providing their livelihood."

In recent years, the maintenance of the region's roads had declined dramatically, Professor Cowling noted.

"In particular, litter has accumulated to unacceptable levels on most major routes, scenic drives and country routes."

In some areas, alien trees and shrubs had invaded roadsides, suppressing indigenous vegetation and impairing spectacular views.

"This unfortunate state of affairs is nowhere more evident than in my own backyard: the southern Peninsula," said Professor Cowling.

"So-called scenic drives and viewpoints are strewn with litter - especially plastic bags, beverage cans and packaging from fast-food outlets - defaced with builders' rubble and garden waste, cluttered with illegal signs and frequented by hawkers at sites that lack even the most basic trading facilities or amenities."

"This creates an overwhelming impression for locals and tourists alike that we simply don't care."

Professor Cowling said the environmental focus of the authorities appeared always on "grand interventions" and they ignored seemingly trivial issues like maintenance.

"The focus has been on the city's proclaimed 'scenic drives' - but unimpeachable grandiose plans later and they have never looked worse."

ACT 15/2/199



Rubbish, rubbish everywhere: Professor Cowling examines illegal dumping near Kommetjie. This photograph was taken last year, but the situation on our roadsides is now probably even worse, he says.

Roadsides required just a small amount of ordinary care, such as the regular removal of litter, alien plant clearance, and the introduction of a few formalised trading areas for hawkers like the Ou Kaapse Weg woodcutters.

"In comparison to the relatively small cost of maintenance, the benefits are enormous. Many countries with thriving tourist industries and successful Olympic bids - like Australia - have adopted these policies.

"And the 'Adopt-a-Highway' initiative in the United States, for example, has been highly successful."

Much more effort had to be placed on developing a sense of civic pride

among the region's inhabitants, and the authorities had to become much more effective in maintaining roadsides.

"Maintenance is labour-intensive and, therefore, has the potential to employ many unskilled workers. If money is a problem, commercial enterprises which produce those products which end up as waste should be persuaded to contribute to a fund."

Professor Cowling acknowledged the efforts of conservation organisations like the Kommetjie Environmental Awareness Group, but said authorities had to take primary responsibility.

Also, the beneficiaries of the tourism industry should volunteer their services and adopt sections of tourist routes which they could maintain in a clean, natural state.

"They would be investing in the infrastructure that underpins their trade."

It appeared many Capetonians had little respect for their natural environment. "That's very sad, but instead of just wringing our hands, let's do something about it!"

Local authorities in the metropolitan areas and the provincial roads department are being asked to comment on Professor Cowling's remarks.



LEON LESTRADE

Throwing down the gauntlet: Richard Cowling issues a challenge to Capetonians

New rules for petrol station construction

Star 16/2/99 (56)

Latest requirements aim to stop leaks from storage tanks and water pollution

BY ANNA COX

The problem of contamination of ground and surface water by petrol stations has prompted Greater Johannesburg's Metro Council to introduce a new set of environmental requirements for new petrol stations.

This follows numerous leaks from storage tanks over the years.

The council identified potential problems, and a task team was set up to research the issue and come up with guidelines for new petrol stations.

Manager of environment information and research for the Southern council, Bill Hamman, who heads the team, said the problem was that once leaks occurred, the environment got damaged and it was almost impossible to rehabilitate.

The leaks, he said, could result in the contamination of boreholes on which many residential and agricultural holdings were reliant for water.

In a recent example in Sandton, a businessman wanting to water his garden pumped water from a borehole on his premises, only to find it was almost pure petrol.

In another incident last year, a man using a toilet in Bryanston near a petrol station threw a cigarette butt into it and the toilet exploded, blowing a hole through the ceiling.

The Eastern council found that the water was heavily

laden with petrol. The station was closed for weeks while the paving was ripped up and the storage tank repaired.

In two other incidents last year, also in Sandton, storage tanks were overfilled, one by 6 000 litres, which flowed into a nearby river.

Other incidents have been reported where corroded or broken pipes from the storage tanks leak and the petrol enters the sewerage system, creating potential danger for residents.

Stations situated on dolomitic and clayey areas particularly placed the environment at risk, he said, because soil movement could cause cracks in storage tanks and the joints in pipes to move, resulting in leaks.

Hamman said the council welcomed the "duty of care" principle adopted by the Department of Environmental Affairs and expected developers and petrol station operators to follow this principle in supporting the council's new requirements regarding storage tanks and offloading of petrol.

"Although there is an SABS code of practice for the installation of underground storage tanks, we decided to go further. Each site will now be examined and considered individually," he said.

The penalties for disregarding requirements in terms of the Environment Conservation Act are fines not exceeding R100 000 or 10 years' imprisonment, or both.

Save our island Pallo, implore Knysna greens

Plea to halt development on isle

JOHN YELD
ENVIRONMENT WRITER

(56) ART 17/2/99

Knysna - Conservationists have appealed to Environment Affairs Minister Pallo Jordan to stop the proposed multi-million-rand development of historic Thesen Island here.

The Western Cape government has already granted rezoning and planning approval for stage one of the project, which involves moving the existing wood-processing factory and sawmill on the island, and building a marina-type complex consisting of more than 600 houses and apartments on several small islands separated by canals.

The planned development also includes shops, offices, a hotel, an "eco-inn" and conference centre.

But a consortium of Knysna-based environmental and civic groups - the Knysna Consortium of Interested and Affected Parties - believes the required public participation process for the development was legally flawed.

Other alleged shortcomings in

the lead-up to the successful rezoning application were that the development proposal - "Concept 25" - was not included in any of the development scenarios for which an environmental impact assessment was done in 1996.

Also, specialist studies done for the assessment were either compiled before 1995 and were therefore "out of date", or were not available for public scrutiny when the rezoning application was submitted.

The consortium said while there was agreement among the group there should be some development of Thesen Island, there was also consensus that the project had not followed the proper process.

Consortium spokesman Jim Saunders said Dr Jordan's department had confirmed receiving the consortium's objections and that the matter was now "under consideration".

A High Court challenge was also a possibility, although this had not been decided on yet.

Free-spending Mpumalanga Parks

(56)

Star 18/2/99

Parastatal had
overspent budget
and failed to pay
essential accounts

By JUSTIN ARNSTEIN
Nelspruit

Mpumalanga's crisis-ridden parks board has been placed under curatorship after it overspent its annual budget by R48-million and failed to pay a string of essential accounts.

Mpumalanga treasury head Issy Lief told the province's portfolio committee on finance yesterday that the finance department would soon take over all day-to-day financial management of the parastatal.

The move follows media revelations that the parks board used large chunks of its budget to fund front companies for its suspended chief executive Alan Gray, its suspended finance director Nico Krugel and various provincial politicians.

The Mpumalanga Parks Board also irregularly donated funds to the African National Congress and the ANC Youth

Heath Unit probing irregular payments

League and paid personal travel, legal, medical and hotel bills for senior politicians.

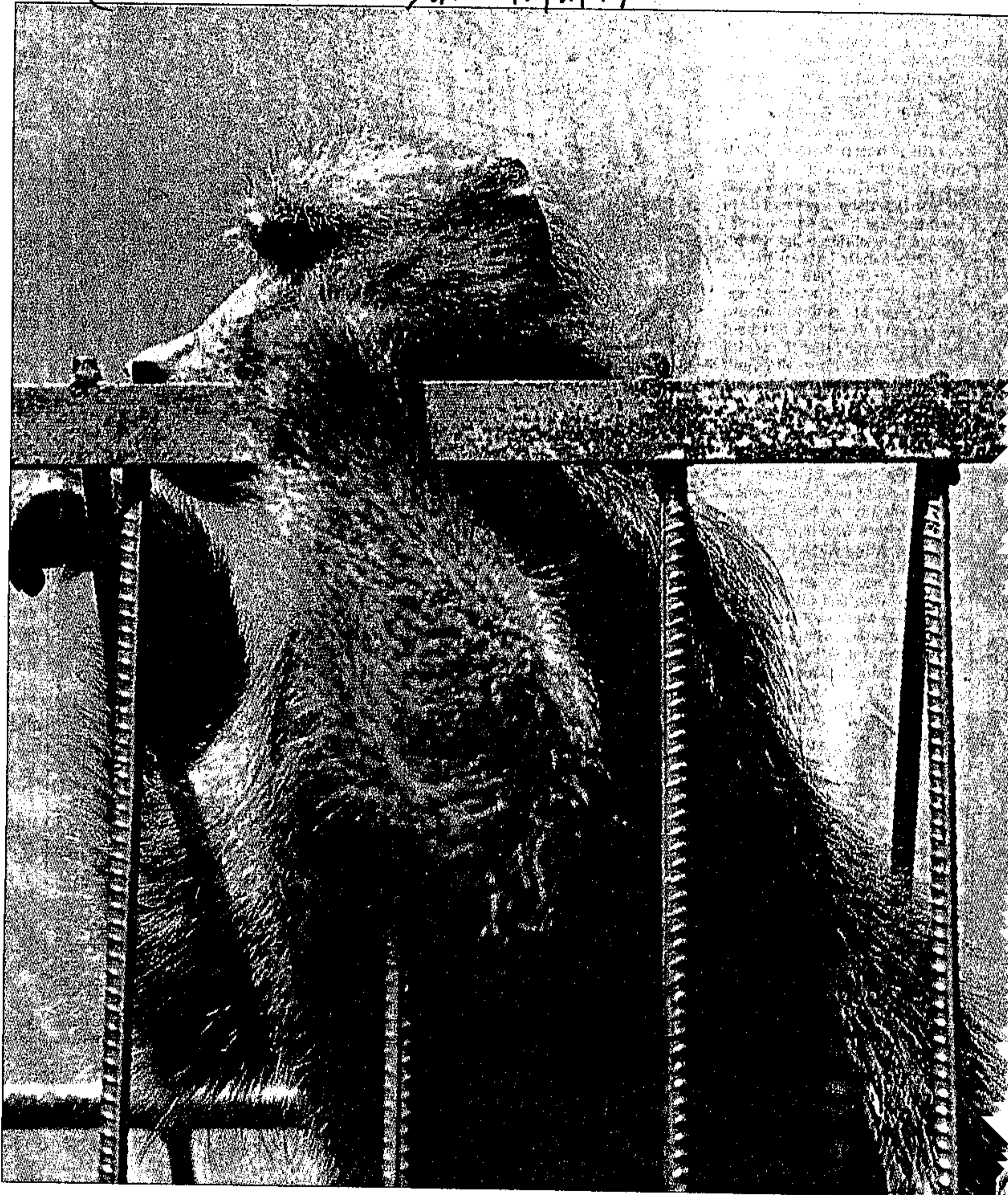
Judge Willem Heath and the separate Gobodo forensic audit team are probing the payments.

The MPB has simultaneously failed to pay its income tax, pension contributions, insurance premiums and its staff medical aid contributions, and has been blacklisted by at least two medical aids.

MPB spokesperson Gary Sutter confirmed that the parastatal had been informed of the pending takeover but said the finance department had not yet sent any official notices to staff.

"We have had problems but they are due to a hopelessly inadequate budget and not just mismanagement. The whole MPB, with over 800 staff, got only R30-million for the 1998/99 financial year," said Sutter.

He was unable to say how much the MPB owed its various creditors or the SA Revenue Service. - African Eye News Service



Animals find themselves in the middle of a dis

By MELANIE-ANN FERIS
Environment Reporter

Staff at the Middelburg Animal and Bird Sanctuary are fighting a desperate battle to keep their zoo open.

They were informed by the Mpumalanga Parks Board on Tuesday that the zoo would have to close down temporarily from March 1. The board

believes the zoo is in need of urgent upgrading.

Zoo staff say the threatened closure has forced them to cancel a number of fundraising ventures as well as several breeding programmes until such time as their future has been decided.

Parks board senior general manager for conservation Arrie van Wyk said the zoo

needed some serious "cleaning up". The board was looking into the possibility of having it privatised.

A statement by Van Wyk that "nobody likes to look at sick and lame animals. Some of the birds don't have wings and the cages are small and not so nice" has left zoo staff furious.

The zoo's senior nature con-

Zoo staff fight for the right to stay open

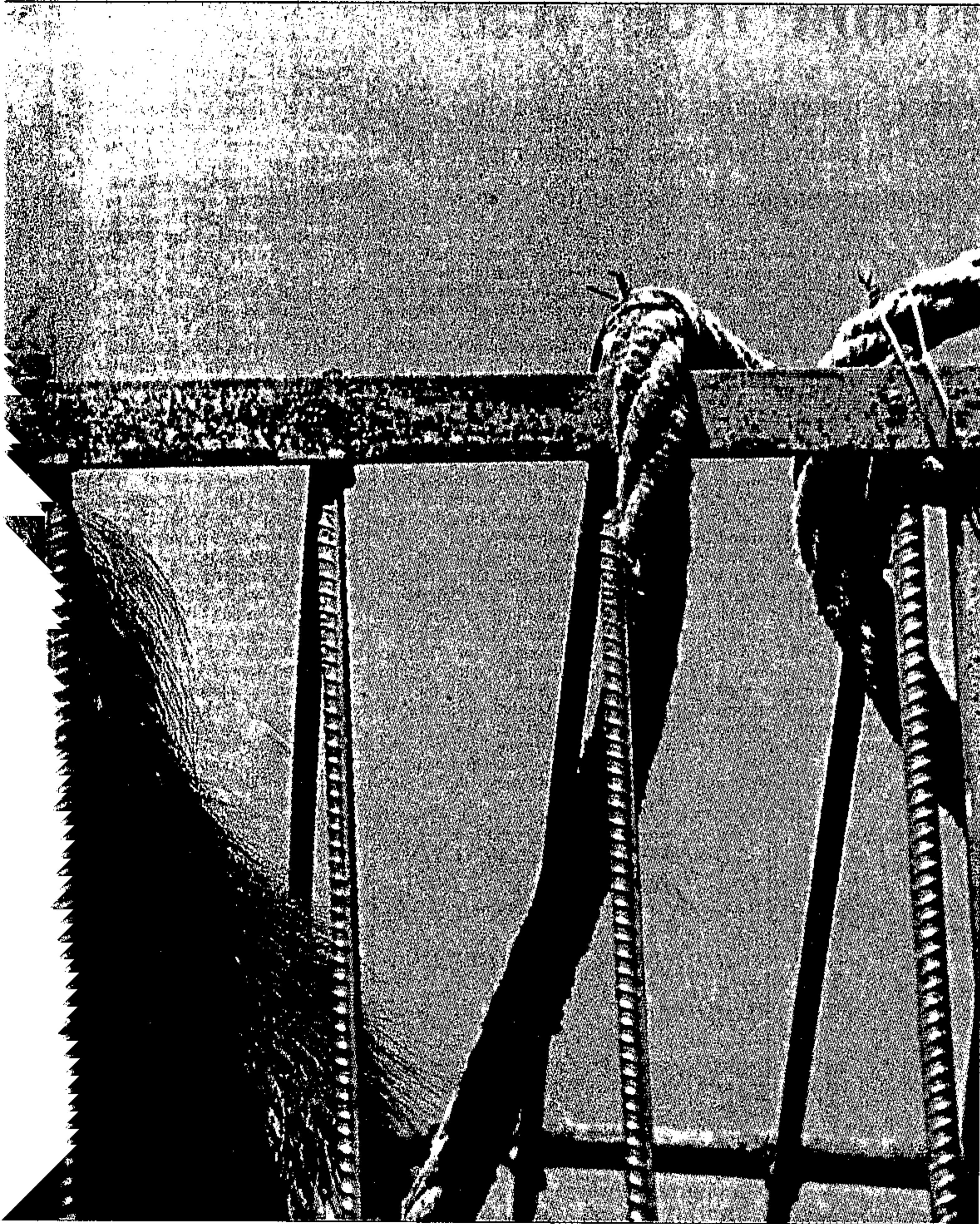
servationist, Delecia Gunn, said yesterday: "We don't have any sick or lame animals. We have one ground hornbill

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nga Parks Board reined in

RIAN HORN

Baboon blues ... one of the more than 200 animals at the Middelburg Animal and Bird Sanctuary whose future hangs in the balance following the decision to temporarily close the centre from March 1.



the middle of a dispute at Middelburg sanctuary

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Zoo staff fight for the right to stay open

ervationist, Delecia Gunn, said yesterday: "We don't have any sick or lame animals. We have one ground hornbill

whose wings were amputated after it was injured."

A tour of the 2-hectare grounds revealed that the zoo is in need of upgrading, but Gunn insists that all the animals, except the warthogs, have enough space.

The planned fundraising ventures were designed specifically to raise funds to build a new warthog enclosure and

make some of the cages more aesthetically pleasing, she said.

The zoo houses 20 animal species - some endangered, such as the cotton-topped tamarins from South America - as well as jackals, baboons, several parrot species, crocodiles and a number of farm animals.

Some of the animals are on loan from the Johannesburg and Pretoria zoos.

Mpumalanga Parks Board spokesperson Gary Sutter said yesterday a task team comprising members of the parks board and town council officials had been established to look into the future management of the zoo.

They have requested people willing to invest in the future of the zoo to telephone the board on (013) 759-5300.

Knysna isle: Town folk appeal to Pallo

ET 18/2/99

(56)

MELANIE GOSLING
ENVIRONMENT WRITER

KNYSNA residents have called on Environment Affairs Minister Pallo Jordan to halt the controversial Thesen's Island luxury housing and marina development in the ecologically sensitive lagoon.

In an emotional meeting in the Garden Route town on Tuesday, hundreds of residents crammed into the town hall to listen to the developers' proposals and register their objections. Some walked out in protest when chairperson Allan Heydorn refused to allow them to debate the objections they had sent to Jordan.

The proposal for the massive R800-million development is to cut up the 97ha island in the Knysna Lagoon into several islands, separated by canals, and build shops, offices, a hotel, conference centre, 120 apartments, 241 group housing units and 299 houses.

Western Cape Planning MEC Michael Louis has given the proposal the green light, subject to certain conditions.

Now a group of eight environmental and residents' organisations have joined forces under the banner of Knysna Consortium of Interested and Affected Parties, and have written to Jordan, asking him to turn down the developers' proposal.

This is the third controversial development Knysna residents have asked central government to scupper in the wake of a go-ahead from the the Western Cape government. The other proposed developments were at Brenton, which would have destroyed the last breeding ground of the

Brenton Blue butterfly, and Sparrebosch on the eastern Head, the last undeveloped coastal plateau in the southern Cape.

The objectors' spokesperson, Jim Saunders, told the meeting there were numerous objections to the development, particularly the dredging it would involve and the increased water flow into the lagoon.

But, he said, he would restrict himself to the legalities of the proposal. "There is agreement that some development will take place on Thesen's Island. There is also consensus that the project has not followed the proper process and that it must be reconsidered. As it is has been presented, it is inappropriate for Knysna and the Knysna estuary," he said.

Among the objections handed to Jordan were that the land submitted for rezoning on Thesen's Island was not owned by the applicant, relevant comments had not been obtained, the proposal had not been submitted in the legally required format, and that the developers had withheld information from the public.

Thesen's Island is owned by the giant Barlows group, which has appointed Chris Mulder, Tony Raphaely, John Tanner, Gray Rutherford, Power Construction and others to develop the land.

Said Saunders: "Fighting something Barlows wants to do feels like the little Dutch boy who tried to fend off the flood by putting his finger in the dyke."

The project had the potential to destroy large amounts of salt marshes, pollute the lagoon with toxins from the pole yard and leave 1 500 people from Thesen's Sawmill on the island without employment.

Grant to Robben Island Museum trimmed

Star 19/2/99 (56)
What does the Afrikaanse Taalmuseum have that the Robben Island Museum doesn't? An increase in this year's Budget.

Institutions getting increases in the R101-million Arts and Culture budget include Cape Town's SA National Art Gallery (R3,9-million to R4,2-million), the Michaelis Collection (R372 000 to R455 000) and the William Fehr

Collection (R1,2-million to R1,3-million).

The SA Museum gets a R700 000 rise to R9,8-million and the SA Cultural History Museum grant goes from R5,9-million to R6,5-million.

The grant to the Afrikaanse Taalmuseum in Paarl rises from R886 000 to R955 000, but the grant to the Robben Island Museum drops from R24,2-million to R21,9-million.

New items include R1,5-million for the Nelson Mandela Museum in Umtata and R500 000 each for Constitution Hill in Johannesburg and Freedom Park in Pretoria.

Grants for monuments (R2-million) remain unchanged. They include the Voortrekker Monument (R425 000) and the Grahamstown 1820 Foundation (R1,4-million). - Political Staff

Game parks face national TB disaster

(71) *RAW 19/2/99*

If the disease is allowed to spread it could infect humans through the milk from domestic cattle

By ROSS MERRITT
Phinda

The spread of tuberculosis through South Africa's game parks is a "disaster" that demands urgent attention, say veterinary experts.

South Africa will face a growing threat that the disease will move beyond cattle, buffalo and lions to new species, threatening the game industry and potentially "tainting" South African parks in the eyes of foreign tourists.

"TB can easily move to new species," said Professor Nick Krtek of Pretoria University.

To combat the problem, five northern KwaZulu Natal game ranches - Phinda, Magudu, Mkuze Falls, Pongola Poort and Harloo game ranch - have formed Buffalo Conservation 97, which spent the last 18 months testing buffalo purchased from the provincial conservation service to isolate



What's up ... animal health technician Alida McCall tests a sedated buffalo for reaction to TB.

TB-free animals. But the long incubation period of the disease and imperfect detection tests - adapted from tests for domestic cattle - mean animals must be kept for at least three months in captivity before being released into disease-free areas.

Marginal game parks underfunded

Buffalo Conservation released 21 TB-free buffalo into the Magudu game reserve this week, an area where they have not been seen for 100 years. The venture, which has holding boxes and testing facilities at the Phinda game reserve, plans to release 100 TB-free animals

each year for the next five years.

"The TB situation in South Africa is a national disaster. From the release of the Kumbelen report last year on the status of South African parks, it is clear that conservation in South Africa is in crisis. Every day that goes past the disease gains a bigger foothold," said Andrew McKenzie, a veterinarian and director of the Rhino and Elephant Foundation.

If the disease makes the leap to rhino, it will limit South Africa's role as the main source for rhino restocking on the continent. If TB leaps to elephants, it will force a moratorium on translocations and increase the pressure for more culling to control increasing elephant populations.

However, fear of the disease is creating a market opportunity for game traders. Buffalo Conservation buys its buffalo for R10 000 each and spends about R15 000 to hold and test

the animals. However, auction prices for TB-free animals range from R35 000 to R45 000, with animals also free of corrie disease going for more than R100 000. However, such high costs mean many marginal game reserves and underfunded parks will have little

TB situation is a national disaster

choice but to test and cull infected herds. The extent of the infection - affecting 60% of buffalo and 95% of lions in sections of Kruger National Park - could translate into massive reductions in populations. So far no tests are available to detect the

disease in rhino or buffalo. If the disease were allowed to run its course, wildlife would continue to re-infect domestic cattle around the parks, which in turn could infect humans with TB through milk. TB was first detected among kudu in the 1930s and is believed to have entered the Hluhluwe-Umfolozi game reserves in the 1960s, moving from cattle to buffalo through common pastoral land.

Cases of TB infection have been found in six species in South Africa. In the recent past, TB has been found among leopard, kudu, cheetah, and baboon in addition to buffalo and cattle. Predators acquire the disease by eating infected animals, while herbivores acquire it through close herd contact. The disease is a problem in Malawi, Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania. The disease could pose a grave threat to cheetah and wild dog.

5 ARRESTED IN FIRST NIGHT

Special unit out to snare sea poachers

THE wheels of government grind slowly, but inexorably. The problem of wholesale stripping of the Cape south coast of perlemoen and crayfish by syndicates first reared its head five years ago. Now a specialist unit has been established to deal with the problem. **SYBRAND MOSTERT** reports.

OPERATION Neptune officially kicked off on Monday — and bagged five alleged poachers the same night.

The new unit is made up of out-of-town policemen to avoid the problem of local cops being threatened by poachers.

They will complement their standard firepower with shotguns, and have the use of several craft to patrol the area. Army personnel from the Oudshoorn base are on standby for back-up and observation duties. They will be using night vision equipment to watch the poachers.

A national team of detectives based in Gauteng to trace the smuggling routes out of the country and to liaise with Interpol will also dovetail into the operation.

Sea Fisheries Inspectors and local conservation volunteers will further beef up the numbers to fight poaching.

"We are here to stop them getting the kreen and perlemoen out of the water," says Senior Superintendent Deon Hagen, who is chipper about heading the new unit, which will cover an area from Rooi Els to Agulhas.

But the move comes months, if not years, too late. Perlemoen and kreen stocks have almost been wiped out at Mudge Point, near Hawston, says the Department of Sea Fisheries.

With Hawston denuded, poachers have now moved in to strip the areas around Buffelags, near Cape Agulhas. A conservation official said heavily armed gangs were camping in the area, and were taking out tons of shellfish on a 24-hour basis, although 14 people had been arrested last week.

Poaching gangs have also gained a foothold in the Hawston area, with police virtually not entering the town. Battles have been fought between poachers and police in Hemanus' main street.

Hagen says the poaching is not the only problem. The poaching syndicates, based in Hawston, are run as an extension of the Cape Flats gangs. Poaching, drug trade and burglary were interchangeable activities, depending on police activity.

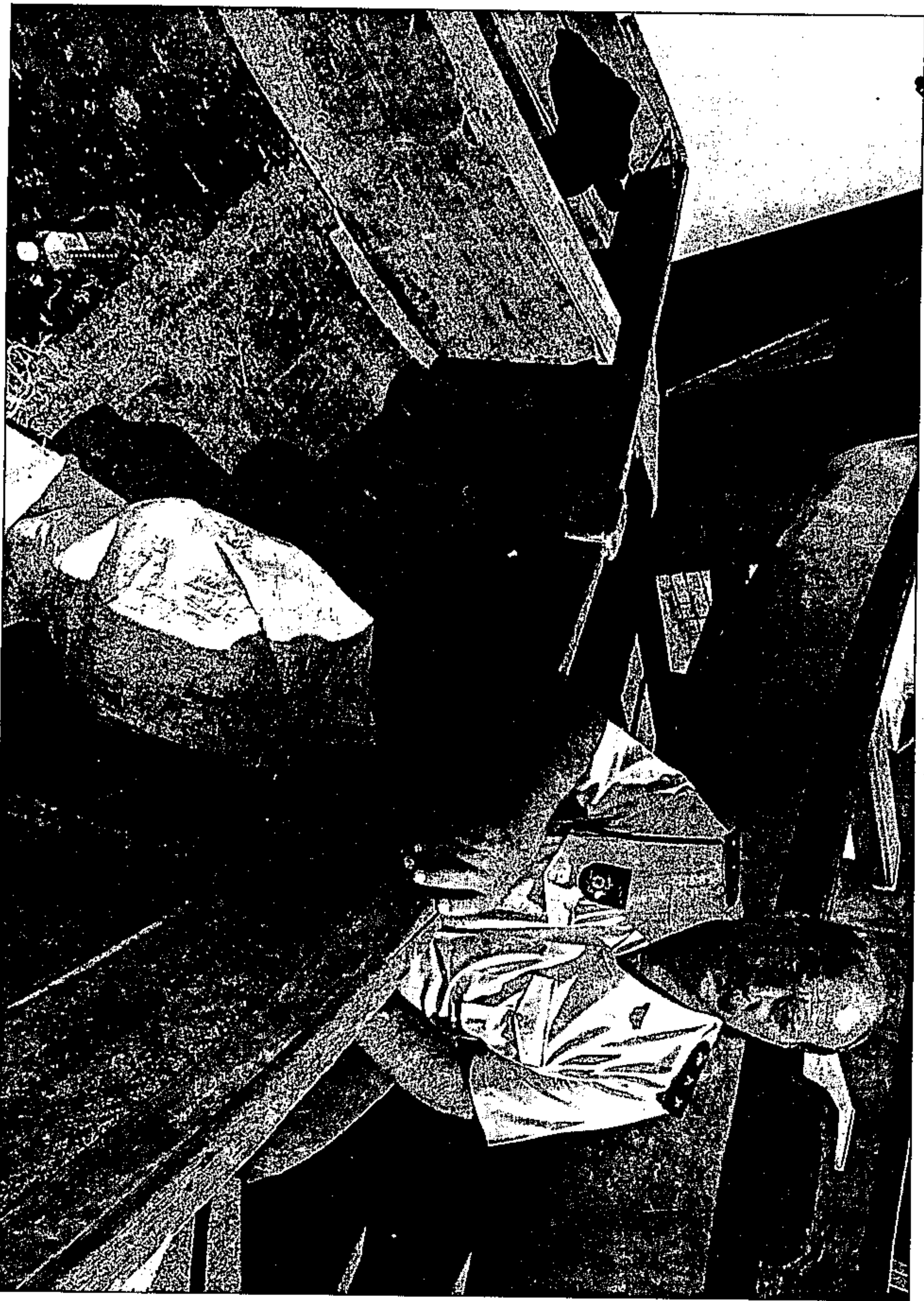
The enormity of what the new unit is tackling cannot be underestimated. The poaching syndicates went into top gear about five years ago when small-time poachers linked up with organised crime.

Now there are large groups of up to 200 divers and "runners" at work. Syndicates use 4x4 vehicles and cellphones. The booty is snucked and cleaned in southern Cape towns and shipped up to Johannesburg, from where it is flown out of the country by international crime gangs. It's big business worth millions a year.

Hagen says the unit will move around to follow poaching activity. Unit members will also be interchangeable to minimise the threat to personnel.

"We have already received a lot of information from the public, but we need more," he says. Anonymous calls can be made to police in Hemanus on (0283) 70-2703 or the toll-free Crime Stop number 0800-11-12-13.

Chris Martens, Overberg area officer for Cape Nature Conservation, said the CNC and locals were backing the operation.



MAKING WAVES: Senior Superintendent Deon Hagen, who will be leading the new, beefed-up anti-poaching squad. "We will stop them getting the kreen and perlemoen out of the water," he says. **PICTURE: ALAN TAYLOR**

Staff shortage has Company Gardens wilting

SIPHOKAZI MGDULWA

STAFF REPORTER

Few opportunities for promotion, short-staffing and no extra money for extra responsibility are the causes of the malaise in the Company Gardens.

This is the view of Jacobus

Smith, the SA Municipal Workers Union shop steward in the garden.

He was reacting to a statement by Ahmed Vawda, the city council's executive director of community development, who said the poor conditions at the Company Gardens were not caused by money, but by a lack of motivation.

Mr Smith said: "Mr Vawda is

totally wrong. The major problem here is that we are short-staffed."

The Company Gardens at the top of Adderley Street was once a tourist drawcard, but now is neglected, overgrown, unkempt and littered. Walkers fear muggings, and thieves steal plants and flowers.

Mr Smith said he and his colleagues were doing their best to keep

the garden in shape, but "we are too few to do the job properly."

Chris Buys, the garden manager, said complex problems had resulted in the present situation. The freezing of posts by the council had been a major problem.

Mr Smith said the union had agreed with management to set up a task team to tackle problems.

(56)

AR 23/2/99

Mines in joint project to purify water polluted water

By MELANIE-ANN FERIS

Environment Reporter

Star 24/2/99
Several Gauteng mines are currently collaborating on a project to purify millions of litres of polluted underground water.

According to a Department of Environment Affairs spokesperson, large parts of the province have been mined out and the abandoned shafts are steadily filling up with water.

It is feared that the water - polluted by contact with mined minerals and chemicals - will start surfacing and could cause damage to building foundations, increase the risk of sinkholes and pose a threat to fresh water reserves.

Apart from the abandoned mines shafts, water also has to be pumped from mining shafts that are still in use.

The Amanzi Treatment Venture, involving the Western Areas Mine, Randfontein Estates, Durban Roodepoort Deep, ERPM and Grootvlei is aimed at establishing the feasibility of purifying about 240-million litres of water per day.

According to the department, the mines are hoping to sell the water for

(56)
household or agricultural purposes, once it has been purified.

Water from the Grootvlei Mine is treated and discharged into the Blesbokspruit. ERPM mines also discharge part of their water into a public stream after it has been treated and some is sold to farmers for agricultural purposes.

Underground water from both the Western Areas and Durban Roodepoort Deep mines is not being pumped out and is flooding mine shafts.

At Randfontein Estates part of the water is used for agriculture and some is also discharged and flows into the Vaal Barrage, below the Vaal Dam.

Alistair James from Metago Environmental Engineers, the company appointed to do the environmental impact study for the project, said part of their investigation was to determine exactly how high the water levels in the mines could go before becoming an environmental hazard.

They have invited interested parties to participate in the process and further information on the project can be obtained by contacting Karin Wright at (011) 7894102.

NUM furious over nuclear safety Bills

By Malcolm Ray

THE National Union of Mineworkers has rejected the proposed passage of two draft Bills concerned with the regulation of nuclear safety and the environment.

Num, supported by the Chemical Workers Industrial Union, demanded the return of the bills yesterday pending a "thorough process of discussion and debate".

In his submission to the portfolio committee on minerals and energy in Cape Town, NUM general secretary Mr Gwede Mantashe criticised the Department of Minerals and Energy Affairs and employers for the "arrogance with which the two pieces of legislation have been bulldozed without taking labour's views into account".

The National Nuclear Regulator Bill and the Nuclear Energy Bill were first mooted by the Government for

legislation early last year and are expected to be passed during this session of Parliament.

Their objective is to create a regulatory framework for the management of nuclear waste and radioactive hazards at nuclear power facilities and processing plants.

Highlighting his union's main concerns, Mantashe said it was "unfortunate" that a "veil of secrecy" continued to surround nuclear energy in South Africa.

He said the consultation process on the bills excluded the unions and communities "who are directly exposed to radiation hazards in underground stopes, processing plants and residential areas of mining towns throughout the country".

"We are also reasonably worried about the exclusion of the mining industry from the ambit of the Nuclear Regulator," he said.

The industry's removal was on grounds of the "limited impact of radioactive emissions", a clause that has been a bone of contention for NUM.

Citing shocking health and safety statistics on the mines, Mantashe said about 1 000 workers at the Harmony gold mine on the Reef were exposed to levels of radiation exceeding the international dose limit.

Exceeding the limit

At least 10 000 mineworkers are exposed to potential annual doses of radiation exceeding the limit.

"It's ironic that, under a democratic government committed to transparency and accountability, this veil of secrecy is sustained by the department of minerals and energy," he said.

He added that the "limited consultative process in Nedlac last year" did not augur well for "cooperative govern-

ment" in the industry.

He asked all stakeholders to "comply with the Constitution and Open Democracy Bill", both of which encouraged the disclosure of information.

Another concern raised by NUM was a provision in the Bills "directed at weakening the role of the Council for Nuclear Safety and lowering the nuclear radiation monitoring standard".

In terms of the proposed legislation, responsibility for waste management and radiation hazards will be transferred from the Government to employers, a provision that could undermine the independence of the Nuclear Regulator.

"The emphasis has not been on improving health and safety of workers and the public but to reduce costs for the Chamber of Mines. Cost-cutting can never be the primary purpose for

developing a regulatory framework,"

Mantashe said. Although he did not elaborate, it is believed the legislation allowed employers too much room to reduce standards of radiation protection and regulation on the mines.

"We are concerned that the contents of these Bills have been determined by the Chamber of Mines, Eskom and the department to the exclusion of other interests," he said.

In so doing, he said both the Government and employers have "flouted" the Mine Health and Safety Act which established an inspectorate within the department of minerals and energy to ensure that mining activity complied with the Act's health and safety provisions.

He called instead for an independent Nuclear Regulator to retain responsibility for setting and maintaining safety standards.

Happy day for heritage

(56)

— minister

ET 24/2/99

A SET of bills which will reshape the management of South Africa's national heritage — ranging from dinosaur fossils to oral history — were approved by the National Assembly yesterday.

One of the bills sets up an overarching policy-making body which will also advise the Arts and Culture Department.

A second bill creates a heritage resources agency as a successor to the present National Monuments Council and allows provinces to set up their own agencies.

It lays down strict rules for the protection of the "national estate" — the country's general cultural heritage — and bans the import of artefacts illegally acquired from other countries. It also allows the state to expropriate property for conservation.

Introducing the legislation, Deputy Arts and Culture Minister Brigitte Mabandla said most South Africans had been ignored by the cultural institutions entrusted with conserving and promoting national heritage.

"Even today, five years into our democratic dispensation, I would venture to say that most of our people still do not see these institutions as their own," she said.

She said there was an almost total lack of black people at management and executive level in national cultural institutions.

The legislation would also help accelerate the training of black workers, she contended. — Sapa



Fever plagues park but 'humans are still safe'

By Russel Molefe
Environment Reporter

(56)

RIFT valley fever, a mosquito-borne disease that is deadly to animals and also poses a threat to humans, continues to plague the southern part of the Kruger National Park and adjacent private game reserves.

Besides a large number of wild animals being affected, cattle in the neighbouring communities have also died of the disease which can be transmitted to humans through contact with carcasses.

The National Institute for Virology in Johannesburg said the outbreak of the disease in the area – the last known outbreak occurred on the KwaZulu-Natal North Coast in 1981 – was expected after good rains.

However, the South African National Parks (SANP) assured tourists

that there was no risk of their getting the disease by visiting the Kruger National Park.

"Though the disease usually only affects animals, humans can contract it if they handle aborted material or carcasses without protective clothing such as rubber gloves, impervious aprons and face masks.

"However, tourists must remember that malaria is prevalent and that they must take the usual precautions such as preventative drugs and mosquito repellents," the SANP said.

The southern part of the Kruger National Park has in the past months been experiencing deadly diseases such as the bovine tuberculosis (BTB) which has devastating effects on the population of buffaloes and lions.

The BTB is reportedly decimating herds of buffaloes and reducing the lion population.

Sowetan 25/1/89

Slow progress in the fight against deadly TB

By Mokgadi Pela (56)

SOCIAL, political and economic transition is to blame for South Africa's slow progress in the fight against tuberculosis (TB), according to an article in the latest issue of the *South African Medical Journal (SAMJ)*.

"Health care administrators, faced with the challenge of implementing a comprehensive district health system, are often unable to focus on the specialised problems of TB control. A lack of political commitment and economic constraints have resulted in delayed appointments of provincial TB coordinators," *SAMJ* says.

"The development of effective therapy programmes in high TB areas is labour intensive and require sustained resources. The national budget is calculated at R500 million a year but

little detail is available about how that money is invested in limiting TB," *SAMJ* says.

Also problematic is the fact that health services are burdened by staff with poor morale. Health providers' levels of motivation seem to be undermined by a lack of support for staff activities and inadequate technical supervision to coach health providers and promote professional capacity.

According to the South African National Tuberculosis Association (Santa), signs and symptoms of TB are persistent cough, tiredness or weakness of whole body, loss of weight, loss of appetite, night sweats (even if it is cold), chest pains, coughing up blood and breathlessness.

Santa advises anyone experiencing any of these symptoms to visit the nearest clinic or hospital.

18WA HUNT IASCAIRIS DBM 31323

Kruger Park calls for funds to fight animal TB

ARG 27/2/99 (56)

The Kruger National Park is appealing to the public for funds to subsidise proposed measures to counter the spread of bovine tuberculosis in the park.

Counter measures against the disease, which has already infected large numbers of buffalo and lions, is expected to cost tens of millions of rands.

Several ideas have been put forward on how to contain the disease in the park.

Leo Braack, general manager of conservation development in the park, said this week that a final decision by the South African National Parks Board on the proposals was expected next month.

"Eradication (the killing of infected animals) is not practically achievable and not morally acceptable," Dr Braack said.

One of the plans suggests establishing a 70km-long buffalo-free zone in the park to act as a buffer between the highly infected buffalo herds in the south of the park and the lesser infected herds from the north.

Another option is to erect a containment fence.

The initial cost of the fence is expected to be R10-million. Maintenance is expected to cost R300 000 a year.

Money was also needed to monitor research animals and to develop vaccines and accurate tests to determine the effects of the disease on lions as well as reservoir hosts such as warthogs, badgers and rodents.

Nick Kriek of the University of Pretoria said elephants and rhino were not threatened by the disease. Although the disease might spread to "one or two" rhinos it would not affect rhino populations, he said. — Own Correspondent

'Stop this restaurant now!'

New Kirstenbosch eatery is on a sensitive wetland site, say conservationists

TWEET GAINSBOROUGH-WARING

Conservationists are calling for work to stop on the new restaurant in the Kirstenbosch Botanical Garden because the public was not consulted.

Marie-Lou Roux, of the Habitat Council and CapTrust, said the new restaurant was being built in an environmentally sensitive wetland area and that plans for the new development had been passed without proper public participation.

"It would appear that no environmental impact assessment studies were performed for the massive building now under construction."

But, according to Jenny Jay, the marketing manager for the National Botanical Institute (NBI), the institute has "no record of concerns voiced by the Habitat Council or CapTrust". She said the organisations should have dealt directly with the NBI rather than going to the media.

Ms Roux said the public had also not been given the opportunity to participate in the development of the new visitors' centre and parking area.

"Of major concern to environmentalists is the impact the restaurant development will have on the lower wetland area of Kirstenbosch, the Liesbeeck River and the historic avenue of ficus trees," she said.

Wetlands are the natural "sponges" that balance waterflow, preventing flash floods in winter and maintaining water flow during dry summer periods.

Ms Roux said the restaurant was positioned almost on the stream. The water would be polluted with stormwater run-off from the roof

and paved areas around the restaurant, she said.

She said the historic avenue of large ficus trees, planted by Cecil John Rhodes, was under threat as roots had been severed during construction.

The Habitat Council and CapTrust said construction should stop immediately and all structures should be removed. They called for a proper integrated environmental management procedure and full public participation to determine where the building should be erected to cause minimal harm.

Ms Roux said studies of the area indicated it was unsuitable for development because it was a wetland.

Speaking in his private capacity, Louis de Villiers, the chairman of the Peninsula Mountain Forum, said he had not been aware that construction on the new restaurant had started. "I am surprised and concerned."

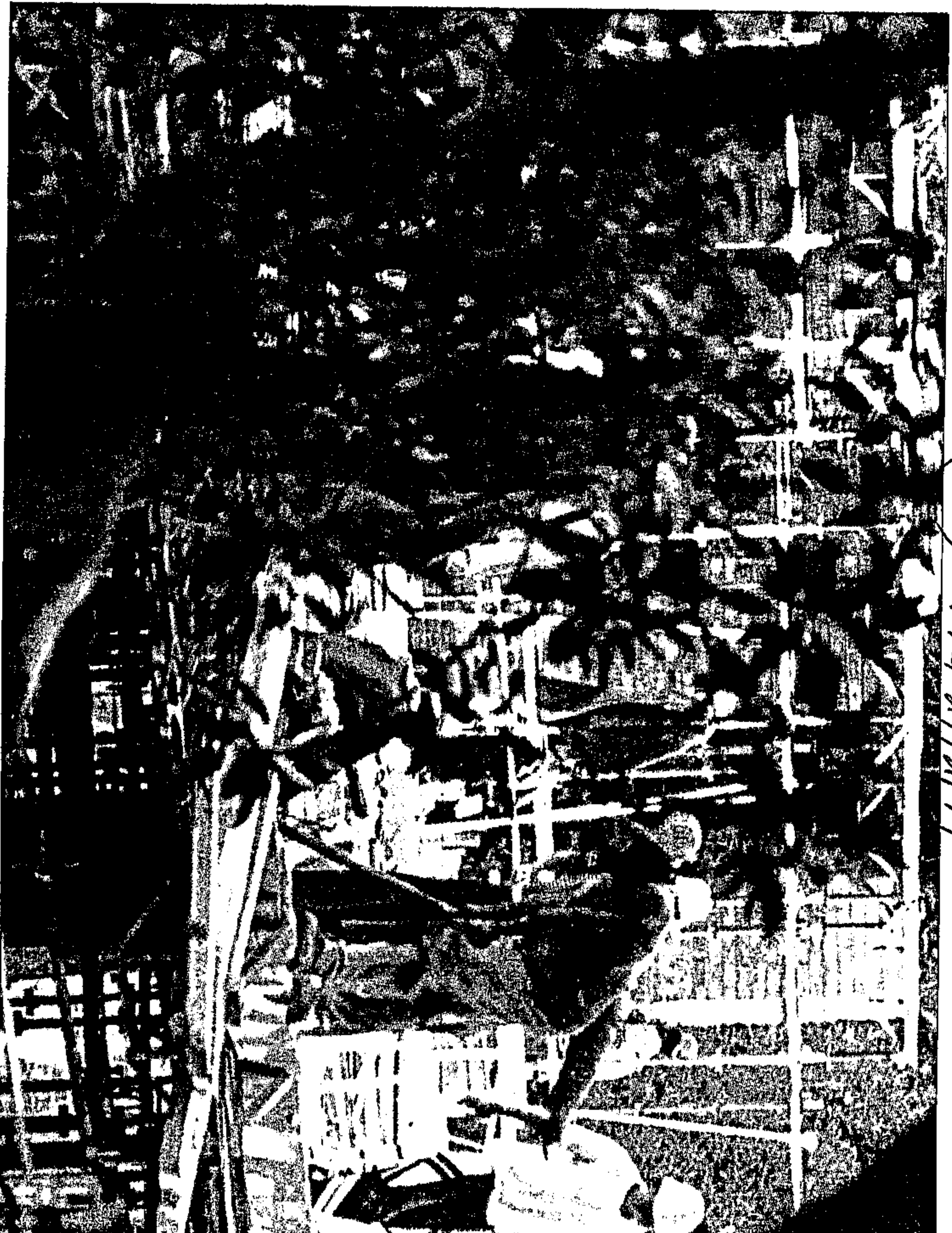
Mr De Villiers said there had been wide opposition to building a new restaurant instead of refurbishing the existing restaurant.

A model of the new building was put on display at the new visitors' centre for public comment at the end of January.

David van den Heever, the architect who headed the design team, said public participation meetings had taken place at the end of last year when the public was invited to comment on the sketch plan.

A model of the proposed restaurant had been made available to those who were unfamiliar with reading plans.

He said he was unable to comment on the environmental assessment impact study because the NBI had handled that aspect.



(56) ARK 27/2/99

CONSTRUCTION SITE: conservationists want work on the restaurant stopped as it is damaging the ficus trees in the garden

Picture ROY WIGLEY



Conservation jewel: park co-ordinator Barry Heydemrych on the coastline of the new Agulhas National Park, which was officially announced today

A national park for all

Area of 'immense conservation significance'

Conservationist Barry Heydemrych watched the demolition of the house with a big grin on his face.

"Excellent, great!" he said approvingly as the front-end loader scooped up another load of rubble from the broken walls and dropped it into a removal truck.

But then this was no ordinary house: it had the dubious distinction of having been built just metres from the most southerly point of the African continent, and it was a definite eyesore.

Now, the property on which the house stood has been acquired by SA National Parks, and it is the major focal point of the country's newest national park - the Agulhas National Park - which is being formally announced today.

Mr Heydemrych is the park's co-ordinator and is overseeing the process which should, in time, result in a national park of some 20 000ha.

Today's announcement relates to a core 100ha at the southern tip, which has been acquired partly through a land purchase by the SA National Parks Trust and partly by contractual agreement with Portnet to include its property at the nearby historic Cape Agulhas lighthouse. But SA National Parks has also just concluded a major land

JOHN YELD
ENVIRONMENT WRITER



purchase in another key area of the new park - part of the fynbos-clad Soetansberg ridge which overlooks the coastal strip midway between Cape Agulhas and Quoin Point to the west - and is negotiating with several other private landowners in the area to include part of their properties in the park on a contractual basis or by outright purchase.

"The Agulhas area has long been identified by SA National Parks and other groups, like UCT's Institute for Plant Conservation, as being of immense conservation significance and worthy of national park status," said Mr Heydemrych.

"But much of the conservation-worthy land in this area belongs to private landowners, many of whom have looked after it carefully for generations.

"So it must be emphasised that no one will be forced to join the park and there won't be any expropriations. The process forward of

consolidating the park will be highly sensitive to landowners."

This is why SA National Parks cannot indicate exactly where the final boundaries of the new park will be.

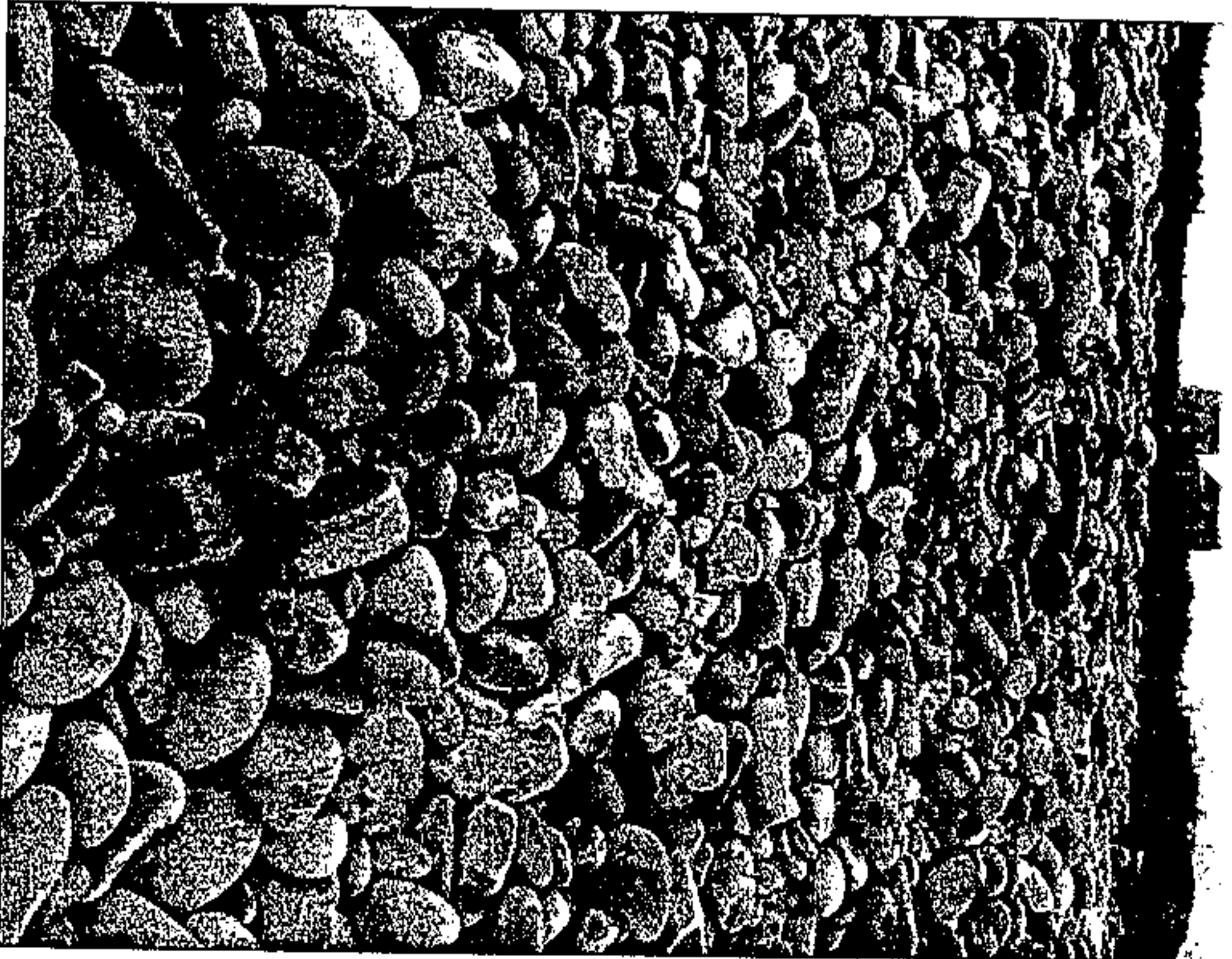
Broadly speaking, it will comprise some 12.5% of land in the Agulhas plain between Gansbaai in the west, Cape Agulhas/Struisbaai in the east, and Bredasdorp and Elim in the north.

"Because of the complexity of the area in terms of land ownership and factors like different soil and vegetation types, the development of this park is likely to be a slow process - possibly as long as 20 years," he said.

"What we envisage for the park is a landscape that will comprise a few geographically separate areas that are zoned for various activities, depending on their conservation value and arrangements with landowners.

"Certain areas will be used for conservation only; some will be used for the sustainable harvesting of resources; and others for recreation, environmental education and so on.

"It must be remembered that because the area's rich indigenous plant life is one of the main reasons for the establishment of the park, isolated conservation areas are possible," said Mr Heydemrych.



Rich diversity: the new park includes stunning coastal scenery and cultural gems like the Cape Agulhas lighthouse



Fynbos hills: park co-ordinator Barry Heydemrych and section officer Deon Joubert admire the view from the Soetansberg

"So we won't need to put in large fencing around all these areas, as is the case with the conservation of large game species."

Not surprisingly, the issue of future access to the park - and particularly to areas on the coast, like the southern-most tip at Agulhas - is concentrating many people's minds, both local and visitors.

"There are so many questions

about access - for example, from recreational and subsistence fishermen," Mr Heydemrych acknowledged.

"We are committed to negotiation and we're hoping that we will be able to achieve agreement on reasonable access to the park's natural resources.

"At the moment the status quo regarding access in and around

Agulhas remains, and this whole question will have to go through a full Integrated Environmental Management process before any final decisions are made.

"We're getting there slowly, but it takes a lot of negotiation and discussion and sitting around tables talking to convince people that this national park won't just be the one big exclusion area," he conceded.

(56) ARTS 1/3/99

Asmal pledges R2-m in new assault on mountain 'aliens'

JOHN YELD
ENVIRONMENT WRITER

Conservation efforts on Table Mountain have been boosted by a further R2-million for the removal of invasive alien vegetation.

The announcement was made by Water Affairs and Forestry Minister Kader Asmal at Kirstenbosch at the weekend after he was presented with the Botanical Society's Flora Conservation Award.

The award was made in recognition of Professor Asmal's contribution - in both his professional and personal capacities - to the preservation and conservation of South Africa's indigenous flora.

"His enthusiasm and genuine concern for the environment have resulted in innovative projects being

(56)
undertaken by his department.

"Their initiatives such as the 'Water-wise Gardening' project and the 'Working for Water' programme have effectively improved the status of indigenous flora in many parts of the country," said the society.

In his acceptance speech, Professor Asmal said the award was in recognition for his having established the "Working for Water" programme.

He said that a further R2-million was being made available from "Working for Water" for removing invasive alien plants from the Table Mountain chain.

This was to ensure that proper follow-up work was undertaken in the aftermath of initial clearing work last year.

This work had cost his department R5-million.

Compromise proposal on bill

Linda Ensor

(56) (10)

BD 2/3/99

CAPE TOWN — The minerals and energy department has come up with a compromise proposal to meet the objections of the National Union of Mineworkers' (NUM) to the National Nuclear Regulator Bill regarding the control of radiation in the mining industry.

The department has proposed that the mining industry be included under the ambit of the bill, but that no change be made to the Mine and Health Safety Act which made the chief inspector of mines responsible for the regulation of all mine hazards, including radiation.

However, the regulator would have to consult with the chief inspector of mines and the Mine Health and Safety Council on the monitoring and application of standards. Chief director Dick Bakker said that while the act had jurisdiction over all hazards in the mining industry, it had not

in the past exercised any control over radiation, leaving this to the Council for Nuclear Safety. The union still has to endorse the proposal submitted to Parliament's committee on mineral and energy affairs, but the Chamber of Mines has flagged its in-principle agreement.

NUM objected to the fact that the bill excluded the mining industry from the ambit of the national regulator, and kept the supervision of radiation under the auspices of the department's mine health and safety inspectorate.

The union feared this would result in lower standards of radiation protection and wanted the council to retain its responsibility in this regard. It suggested the inspectorate had not effectively dealt with the problem of dust on the mines.

The department also accepted a proposal by Eskom that a licence fee paid by a licensee should reflect the actual costs of regulation of the specific licensee.

Environmental standards are a new trade barrier

BD 5/3/99
SA does not rate highly in survey of manufacturing companies in various countries, writes **Grant Hatch**

THE link between global competitiveness and the environment is becoming increasingly important as trade barriers are being dismantled and replaced with new and subtler barriers.

US regulators have adopted strict environmental standards to reduce the risk of competitors to US products, following the North American Free Trade Agreement.

Similarly, environment standards in the packaging and car manufacturing industries in Germany were used to exclude competitors who could not meet stringent requirements.

In the light of this, how environmentally competitive are South African companies?

According to The Global Manufacturing Futures Survey, a biennial survey of the environmental competitiveness in manufacturing companies in SA, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, the US, Mexico, China and Europe, SA companies are not environmentally competitive.

The survey, which is represented in SA by the Graduate School of Business at the University of Cape Town, was used to compare companies in terms of past and future expected returns from investment in areas such as environment-improving technology and the use of recyclable raw material.

It shows that SA companies reported the lowest return from past investment in environment-improving technology. And this investment is not enough to compete globally.

To compound the problem, recent draft

legislation suggests that SA is adopting the US regulatory approach. Although there are individual examples of environmentally progressive companies such as 3M and McDonalds, US manufacturers show lower returns.

This could reflect a regulation-driven approach to the environment. In other words companies act to comply with regulations rather than to exploit cost savings and see lower direct benefits from investment.

The US was particularly weak at recycling products which is reflected in the high failure rate of recycling programmes.

The European model is incentive-driven (giving companies tax breaks for environmental investments) which elicits a greater response and higher projected returns.

According to the survey, Mexican and Japanese companies have achieved the highest returns from investment in environment-improving technology.

It would seem Japanese investment is driven by a focus on quality improvement to reduce manufacturing costs.

In Mexico, often regarded as the environmental laggard, the incremental returns from environmental investment are high.

Expected future returns were highest for Japan and Mexico with the US falling below the ranking for even SA.

Hatch is a management consultant with Gemini Consulting.

How compost is killing the wetlands

(56) DTG 5-11/3/99

Peatlands, which take thousands of years to establish, are being exploited to make compost and potting soil, writes
Rehana Dada

Most gardeners buying plastic bags of "environmentally friendly" potting soil and compost are probably unaware that they are in fact contributing to the destruction of valuable wetlands protected by law.

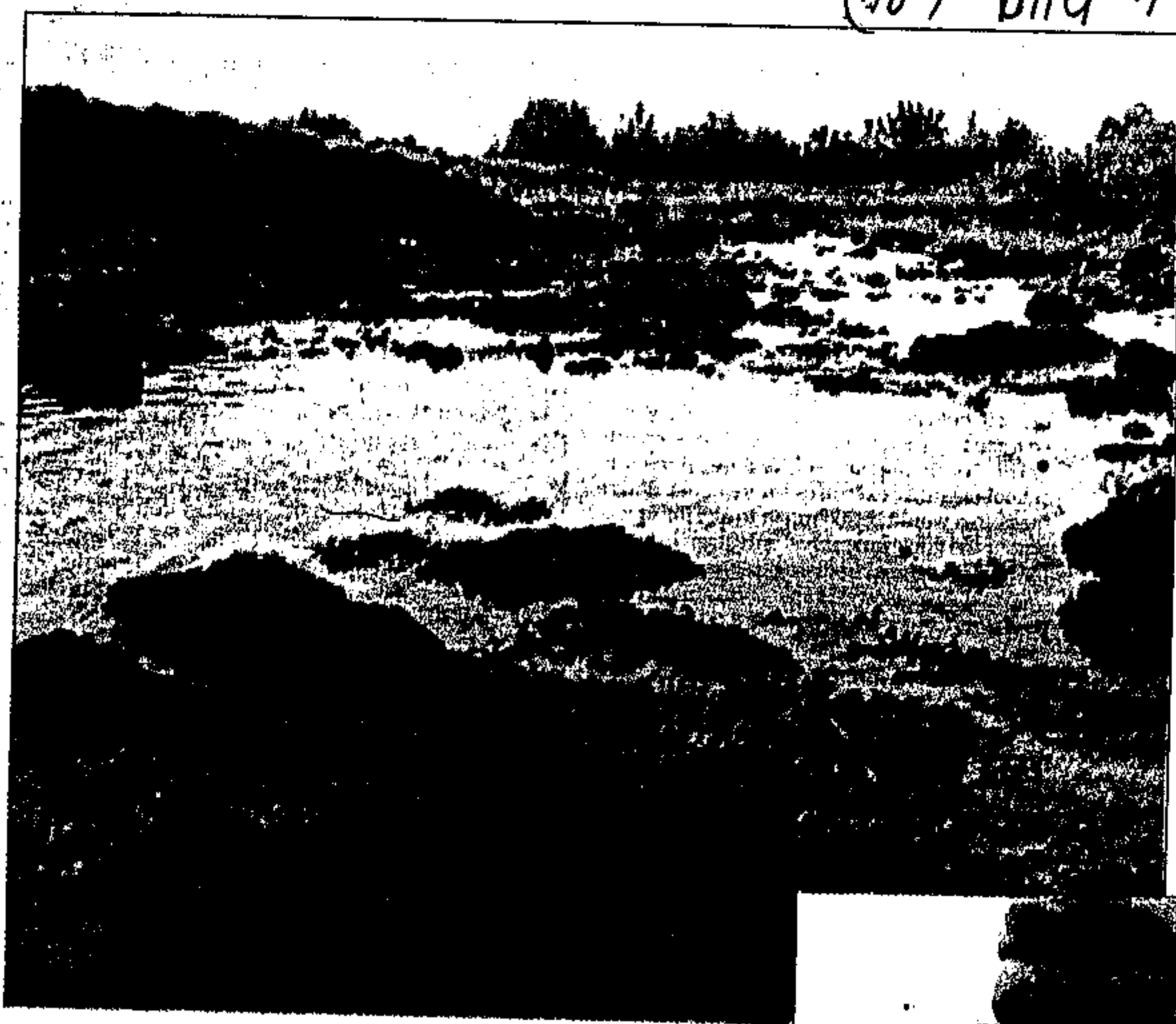
Unscrupulous profit-seekers often gouge this compost and potting soil out of habitats called peatlands, which act as nature's water purifiers. It takes thousands of years to establish a peatland, but once destroyed they are virtually impossible to recreate.

The need for national legislation to protect wetland systems from exploitation became blatantly obvious during the battle in the early Nineties to save the eastern shores of St Lucia in northern KwaZulu-Natal from being mined.

The Wetlands Bill was tabled in 1995, based on the guidelines of the Ramsar Convention — an international wetlands protection agreement to which South Africa is signatory.

In March 1996 the battle for St Lucia was won when the government stepped in to prevent mining of the magnificent dunes, but since then progress in protecting wetlands has been slow. The Wetlands Bill is still being debated and amended.

As a result, 28 years after South Africa's international commitment at Ramsar, there is still no national



Squeezed dry: Simon Gumede (right) of the Council for Geoscience shows how effective peat is at filtering water. This destroyed peatland (above) is in Tarlton on the Highveld. PHOTOGRAPHS: DON GUY



legislation that specifically protects wetlands. In our country, wetlands remain vulnerable and without adequate legal protection.

Wetlands are important as storers of water, water purifiers, centres of biodiversity and for flood control.

They contribute to atmospheric balances and clean aquatic habitats by absorbing and storing carbon, and filtering water.

They are highly productive and indispensable components of healthy river systems. But they are still significantly threatened by industry, development, agriculture and forestry.

Geoff Cowan, of the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, says wetlands are partially protected by six other laws already on the statute books. But co-ordination between the relevant government departments is not always possible. None of these Acts focuses on wetlands, and they are open to interpretation, depending on the focus of the Act. Even when the relevant clauses are used together, the shield is weak.

A wetlands issue that is becoming increasingly urgent is peat extraction.

Peat is organic matter that remains as it was when it formed — which could be anything from last year to a few thousand years ago. It is a type of soil that has a high carbon content, and consists of semi-decomposed, partially preserved reeds, pollen, sedges, tree trunks and even animals.

Undisturbed peat is a record of geological and climatic changes in the environment. More importantly, peat enhances the functions of wetlands. It absorbs and stores water exactly like a sponge. It is an excellent filter, known to remove a large percentage of pollutants from water.

Tests with harmful herbicides show peat to filter out 90% of the chemicals. Where peatlands occur

downstream of mines and industries on the Highveld, they have become important factors in natural water purification.

Peat extraction is highly destructive. It affects local hydrology, reduces biodiversity and has a severe impact on the peatland's functions.

In South Africa most peat extraction occurs in the Highveld, where water resources are particularly valuable. About 60% of locally extracted peat is used to grow mushrooms, and 40% finds its way into plastic bags as "environmentally friendly" potting soil and compost. Essentially, these priceless habitats are destroyed for pizza-toppings and gardens in affluent suburbs.

Piet-Louis Grundling, of the Council for Geoscience, points out that the peat is not renewable. Depending on conditions such as rainfall and vegetation, peat forms at a rate of between 0.7mm and 1.2mm a year. Peatlands cannot be rehabilitated — it is impossible to recreate in a matter of years or even decades what has been created over thousands of years.

Peat is used widely for a variety of purposes, including fuel, horticultural uses, pollutant absorbents and medicines. But peat extraction is a Eurocentric habit imported into our country with disregard for local ecological conditions.

In the northern hemisphere it works because peatlands are vast and peat extraction in most areas is slower than the rate of peat formation. But South African peatlands are small and rare.

Peatlands are protected under the legislation that affects wetlands, but extraction continues regardless. Until recently, peat was considered an agricultural resource and treated as such, but a court case over mining rights in a Ventersdorp peatland resulted in peatlands being declared a mineral.

This would bring into effect legislation from the Department of Minerals and Energy, except that the department's current policy states that peat is not a mineral, and therefore cannot be "mined".

Santi Meintjes, representative of the Department of Minerals and Energy, says the legal department is still to decide on a course of action. In the meantime, no legislation directly addresses peat extraction.

Hotel plan threatens Kosi conservation

MTG 5-11/9/99

(nb)

David Larsen

The last undeveloped estuary on South Africa's east coast could be ruined by a multi-million dollar hotel development, says the National Environmental Action Group.

Durban-based developer Crane Africa, in partnership with Singapore-based Aman Resort Group, has proposed a 100-bed hotel on the dune above the Kosi Bay mouth.

"The mouth is rated foremost among KwaZulu-Natal's estuaries in terms of its conservation potential. It should be regarded as one system in the province that should, without doubt, be preserved," says Garth Lee, representative of the National Environmental Action Group.

Kosi Bay's ecological importance was recognised by the international community when it was proclaimed a Ramsar site in June 1991. "There is an international obligation to uphold its position as a high-priority conservation area," adds Lee.

While the Lubombo Spatial Development Initiative is increasing access along the Zululand coast through the upgrading of roads, the action group proposes Kosi Bay should be proclaimed one of the "sacred sites" where no development is allowed, as has happened at various sites along the KwaZulu-Natal south coast.

The developer, Jeffrey Crane, says in defence that he was not responsible for choosing the site in the first place. "It was the old KwaZulu Bu-

reau of Natural Resources which identified the site as having already been severely disturbed. What people are worrying about is the visual impact. It is unrealistic to expect a development on the top of a prominent hill to be out of sight, but it won't affect people as much as they think."

Says Lee: "One hundred beds will mean the building will be enormous, if one considers en-suite bathrooms, restaurant facilities, swimming pool and parking lots for 50 or more cars."

Crane's plans have been accepted by the provincial Department of Traditional Affairs and Environmental Affairs and the KwaZulu-Natal Conservation Service, subject to the implementation of a comprehensive environmental plan.

KZN 'cultists'

ignore new

dolphins law

Budget cuts end offshore patrols

New government regulations are being flagrantly disregarded by entrepreneurs who run cult "swim-with-dolphins" operations, according to angry marine conservationists.

Nan Rice of the Fish Hoek-based Dolphin Action Group said they had been inundated with complaints about these illegal operations and that schools of dolphins were being disturbed by people leaping into their midst from the operators' boats.

She singled out KwaZulu Natal as the main problem area, and said complaints to the KwaZulu Natal Nature Conservation Service were having little effect.

But the service has responded by saying its conservation efforts have been hampered by budget cuts, which have forced the cancellation of its offshore patrols.

Also, it says people were allowed a period of grace to become familiar with legislation, and that as from last month "the honeymoon is over", with strict law enforcement occurring.

Mrs Rice said disturbing dolphins was an offence and that this was confirmed in the new Marine Living Resources Act, which came into effect last September.

"KwaZulu Natal nature conservation officers maintain they cannot stop entrepreneurs taking people out into the ocean to swim.

"But what they don't state is that if dolphins appear, swimmers should immediately return to the vessel to comply with the regulations - which is apparently not being done."

The "swim-with-dolphins" cult was one which had nothing to do with the conservation and protection of these animals, Mrs Rice said.

"As far as we are concerned it is based on self-interest with little regard for cetaceans (dolphins and whales) or those poor unfortunates who have to enforce the regulations and/or genuinely work to protect and conserve them with few resources.

"Surely the east coast inshore dolphin populations are already under enough pressure without harassment and disturbance being added to their plight."

Asked to comment, KwaZulu Natal Nature Conservation Service

**JOHN
YELD**



ENVIRONMENT WRITER

spokesman Jeff Gaisford said the main problem area was at Ballito on the KwaZulu Natal north coast, which was also known as the "dolphin coast".

He confirmed that before the introduction of the new legislation, charter operators had been taking tourists to view, and swim with, dolphins.

"We had a familiarisation period after the introduction of the new Act when we didn't enforce it," said Mr Gaisford.

"Then we held a series of public meetings about it, and now the honeymoon's over - this Act is being enforced as from February 1."

During one of these meetings - held at Ballito at the end of January and attended by the charter operators - a concerned person had raised the "swim-with-dolphins" issue, Mr Gaisford added.

"The relevant sections of the Act were read out at that meeting and it was agreed that NCS (Nature Conservation Service) would enforce these regulations.

"Also, the operators agreed that they would abide by these regulations and that they would apply to Sea Fisheries for the proper licences."

Since that meeting, an advertisement for a "swim with dolphins" tour had appeared in a local newspaper, Mr Gaisford said.

"Our staff are investigating and they're going to take appropriate action against whoever placed it."

He pointed out that the service had been severely handicapped because of budget cuts.

"Our problem at the moment is that we don't have funds for fuel to operate our offshore boat patrols," he said.

"We are monitoring from the shore as far as possible, but that's not satisfactory.

"We're hoping that our '99 budget will include sufficient funds to enable us to resume these offshore patrols."

(76)

ART 8/3/99

Landmark mining ruling

(56) (210)

A LANDMARK judgment on Friday by the Supreme Court of Appeal has placed the environment at the forefront of all mining plans, bringing SA in line with international business rules. Mining companies and authorities now have to listen to all interested parties.

The court dismissed, with costs, an appeal by Sasol and Gauteng's director of mineral development against a High Court decision last March. The High Court had set aside Sasol's authorisation to strip-mine the Rietspruit wetlands on the Vaal River for coal.

Judge Pierre Olivier said development "which meets present needs will take place without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". He said application of the *audi* rule — that the other side must be heard — when seeking a licence was "indicated by virtue of the enormous damage mining can do to the environment and ecological systems".

ENVIRONMENT

By JANETTE BENNETT

The Constitution included environmental rights as fundamental human rights, which required that environmental considerations be given recognition and respect. "Together with the change in the ideological climate must also come a change in our legal and administrative approach to environmental concerns," said Judge Olivier.

Sasol was taken to court by the community-based Save the Vaal Environment (Save), which said the judgment was not of value only to Save, but also to many communities taking on big companies to protect the environment.

Sasol corporate communications manager Alfonso Niemand said the judgment was not good news for the mining industry and would make processes "drawn out and costly". Sasol would resubmit its application to mine.

ST (BT) 14/3/99

Blue crosses mark troubled waters

MELANIE GOSLING

ENVIRONMENT WRITER

27/15/3/1999

If you see blue crosses dotted around the Peninsula in unusual places today, they represent a river that has become polluted, infested — or no longer exists.

The crosses were put up by environmental activists yesterday to mark the International Day of Action Against Dams and For Rivers, Water and Life. Activists worldwide protested against the degraded state of many of the world's rivers, as well as against the serious environmental and socio-economic impacts of the world's large dams.

Liane Greeff of the Environmental Monitoring Group said yesterday a cross was put up at Lakeside on the Blue Route, where a river had become seriously polluted, and another in the Heerengracht in the city centre, where the river that once flowed from Table Mountain to the sea now lay under concrete and tar.

A cross was put up on the banks of the Liesbeek River, where Gordon Oliver performed a river blessing ceremony to mark the day.

Said Greeff: "We chose the Liesbeek for the ceremony because its degraded state reflects the poor state of most of Cape Town's urban rivers — the Lotus, the Kuils and the Eliseskraal."



PROTEST: Gordon Oliver and Liane Greeff put up this blue cross on the banks of the polluted Liesbeek River during a river blessing ceremony yesterday, as part of a world protest against the degradation of rivers.

PICTURE: BRET THOMPSETT

Greeff said environmental groups and communities met in KwaZulu-Natal yesterday to discuss the potential impacts of the proposed 10 new dams in the province.

She said the day of protest around the world also highlighted the negative socio-economic impacts of big dams. These included forced removals, loss of livelihoods, the disintegration of social fabric and the introduction of diseases like Aids into communities by construction workers.

The Lesotho Highlands Water Project had given compensation to people who had to move, but there were still major social problems associated with the project. The Epupa Dam planned for the Kunene River would displace 5 000 Himba people, Greeff said.

In China last week there were violent clashes between police and peasants when hundreds took to the streets in protest against the proposed damming of the Yangtze River.

The Chinese authorities are pushing for the £4.5-billion Three Gorges Dam on the river because it will control flooding, generate electricity and cut the pollution produced by the annual combustion of 50 million tons of coal.

But 1,3 million people will lose their homes as it will flood four cities, eight towns and 356 villages.

CALL FOR CLEAN AIR, WATER

ANC's 'green' policy for governing Western Cape

SOLAR POWER, pollution taxes and sorting garbage for recycling are part of a new environment policy for the Western Cape. Environment Writer **MELANIE GOSLING** reports.

ET 15/3/99 (56)

THE Western Cape ANC has launched a bold new environment policy that would make radical changes in transport, planning, waste management, commerce and industry.

The draft policy document on the environment aims to set the Western Cape on the path of sustainable development. It outlines how the ANC will make the environment a top priority of the province's administration if the party wins control of the Western Cape in this year's elections.

The policy includes:

- A requirement that all private companies and provincial agencies produce environmental audits.
- The introduction of pollution taxes.
- The speeding up of pilot programmes on solar and wind energy and the review of nuclear energy.
- The targeting of industries that cause air pollution to assist in "cleaning up".
- The integration of the provincial departments of planning, tourism and the environment.
- The integration of waste management, with the focus on waste separation at source and recycling.

● The introduction of legislation and economic incentives to encourage the use of public transport instead of private cars.

● The extensive introduction of bus and taxi lanes and research into electric taxis.

● The phasing-out of marine sewage outfall pipes.

The environment policy is the second of 12 draft policy documents which the ANC is releasing in the run-up to the elections. The first was the party's economic policy, released last month.

This document aims to link environmental issues to social transformation, enhance quality of life and balance the needs of society with the protection of natural resources.

Speaking at the launch of the document, ANC Western Cape leader Ebrahim Rasool said it was unfortunate that the environmental debate in the province had been driven largely by the need to create an "hospitable community" for overseas visitors.

"This is obviously important, but it is disturbing if the debate rests there," he said.

"The Western Cape must also be habitable for its residents.

"The Western Cape government needs

to be an agent for environmental justice."

Rasool said there were communities on one side of the railway line that had clean, piped water, while squatter camps on the other side had inferior water which led to disease.

Some communities had clean air and plenty of "green lungs", while the air in the townships was polluted by smoke from the fuel used for cooking and heating. This had to change.

"Many people are cheesed off by politics, but even the most cynical communities are moved by environmental concerns.

"Economic development is the mantra of our times, but we need to create jobs in ways which reduce the cost to society. If the Western Cape government is to be worth its salt, it needs to make environmental concerns a key measure against which industrial development must be measured."

ANC Western Cape MP Garth Strachan said the coming elections should be policy-driven and the focus moved away from personalities.

"These sets of proposals in the draft policy have been widely canvassed in civil society but are not cast in concrete. They are to be debated ... and changed," Strachan said.

Sue van der Merwe, MP and convener of the ANC environmental policy desk, said the party regarded people as "the centre of any environment policy".

Knysna power group on track

(56) ARG 15/3/99

Aiming to halt island development

A powerful group of Knysna residents and conservationists has formed a consortium to challenge redevelopment proposals for historic Thesen Island in the Knysna lagoon.

Last week, the consortium filed a 20-page set of objections to the approval by provincial planning minister Michael Louw of a proposed R800-million "canal-estate" development on the island.

Mr Louw's approvals, announced in December, include an amendment to the Knysna/Wilderness/Plettenberg Bay regional structure plan, and the rezoning and sub-division of the island.

The development proposal includes dividing most of the island into 27 smaller residential islands separated by canals, and constructing 299 single houses, 241 group housing units, 120 apartment units, private and public open space, and shops, offices, a hotel and conference centre/eco-inn during a phased development.

Some of the existing industrial buildings on the island will be retained.

The appeal against Mr Louw's decision comes from the Knysna Consortium of Interested and Affected Parties.

It includes the Knysna Ratepayers' Association, two groups of the Wildlife Society, Belvidere Estates Transitional Local Council, Old Belvidere Conservation Committee, Garden Route Trust, Outeniqualand Trust, and Knysna's Environmental Forum.

Last month, the consortium also appealed to national Environmental Affairs Minister Pallo Jordan to stop the proposed redevelopment of the island.

The consortium said it believed

JOHN YELD

ENVIRONMENT WRITER



the required public participation process for the redevelopment had not been followed, among other reasons.

Last week, consortium spokesman Jim Saunders said he had been told by Dr Jordan's officials that a letter in response to their request was on its way.

Although he had not yet seen it, he understood that Dr Jordan's department was arranging a meeting of all the statutory authorities involved - including the provincial government, South African National Parks, Cape Nature Conservation and the Knysna town council - to discuss the issue.

Neither the objectors nor the developer would be invited to this meeting.

In its objections to the Western Cape government, the consortium said that Mr Louw had failed to require the developers to comply with the Environmental Conservation Act, Lake Areas Development Act, Development Facilitation Act, National Environmental Management Act, Extension of the Outeniqua Sensitive Coastal Area Act, and the relevant Guide Plan and/or Structure Plan and other legislation.

The consortium said that, in principle, it had no objection to redevelopment of Thesen Island. But, it did object to the proposals, which it described as "one of the most socially and ecologically sensitive projects to come to the South Coast".

"(We) request an alternative proposal for development that is in keeping with the existing community of Knysna ...

"(We) insist on formal public involvement with adequate environmental cultural and social studies, including alternatives to "Concept 25" (the development proposal) in order to allow the public to make an informed decision".

The consortium's legal objections include:

- Knysna town council's chief executive had failed to notify every person who, in his opinion, had an interest in the application.

- The chief executive failed to comply with the constitution by not making available to the public certain information necessary for their consideration of the application, although requested to do so.

- The developers failed to comply with the Development Facilitation Act by not providing for the active participation of the public affected by the development proposal.

- The environmental impact assessment used by the developers was out of date and had been prepared originally for an application for rezoning, subdivision and amendment of the Structure Plan, filed in 1993.

- Specialist environmental

'(We) request an alternative proposal ... that is in keeping with the existing community'



Big plans: developers are proposing major changes to Knysna lagoon's Thesen Island.

reports commissioned by the developer were not available to the public during the review period.

The consortium said it was not acceptable for the developer to use older studies to replace the legally required process.

"The process must be new and must develop a full, complete and accurate (holistic) picture of the impacted area; that is, the Knysna Estuary and the surrounding shoreline ...

"Because the area is sensitive a

full-scale environmental impact assessment will be required.

"(The) developer is going forward with an uninformed and unrealistic proposal because of a failed public participation process."

- Most of the 102-hectare island owned by Thesen & Co, a wholly owned subsidiary of the giant Balfour Beatty group.

In 1974, the group bought the sawmill and wood-processing factory on the island from the pioneer

'We have nothing to

JOHN YELD

The developers who are proposing to build the canal-estate on Thesen Island in Knysna have nothing to hide and nothing to be ashamed of in their planning.

So says planner Chris Mulder, who is co-ordinating the R800-million development on behalf of a consortium of South African business people.

Dr Mulder, who had a major town-planning practice in Pretoria and who has also worked in Hong Kong and China, now lives at Great Brak - appropriately, on "The Island" there.

He is described by partner Gray Rutherford as "probably South Africa's most experienced property master planner, who has been working on this plan (Thesen Island) for seven years".

"No other residential development in South Africa has been bet-

ter researched," Mr Rutherford said in a sales brochure.

He also said he and Dr Mulder had been partners in the Belvidere Estate development on the western edge of Knysna lagoon - "considered by many to be South Africa's most successful and beautiful coastal development. It set a new standard for master-planned residential developments in South Africa."

In an interview, Dr Mulder rejected the objections to their development by the consortium of conservationists and ratepayers.

He said the development team had got all the necessary approvals and that their application had been "checked and re-checked".

Pointing out that the master plan for the proposed development had been unanimously approved by the Knysna town council in 1994, Dr Mulder said this was Knysna's only chance to have a full waterfront development on the lagoon.



Islands galore: this is what the Thesen Island 'canal estate' development will look like, if objections are not upheld

is such a terrible place to live in,
come from Utopia.'

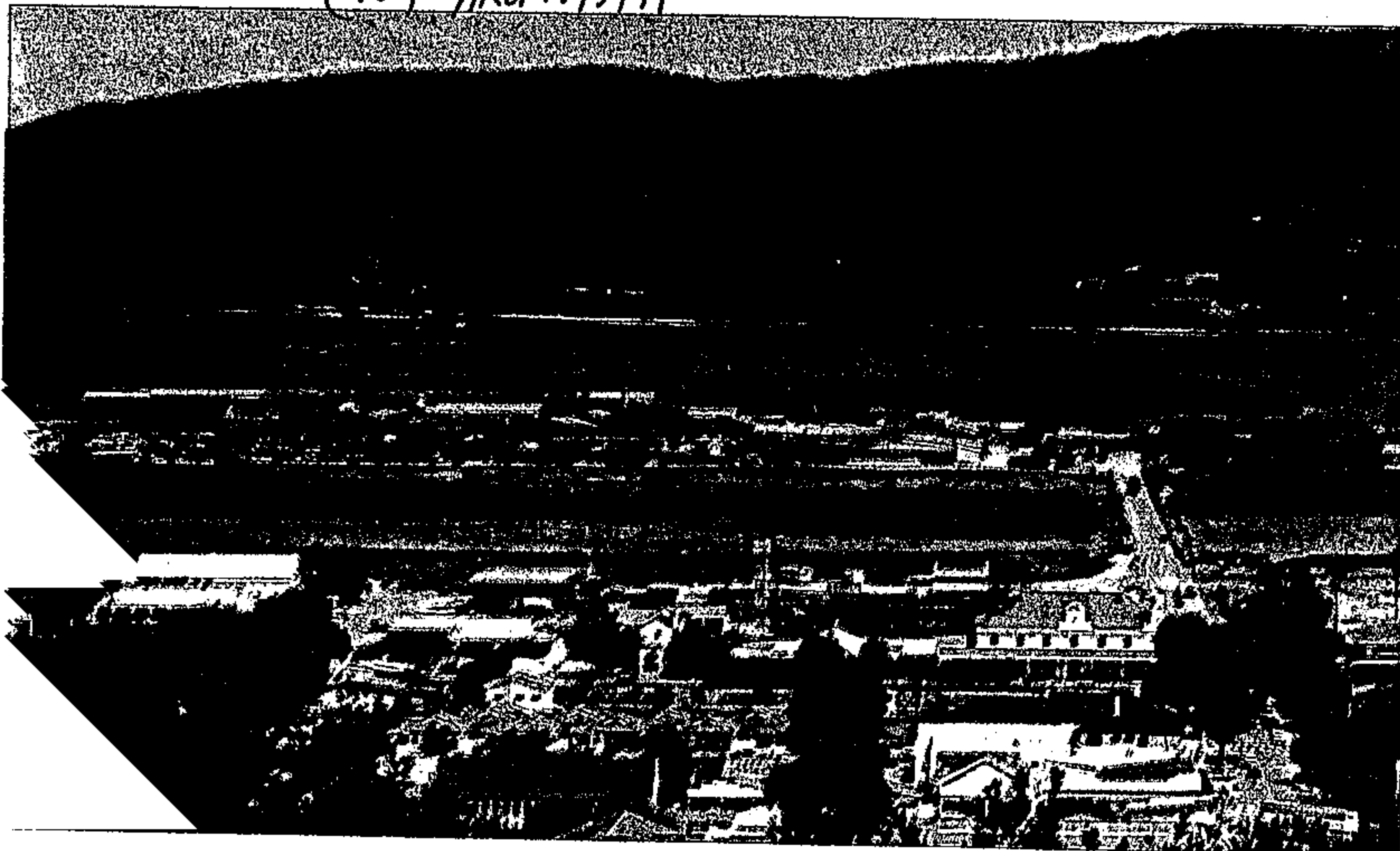
- Cape Points, page 16

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MARCH 15
1999

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Group on the warpath

(56) ARG 15/3/99



Big plans: developers are proposing major changes to Knysna lagoon's Thesen Island, which is connected to the mainland by a causeway, right

JOHN YELD

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■ Most of the 102-hectare island is owned by Thesen & Co, a wholly-owned subsidiary of the giant Barlows group.

In 1974, the group bought the sawmill and wood-processing factory on the island from the pioneering

Thesen family.

The factory employs about 1 000 people and another 250 work in the surrounding area.

The company is the single biggest employer in Knysna, and directly employs about 8% of the town's labour force of about 16 000, according to a CSIR-compiled environmental impact report.

When proposals for Thesen Island were mooted in the early 1990s, the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, Cape

Nature Conservation and South African National Parks jointly opposed any further development while the factory remained.

They argued that the industrial zoning of the island was wrong and that the factory posed a potential pollution hazard to the Knysna estuary.

The timber company indicated it was prepared to consider relocating the entire factory to the mainland, subject to the sale of the property at a viable price and a suitable alternative site being found.

We have nothing to be ashamed of'

JOHN YELD

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In an interview, Dr Mulder rejected the objections to their development by the consortium of conservationists and ratepayers.

He said the development team had got all the necessary approvals and that their application had been "checked and re-checked".

Pointing out that the master plan for the proposed development had been unanimously approved by the Knysna town council in 1994, Dr Mulder said this was Knysna's only chance to have a full waterfront development on the lagoon.

He argued that the recent Knysna Quays development was "very small" in comparison with their proposals and could not be considered as a waterfront for the town.

Referring to the heated public meeting in Knysna recently, when the consortium had announced its objections, Dr Mulder said those attending had been "so emotional" that a rational discussion about the proposed development had been impossible.

The developers had tried to tell the objectors that any constructive criticism would be taken seriously - "but they're not interested," said Dr Mulder.

One of the objectors' major criticisms is that the development application for official approval refers to a "Concept 25" - the 25th version of the overall plan - whereas the environmental impact assessment done some years earlier refers to an earlier version, Scenario 7.

But Dr Mulder dismissed this, saying exact plans and layouts were not required for a rezoning application and that the concept - technically, a phased mixed land use with a canal estate - had not changed.

"It's only the concept that can't be deviated from," he said.

"Basically this (Concept 25) is a refinement of Scenario 7. I think in retrospect we shouldn't have called it Scenario 25 - we should rather have called it a development plan, and that would have avoided a lot of confusion."

Dr Mulder said there had been a "tremendous" response to their proposals since the sales office had opened in mid-December, following Mr Louis's approvals.

By January 2, serviced plots, costing more than R33-million, in the development had been sold. Properties range from just over R400 000 to more than R3,3-million.

Services would be provided within three years.

THIS IS addressed to the angry, rude, horrible and inconsiderate

Conservation looking green around gills

(fb)

Budget hopeless, says minister

JOHN YELD
ENVIRONMENT WRITER

Provincial environment minister Kobus Meiring has painted a bleak picture of nature conservation in the Western Cape, saying there is not even enough money to buy essential equipment such as vehicles for managing nature reserves.

And the R500 0000 allocated to the new Western Cape Nature Conservation Board, which is in the process of being established, was "totally inadequate".

In the budget speech for his Department of Environmental Affairs, Culture and Sport in the provincial legislature, Mr Meiring said the lack of funding for major capital projects, and particularly for nature reserves, was a major concern.

The department had one of the smallest budgets of the provincial service and it had dwindled progressively over the years. "As an example, in 1980 this province spent R22,47 a hectare on provincial nature reserves. In the current financial year, this has decreased to approximately R2 a hectare."

Although the 1999/2000 financial year allocation to his department was up R11,9-million to R129,6-million - approximately 1,2% of the overall Western Cape budget - this was still inadequate, he said.

"Certainly it is not possible for the department to realise its poten-

tial, with regard to contributing to economic and social development, without more adequate funding."

Mr Meiring said 30% of his department's 1 341 posts were vacant. "This small army must fight to preserve, protect and promote the environment and nature reserves of the entire province, the cultural heritage of all our people in the Western Cape, the prowess of the province in sport - and they must contribute to the promotion of tourism, economic development and job creation.

"In addition they must perform the many administrative functions which are performed by other, larger departments."

Mr Meiring said his department believed that if the Western Cape's conservation areas were to survive they had to become more accessible.

Also, there had to be greater material benefits flowing to local communities from these areas. "This implies that development of infrastructure to accommodate both local and overseas tourists should be given a high priority," he said.

Last year the Western Cape legislature had approved the implementation of a statutory nature conservation board for the Western Cape.

This board would be able "to place nature conservation on an enduring and effective footing". His department would support the board in its efforts to develop "private-public partnerships" and obtain funding from other sources.

APG 16/13/199

BY MELANIE ANN FERIS
Environment Reporter

(76)

A three-year battle by residents and conservationists to stop an opencast mine planned by Sasol along the banks of the Vaal River has ended in victory for the residents.
The Supreme Court of

Sasol's bid to mine along Vaal River blocked

Appeal in Bloemfontein has dismissed Sasol's appeal against a ruling by the Johannesburg High Court that set aside the Department of Minerals and Energy Affairs' authorisation for Sasol Mining to

mine coal near the Vaal River. Sasol spokesperson Richard Hughes said yesterday the judgment was not good news for the mining industry and business in general. "It will have the effect that all multi-phased

administrative approval processes will become drawn out and costly procedures which will place an additional burden on businesses investing in South Africa," he said. Sasol would resubmit its

mining application, he added. An ecstatic Save the Vaal Environment Organisation chairperson, Sue Sellschop, said the judgment was not only of value to the organisation but to other communities that were tackling big companies in an effort to protect the environment.

Star 17/3/99

'IMPACT WILL BE TREMENDOUS'

Noordhoek shock as developers get go-ahead

THE provincial government has given the green light for a housing development on the slopes of Dassenberg mountain in Noordhoek — overruling the South Peninsula Municipality, who rejected it last year. **MELANIE GOSLING** reports.

THE 170-unit luxury housing development, which borders the Cape Peninsula National Park, was also rejected by the Cape Metropolitan Council, SA National Parks, seven local environmental groups and five residents' associations.

But when the developers appealed, the Western Cape's Department of Planning, Local Government and Housing granted them approval for rezoning, saying the housing scheme was "desirable" and would "ensure better protection of a sensitive wetland area and mountainside".

Mike Slayen of SA National Parks said yesterday: "We're shocked. We will try to take it further to see this development doesn't happen. The land is zoned agricultural and should be incorporated into the park."

"The negative visual impact will be tremendous — it's right there on the edge of the national park. The wetland is important, with rare amphibia, and should not be in private ownership, but managed as part of the bigger Noordhoek wetland system."

Richard Walton of South Peninsula Municipality said they had asked the provincial authorities to give reasons why they had given the development

the go-ahead, in view of the local council's refusal and the "overwhelming public refusal".

"Obviously we're disappointed, but until we know why they made that decision we can't really comment. We've seen this before. Noordhoek Manor, on the other side of Ou Kaapse Weg, was also opposed by the local council and residents' and civic associations, yet it was approved by province," Walton said.

The top section of the Dassenberg property is inside the Cape Peninsula Protected Natural Area (CPPNE), land earmarked to be incorporated into the national park. The provincial authorities have said the owner must donate this 31ha to National Parks.

The Department of Planning told the *Cape Times* they had approved the controversial development because:

- The Peninsula Urban Structure Plan of 1988 allows urban development on the slopes of Dassenberg up to the CPPNE boundary.
- Even without rezoning, the landowner could divide the land into 170 agricultural plots. The proposed housing development would have less of a negative effect than the agricultural plots.

- Only 33% of the site would be developed and 67% conserved. The developer would give R1.2 million over three years to maintain the conservation area.
- The future home owners' association would be able to ensure better management of the wetland and mountainside than the local authority.

The land is owned by A J N van Niekerk of Pieterstburg in the Northern Province.

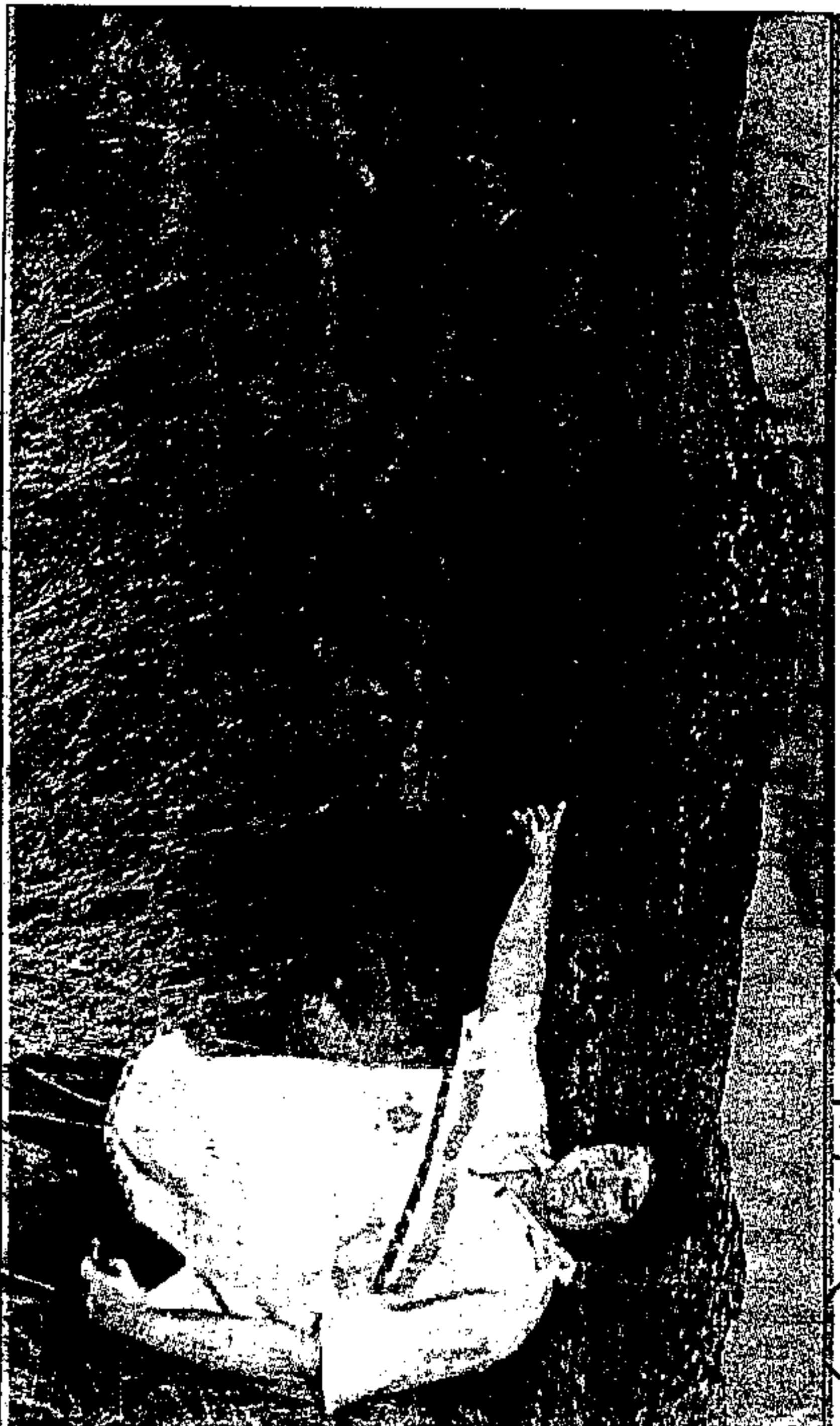
The Planning Partnership, who made the application to develop, were unavailable for comment.

Green groups said urban sprawl would edge further up the slopes to the border of the Cape Peninsula National Park. They fear the housing will have a negative effect on the Loch Venus wetland at the bottom of Dassenberg.

Bruce Smith of the Kommetjie Environmental Action Group said: "This will have dire consequences for the Noordhoek valley. The local authority has to play Russian roulette with these provincial guys. I've heard the council say they almost feel forced to approve bad developments and put in really strict conditions, rather than turn them down, because the developers go running to province and they get the go-ahead."

"This time (MEC for Planning) Michael Louis has really gone against the whole tide."

Kim Kruyshaar of Friends of Silvermine said it was particularly shock-



GOING, GOING.... Sandy Barnes of Friends of Silvermine shows where the 170-unit housing development, approved by the provincial authorities, will stand on the slopes of Dassenberg in the Noordhoek valley. **PICTURE: JACK LESTRADE**

ing that the provincial authorities had allowed the Loch Venus wetland to remain in private ownership.

"The local council very clearly said it should become public open space. We've seen before what happens to open space in private ownership. The home owners take on the task of managing it, then they claim it is too

expensive and onerous, and claim they have to develop yet another portion of the land to pay for upkeep."

"We saw that happening in Fish Hoek with those huge flats on the mountainside, where they were meant to make a fynbos garden, but instead built more flats," she said.

Sandy Barnes of Friends of Silver-

mine said the housing proposal went against the draft Urban Edge study and the draft South Peninsula Sub-Regional Structure Plan.

"No one seems to take any notice of those studies which are done at great expense to the taxpayer. Province just overrules the local authorities," Barnes said.



Mines urged to make dumps safe

BY MELANIE-ANN FERIS
Environment Reporter

Mines that do not take responsibility for rehabilitating dumps, which are causing serious health and environmental problems in residential areas, could lose their mining permits.

Gauteng MEC for environmental affairs Nomvula Mokonyane said yesterday the department now had the legal power, in the form of the new Environmental Management Act, to take action against mines that did not take responsibility for rehabilitating dumps.

(56)

"The worst scenario is that we apply to the national government to suspend their mining permits," Mokonyane said.

For years, residents in Kagiso on the West Rand, Meadowlands and Dobsonville in Soweto, and the bordering Fleurhof community have been living under clouds of dust from nearby mine dumps.

Studies have shown that poisonous dust particles from the dumps, combined with smoke pollution, have caused air pollution levels to rise to three times higher than accepted international standards.

Dr Vali Yousefi of the Na-

Star 19/3/99 (212)

tional Centre for Occupational Health said dust from mine dumps could contain high levels of crystalline silica, and people inhaling large volumes of dust containing these particles could develop silicosis, an incurable lung disease.

He said people living in the vicinity of mine dumps could do very little to protect themselves against exposure to dust caused by wind erosion or other natural or manmade activities.

Government authorities and mine owners could rehabilitate sites to reduce or totally eliminate dust, Yousefi added.

Parks board 'forced to buy hotels for lease-back deal'

BY JUSTIN ARENSTEIN
Nelspruit

Mpumalanga's scandal-ridden environmental affairs department illegally forced the province's parks board to buy a string of hotels without following tender procedures.

Department officials admitted to a legislature portfolio committee yesterday that they ordered the MPB to renovate the hotels, worth over R16-million, into office complexes and lease them back to Government at R1 each per year.

But the department has failed to pay even this tiny amount for the six properties it leases from the cash-strapped MPB.

"We don't know why we haven't paid or why we originally got into the deal, expect that it was obviously an attempt to avoid the procedures.

"This use of functional hotels as offices appears to be a departmental trend because even our head office was once the Drum Rock hotel," said department head, Banele Mkize.

He confirmed that Judge Willem Heath was probing the deals and may attempt to recover any losses suffered by the state. One of the former hotels, the R1,8-million Palm Court Inn in Ermelo, was completely gutted after arsonists torched it in three separate incidents last year.

Mkize admitted during an earlier committee hearing on Wednesday that the department failed to insure any of the buildings' contents and was in fact unsure exactly what items had been torched.

The building's physical structure was insured by the MPB and is currently being rebuilt as a shopping and office complex.

No one has been arrested for the arson yet and no formal investigation was launched into the missing

furniture from the original hotel.

Mkize was also unable to tell the committee what happened to the antique furniture that once filled a farmhouse in Carolina.

The MPB bought the house on direct instructions from former environmental affairs MEC David Mkhwanazi before leasing it to the department for R1 per year.

The house, hotels and a web of at least six other rural properties have since been sold to the Nelspruit Development Trust under questionable circumstances.

The MPB is the sole beneficiary of the secretive trust but cannot use the buildings until it repays a R16,5-million loan it took from a property development company, INCA, to finance the scheme.

"We effectively took a loan to sell the buildings to ourselves. It was all legal and was designed as a way for us to raise desperately

needed funds,"

said MPB acting chief executive Abe Sibiya.

MPB board director Brian Shrosbree said the cash-strapped parastatal was review-

ing the entire scheme, which had originally been designed and set up by suspended MPB chief executive Alan Gray.

Gray was suspended and is currently being investigated by Judge Willem Heath, the police and an independent forensic auditing team for a series of novel funding deals he engineered by using state assets as collateral.

"I'm new to the board but we're already expecting a R29-million shortfall on our budget next year and will therefore be looking to maximise our returns from all commercial properties.

"But be assured, there definitely will not be any more R1 per year leases," added Schrosbree.

African Eye News Service

**Province
scandals
grow in
number**

SPR 19/13/1999

Four-part plan for the Kruger Park

Sharon Hammond

The Kruger National Park's new management plan has been approved, paving the way for four-wheel drive routes and a reintroduction of elephant culling.

General manager for conservation development Dr Leo Braack says that the new plan took three years to devise and had the approval of many conservationists, including groups traditionally opposed to elephant culling.

"It represents probably the most transparent and participative process of policy review the organisation has had," he says.

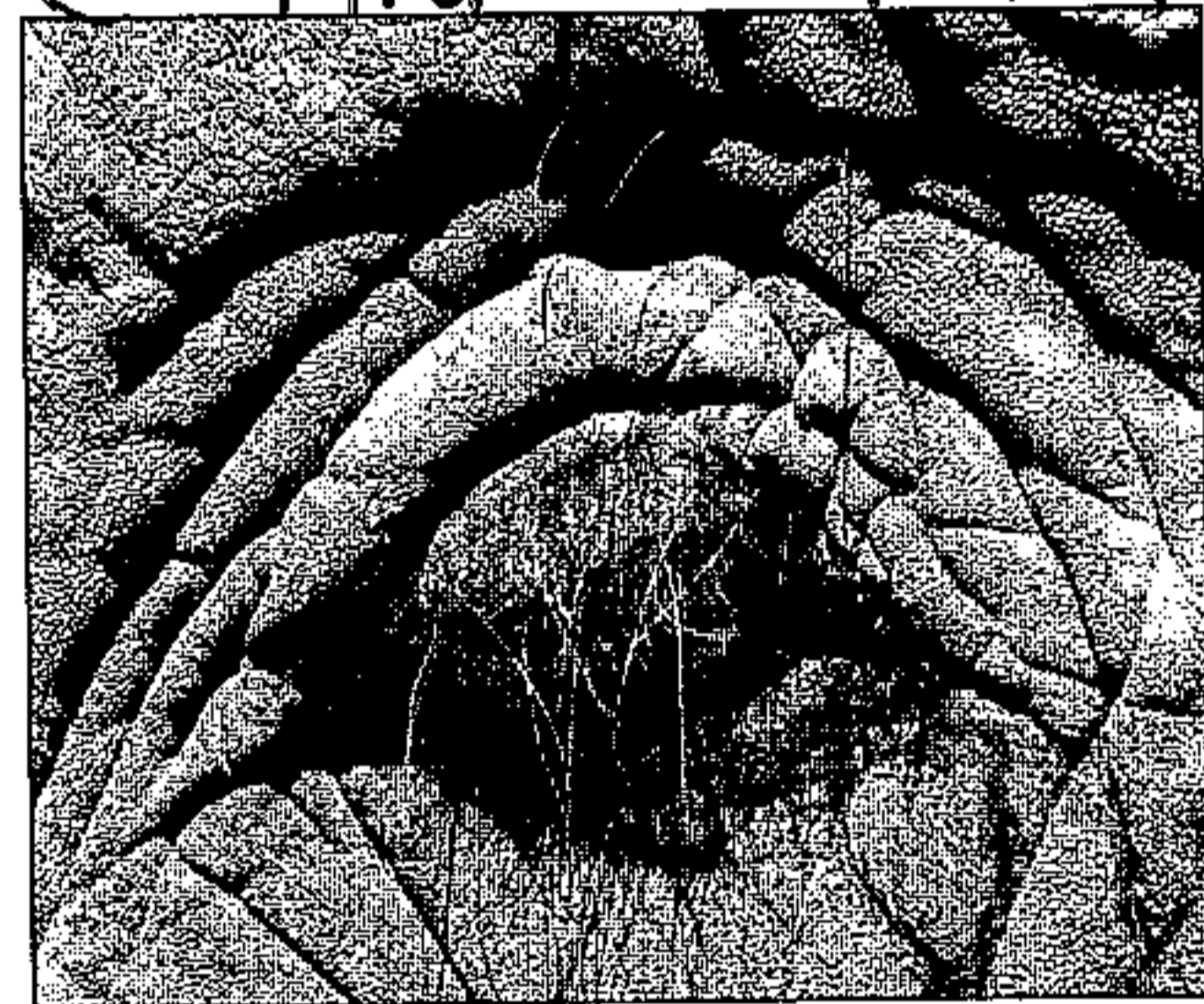
The new management plan involves dividing the park into six zones. In two of the zones, or 40% of the park, elephant numbers will not be controlled at all. In two other zones, also about 40% of the park, the elephant population will be reduced, preferably by live capture and relocation (but possibly culling) to allow vegetation to recover.

"Culling will be resorted to if sufficient areas are not available to relocate elephant to outside the park," explains Braack. He says contraception for elephants was not yet a viable option, but that the new elephant management plan was based on sound ecological principles ensuring maximum biodiversity.

Elephants will not be allowed into the two remaining zones, which have been declared botanical reserves. The world-renowned park will also be managed according to more natural principals, and artificial watering holes built during the historic "Water for Game" period will be destroyed.

"Water will only be made available according to the natural distribution of water," he explained.

(76) M+G 19-25/3/99

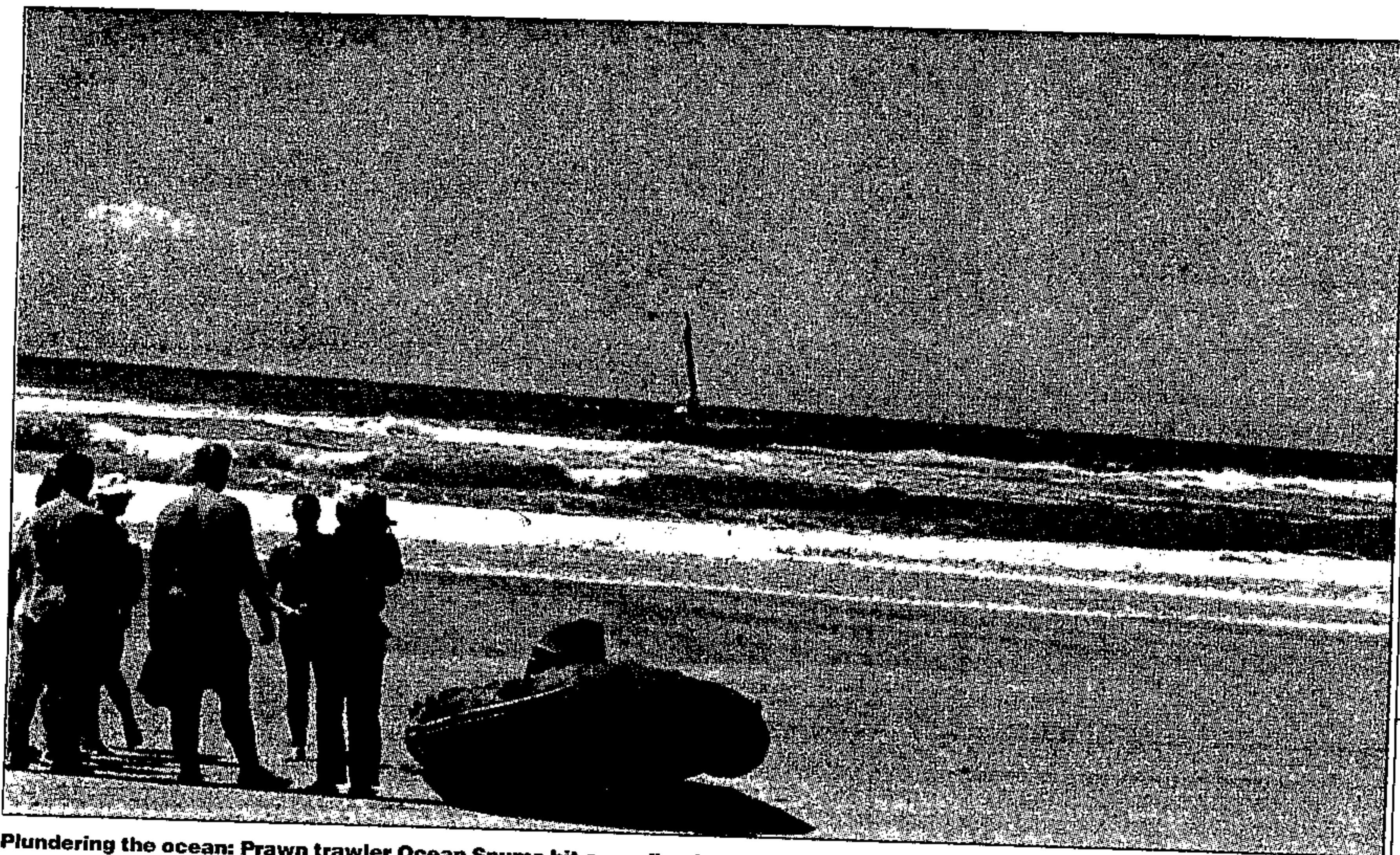


Seen off: Elephants will be kept out of certain areas of the Kruger Park

This will ensure that the pressure of animals present in all areas at all times will be reduced and that a more natural pattern of shifting animal populations will be re-established. Species such as the roan antelope, which began declining as the artificial watering holes led to an increase in zebras and consequently lions, will now be able to recover.

The new management plan includes a recreational opportunity zoning plan to provide a wider range of activities for visitors, such as four-wheel drive routes that will be established in remote areas. It allows for the establishment of numerous smaller wilderness areas where visitors could go on day walks or overnight trails.

The new management plan was approved by the board of the South African National Parks last week and will be implemented once staff have been redeployed, funds procured and infrastructure established. — African Eye News Service



Plundering the ocean: Prawn trawler *Ocean Spume* hit a sandbank and capsized earlier this month while scooping up prawns less than 300m off the mouth of the St Lucia estuary. PHOTOGRAPH: KIAN BARKER

P(r)awns in a rotten industry

M+G 19-25/3/99

~~SPRING~~
56

Niki Barker

The KwaZulu-Natal marine environment is being plundered by unscrupulous fishing fleet owners who are taking advantage of the government's inability to adequately regulate fishing operations off the coast.

A recent shipping disaster in northern KwaZulu-Natal has revealed the lack of control of the lucrative prawn-fishing industry by the Department of Sea Fisheries.

Prawn trawler *Ocean Spume* hit a sandbank and capsized earlier this month while scooping up prawns less than 300m off the mouth of the St Lucia estuary. The trawler allegedly had five tons of prawns on board.

St Lucia residents rejoiced at its sinking, as the trawling operation has been a sore point with the townsfolk for several years.

The owner of the trawler, Jack Walsh of Durban-based Spray Fishing, says it was operating legally when it sank. But this week it emerged his fishing permit was issued only two days after the trawler went down.

A Department of Sea Fisheries official says fishing is allowed only after a vessel is in possession of the permit. "But these guys often take a chance. They know they will soon be getting their permits, and they start fishing at once — hoping no one will come aboard and check."

Prawn trawling is certainly worth taking chances for. There is a limited season as the lifespan of prawns is short — about eight weeks. They congregate in large numbers in

the shallow water off estuaries and lagoons, so it's easy to scoop them up in large drag nets.

A single trawler can net between three and five tons a day. A catch this size would be worth about R500 000.

All commercial fishermen are compelled to pay a levy to the Department of Sea Fisheries. In the case of prawns, this levy is a remarkable R95 a ton, which works out to less than a cent a kilogram. With a market value of more than R60 a kilogram, prawn fishing is an extremely lucrative business.

When the new Living Marine Resources Act was introduced in September last year, all previous laws and licences were repealed and fishermen were required to re-apply for fishing licences.

Historically, the South African fishing industry has been Cape-based, so most attention has been paid to the protection of cold-water species such as crayfish and abalone. Prawn fishing occurs in the tropical waters of KwaZulu-Natal and Mozambique, and until recently the industry has been a bit of a free-for-all.

The KwaZulu-Natal Nature Conservation Service has been tasked with patrolling the coastal waters of the province, and has been allocated a budget to do this.

But doubts have been expressed about its ability to protect the coast from marauding fishing boats. Reports of vessels lowering nets at night into the protected marine reserve north of St Lucia, for instance, have not been followed up as the service does not have the sea-going capacity to react to public alarms.

"Launching a boat at night to investigate is

very difficult, as there is no harbour close by [to the St Lucia marine reserve]. We use the navy as much as we can, but they also have their restrictions," says an officer in the conservation service.

"However, we are still fortunate. The Eastern Cape and Transkei have no policing at all. Their fishing is wrecked."

The conservation service says the *Ocean Spume* matter is under investigation. "We need to get samples of the catch, and sworn statements as to whether the trawler was actually engaged in fishing."

Proof of the trawler's activities will not be slow in coming. The residents of coastal towns such as Zinkwazi, Mtunzini, Tugela and St Lucia have been protesting for many years against the presence of trawlers a few hundred metres from their beaches. Their protests have been based on environmental and economic concerns.

St Lucia's economy relies entirely on fishing and tourism. Businesspeople in the town accuse the trawlers of destroying the food chain off the sensitive St Lucia estuary mouth and damaging fish populations. They stress that the area is a proposed World Heritage Site and deserves protection.

There are also concerns about the safety of bathers, surfers and divers, as the trawlers operate just beyond the line of breakers, less than 300m offshore.

Residents are preparing a petition in an attempt to pressure the government into extending the boundaries of the present marine reserve, where no fishing should be allowed.

BOBBY JORDAN

TABLE Mountain stinks — and environmentalists say the sewerage system is overloaded because of the large number of tourists using the cableway station.

The sewerage system is said to be overflowing onto a popular hiking route, angering mountain hikers and prompting calls for the municipality to investigate.

Denying the charge, cableway company managing director John Harrison claimed this week that hikers were responsible for the foul smells on top of the mountain.

"It's not our problem if climbers and hikers go to the toilet in the bushes."

Ten thousand one-way tickets were sold at the upper cable station last year, so it was clear there were a large number of hikers, Harrison said.

About 75 percent of the cableway station sewage was vacuum-packed and taken off the mountain in drums by the cablecar after hours.

Also, the Table Mountain Aerial Cableway Company had finished repairing a faulty sewerage pipe more than a month ago.

"There was an old galvanised pipe that had been there for about 40 years and which we had to replace with a plastic pipe," Harrison said. "Hikers had been sliding and walking on the old one."

Peninsula Mountain Forum spokesman Louis de Villiers said seepage along the main sewerage line in Fountain Ravine was the main cause of concern.

Cableway station officials might have to consider alternatives, such as linking the pipeline with the municipal sewerage at the foot of the mountain, he said.

"The problem with taking it down on the Camps Bay side is that it will end up in the sea — and maybe on the beaches. The whole thing has been under consideration for some time — the cableway company is busy with a study."

There was a similar problem at Cape Point because of poor planning and an upsurge in the number of visitors, De Villiers said.

"It smells bad a lot of the time at Cape Point."

Andy Gubb, spokesman for the Wildlife and Environment Society, said concerns about Table Mountain's carrying capacity remained unresolved.

"One can't simply keep pumping people onto the top," he said.

"Maybe the system is not able to cope with the number of tourists."

A report on Table Mountain's carrying capacity had not been completed before the R87-million upgrade project in 1997.

The project included a new bistro, restaurant and state-of-the-art cablecars that comfortably carry 65 passengers.

"At the time the company kept saying that carrying capacity was a difficult thing to define," Gubb said.

A hiker, who wished to remain anonymous, said the most offensive smells were from a "soak-away" zone where water from septic tanks was released onto the mountain.

"What seems to be happening is that the water is rushing out too quickly and can't soak away," he said.

"The authorities were warned long ago that the system couldn't handle large numbers of visitors."

Harrison said that, under the circumstances, the system was "highly efficient".

"Ideally the cableway company would like to extend the sewerage pipe down Fountain Pipe and link it with the municipal sewerage. We have approached the Parks Board about this.

"I don't believe treating sewerage on the mountain is the right thing to do.

"We've got nothing to hide — we run an open business here.

"You get people who climb up the mountain and the moment there's a bad smell they blame the cableway company."

Harrison thought that dassie droppings might also be a source of foul smells.

Table Mountain stinks

Sewerage system 'overloaded'

ST(CM) 2/1/97 (52)

THE troubled relationship between mining and the environment has been sorted out once and for all by a Supreme Court of Appeal judgment.

Last Friday, the court dismissed with costs an appeal by Sasol Mining and Gauteng's director of mineral development against a High Court ruling removing Sasol's authorisation to mine the Rietsspruit wetlands on the Vaal River.

The implications are broad: — Groups concerned about the environment will have to be heard and considered at all stages of mining authorisation and follow-up processes. Previously the assumption was that interested and affected parties would be heard when a company submitted an environmental management programme report (EMPR), by which stage mining plans were usually advanced. — Community organisations doing battle with big companies on environmental issues now have the force of the law, not just public sentiment, behind them. — Companies are compelled to address environmental issues at all stages of mining.

— Mining authorities have to hear all sides before issuing authorisation to mine, consider the needs of future generations, and ask whether mining should be allowed at all.

Last week's judgment was the culmination of a three-year tussle between Sasol, the Department of Mineral and Energy, and Community-based Save the Vaal Environment (Save). Save was formed after Sasol told the community in mid-1996 of its plans to mine the North-West wetlands. Sasol planned to strip mine the area for coal, starting in January 1998.

Environmental consultant Paul Dutton likened the wetlands to a kidney which filtered — for free, he pointed out — more than 2.1-million cubic metres of water a year into the Vaal. Nowadays, economists are giving monetary value to natural assets, and estimates are that the loss of Rietsspruit would cost about R3-billion. "Can SA, with predictions that it will not have sufficient water to meet demands by 2005 afford to gamble low-grade coal for clean water?" Dutton asked at the time.

Save argued that interested and affected parties had not been consulted, but presented with a *fait accompli*. It took the matter to court.

In March last year, the High Court set aside Sasol's authorisation to mine, which had been

Finally, the law comes to the land's rescue



JANETTE BENNETT
Looks at a groundbreaking court judgment

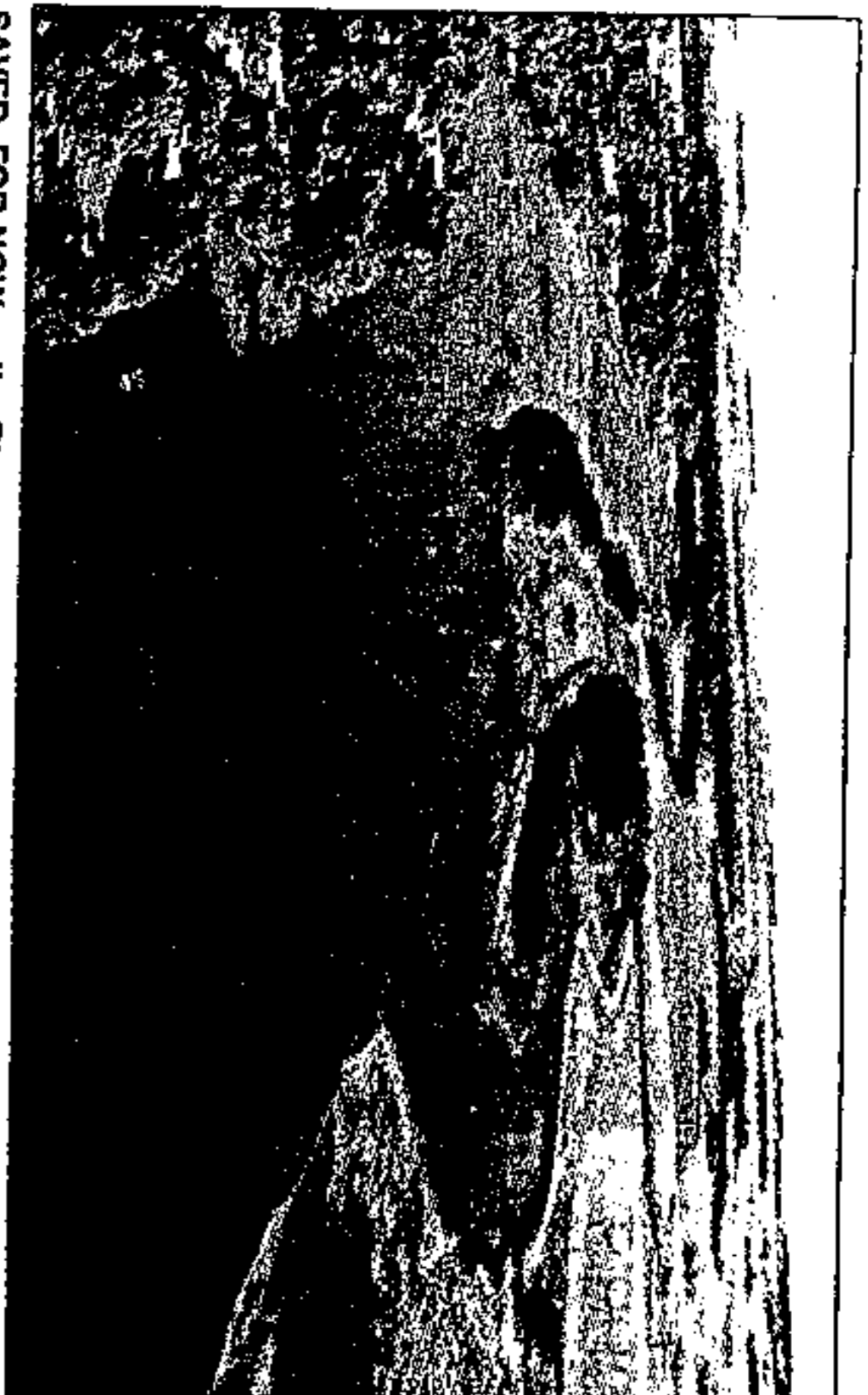
ST (BT) 21/3/99 (56)

issued by the Regional Director in the Department of Mineral and Energy Affairs, and ruled that interested and affected parties had a right to be heard before decisions were taken on whether mining should go ahead. This also extended to the manner and scale of mining.

Sasol and Gauteng's director of mineral development then appealed against the High Court decision, and last Friday, the Supreme Court of Appeal dismissed the appeal.

Passing judgment, Judge Pierre Olivier rapped the director over the knuckles for not granting Save a hearing on environmental matters, "about which the respondents (Save) have legitimate concerns."

"The granting of the section 9 (of the Minerals Act) licence opens the door to the licensee and sets in motion a chain of events which can... lead to the commencement of mining operations," he said.



SAVED, FOR NOW ... the Rietsspruit wetlands that led to the watershed court ruling



AFTER MINING ... Sasol says Wondervater, near the Vaal, will continue operating

Judge Olivier was of the view that the *audi rule* (the other side must be heard) applied when a mining licence was being sought. This was "indicated by virtue of the enormous damage mining can do to the environment and ecological systems."

"What has to be ensured ... is that development which meets present needs will take place without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

Judge Olivier's next statement, which took the environment firmly out of the margins, has drawn much positive comment. It effectively gives substance to SA's Constitution, signalling a necessary paradigm shift in the thinking of those who administer legislation.

"Our constitution," he said, "by including environmental rights as fundamental, justiciable human rights, by necessary implication requires that environmental considerations be ac-

corded appropriate recognition and respect in the administrative processes in our country.

"Together with the change in the ideological climate must also come a change in our legal and administrative approach to environmental concerns."

Importantly, the judgment can be applied not only to mining, but to any activity which can affect the environment.

Duard Barnard, who has assisted Save, says the judgment is significant. "It ushers in a major change in the legal application of environmental rules. And it takes the environment to the forefront of any development plans," he says.

Conservationist Dr Ian Player says the judgment is a breakthrough in the understanding of the Constitution, environmental rights, and the value of wetlands. "This is a country of drought with periodic rainfall, and wetlands are our banks in dry times. To interfere with wet-

lands is to cut our throats. Nobody is against development, but it must take place in accordance with environmental laws and rights. In the past, development overrode everything, with insufficient attention to environmental concerns."

Save chairperson Sue Sell-schop says this is the first instance of a community lobby group beating a big company.

But Save's battle is far from over. "We have won our process rights to be heard; now we can argue content. That takes us to where we were in May 1996," says vice-chair Allan Whittaker. The judgment adds wind to the sails of other groups taking on big companies on environmental grounds. For one, Save the Dome, which is taking on Randonnein Estate's plans to mine the Vrededorf Dome, a proposed World Heritage Site, says Save's victory has strengthened its case. The dome, near the Free State town of Parys, is the "col-

lar" left by the world's oldest meteorite impact site. It is considered to have outstanding scientific and ecotourism value.

Another is a group challenging threats that small diamond miners will be let loose in the Vaalbos National Park, north of Kimberley. Proclaimed a national park in 1986, it is home to several rare species of animals, some endangered. SA National Parks (SANP) has announced, and the MEC for agriculture, environmental affairs and land reform has indicated an intention to give preference to small miners to use the area.

The group charges that SANP and the Northern Cape Provincial Government have had "very little communication and no consultation" with affected communities. It has launched an e-mail petition.

Allison Burger Pinter, principal environmental scientist at SRK Consulting, says the judgment has a strong public involvement message. "It is an enormous challenge to encourage people to participate in making decisions that will affect their lives. Many people are sceptical of their ability to influence decision making. This judgment shows they can influence decisions."

Sasol corporate communications manager Alfonso Niemand says Sasol honours the judgment. But, he says, it will make multi-phase administrative approval processes "drawn out and costly", and place a burden on businesses investing in SA.

He points out the judgment does not prohibit Sasol from mining, but affects the process it has to follow to obtain approval for mining. "The process will clearly have a cost effect but it will depend on specific cases. In this case, we don't know how long the delay will be." Sasol will resubmit its application to mine the area.



PHOTO: CATHY RHINOCK

VICTORY ... Save the Vaal Environment vice-chairman Alan Whittaker and chairman Sue Sell-schop after the Supreme Court of Appeal judgment

He rejected Save's argument that the judgment means the existing Wondervater and Sigma mines at Sasolburg now have no license to operate.

To meet its interim needs, Sasol has increased production at Wondervater and has brought in coal from Secunda.

Commenting on the judgment, Dr John Kilani, environmental adviser at the Chamber of Mines, of which Sasol is not a member, said the chamber endorsed the need for stakeholder participation in environmental decision making. "Our members are committed to conducting environmental impact assessments ... in order to ensure the decision-making process is not unreasonably drawn out, we believe every stakeholder who has rights to participate in environmental decision making also has some responsibilities. It is the government's role to ensure everybody involved plays the game by the rules."

'What has to be ensured ... is that development which meets present needs will take place without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'

Alien weeds give power to the people

Working for Water project roots out poverty and hopelessness for tens of thousands

"We are changing the lives of thousands of people dramatically for the better, and we are also having a hugely beneficial impact on South Africa's environment."

In a normal context - and particularly in the run-up to the June election - the author of such fine words would probably be accused of wild exaggeration or political hyperbole.

But when the claim is made by Guy Preston, national leader of the Working for Water programme of the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry, it can be taken seriously.

For during its short lifespan of three-and-a-half years, this innovative, multi-award-winning programme has snowballed into South Africa's biggest public works initiative since the 1980s, when poor white people were employed on major dam construction projects.

It is also the biggest conservation programme on the continent. In essence, it involves employing previously jobless people to remove "water-hungry" invasive alien vegetation from the country's vital water catchment areas.

But such a bald outline says little of the broad range of benefits that accrue from the programme that has drawn a range of Government



JOHN YELD
ENVIRONMENT WRITER

departments into a major, multi-disciplinary partnership.

Such benefits range from the obvious - increasing available water supplies, restoring South Africa's rich biological diversity and putting food on the tables of the very poor - to building families and communities, educating people about reproductive health, running HIV and AIDS awareness programmes, restoring human pride and dignity, and encouraging entrepreneurship and financial independence in the previously marginalised.

The number of people employed on Working for Water has fluctuated widely because of vagaries in funding, but at its peak last year there were more than 42 000 on some 350 projects across the country - making it one of the government's biggest and most successful job creation projects.

By the end of this year, the employment figure will probably be

about 30 000, who in turn support 250 000 dependants.

In any programme of such scale, mistakes are inevitable and human frailties will manifest themselves. And in the case of Working for Water, these frailties are magnified because so many of those involved are from the most seriously disadvantaged sectors of society.

Problems include drunkenness, theft, sloppy and ineffective work, using vehicles and equipment illegally, and fraudulently signing on for a day's work without doing any.

Mistakes have included the unhappy incident on Devil's Peak 10 days ago when a contract team working in the Cape Peninsula National Park under the auspices of Working for Water inadvertently set fire to the mountain-side while trying to smoke bees away from a drooped chainaw.

Dr Preston is as open and upfront about the programme's shortcomings as he is about its multiple benefits - and he is equally determined to root out inefficiency and corruption.

ARG 22/3/99

"Of course, there are problems in such a huge programme. It would be incredibly naive to think that you could run a programme like this without problems," he said.

While the programme's management has always had the best intentions, it hasn't always invested in the capacity required to achieve its goals, he acknowledged frankly.

"There's no doubt there are some instances where the quality of work is simply not good enough, and there is some corruption."

"The problems we've had in George are a case in point. But our job is to minimise problems, and our policy is to be absolutely ruthless. If we find people who are corrupt, we will fire them - and we have fired people already. And we'll also go one step further and prosecute."

"But these are just a few 'bad apples' - overall, most of our projects have been found to be run well."

Because of the programme's major focus on human development, many of its problems had an

unusual socio-economic dimension.

"An example is our youth policy, whereby we're committed to having 20% of our labour force aged between 16 and 25," Dr Preston said.

"But this can mean situations where parents and their child, or children, are standing in the same queue seeking work. And if only the child is chosen, this can dramatically change the power structure in the family and possibly cause social frictions."

Another problem was the workers' general inexperience in financial management, and the extent of the programme's responsibilities.

"For example, when making wage payments towards the end of the year, do we need to help workers plan ahead for costs such as January's school fees, given the huge hype of Christmas buying.

"And then loan sharks are a real scourge, preying on so many of our workers who find themselves in fragile circumstances and without the necessary experience and financial discipline to resist."

There were three levels of control in place in the programme, Dr Preston explained: initial assessments of likely problems, and finding ways of avoiding these, internal monitoring of projects and independent audits,

including forensic audits.

All three types of control had been used, and there had been more than 100 audits of the projects - mostly regular performance audits, but also financial and forensic audits by independent specialist auditing firms whose reports go to the Auditor-General.

Dr Preston continued: "If we complete our task of clearing the invading alien plants without undertaking the necessary training and empowerment of our workers, we will not have honoured our Reconstruction and Development Programme commitments."

"But that is easier said than done, and it has not all been plain sailing."

One strategy had been to find effective mechanisms to ensure acceptable productivity.

"One of the ways we've been trying to achieve enhanced productivity is by moving from a straight, daily wage for the workers through piece-work - being paid on a task-by-task basis - to contract work, which

empowers workers to take control of their productivity, and be in a position to take on other work.

"I argue that if we are on valid piece-work or contracts, when people sit down on the job because they're tired, they are the ones who are losing out."

"What we're trying to do is to give workers an incentive to be productive. The more they do, the better off they're going to be."

To further enhance the programme, the managers were now considering ways of developing partnerships with the private sector and with non-government organisations and other interest groups, like the Homeless People's Federation and the forestry industry, Dr Preston said.

"The more we can get people to 'adopt' our projects in a way whereby they don't disempower the project manager, but support him or her to do the work as efficiently as possible, the more we can build capacity and the more effective this Working for Water Programme can be."

'There are some instances where the quality of work is simply not good enough.'

'We're trying to give workers an incentive. The more they do, the better off they're going to be.'

KwaZulu Natal wetland wonderland goes for world heritage status

(56) Star 24/3/99

This nature paradise near Richards Bay has become home to many endangered bird species

By MELANIE-ANN FERIS
Environment Reporter

A mid large gum plantations and huge farms, in northern KwaZulu Natal, a new wetland area has slowly been developing.

Sappi has now applied for World Heritage status for the site.

In 1988 Sappi purchased the Mavuya Estate near KwaMbonambi about 25km from Richards Bay.

In 1990 workers broke down a canal which was used to keep water out of the area, and allowed water to flood the area.

Hundreds of gum trees in the Ntenja and Mavuya rivers were felled and not allowed to re-establish themselves.

As part of Sappi's alien invader eradication programme, which started in 1988, a total of 120ha of land has been cleared at Mavuya.

According to Mark Hitchins, Sappi management



Beauty ... this area took nine years to transform itself and could become a natural heritage.

forester, there are now believed to be more than 200 bird species including Red Data (endangered or protected) and bird species such as the pygmy goose, yellow-billed stork, cuckoo hawk and woolly-necked stork in the

Mavuya wetland area.

The wetland has also become home to, among others, the endangered ant bear, Nile crocodile and African rock python, he said.

"It was amazing to see something develop from north-

ing. In the past nine years we have transformed the area into what could easily become a natural heritage site," Hitchins said.

The Mavuya wetland project is one of 13 environmental projects in the Kwam-

bonambi Conservancy area, these include three areas registered as sites of conservation significance and a raptor nesting site.

Surrounding communities are allowed to harvest reeds and "ikwani grass" for mat-weaving and they are also allowed to fish in the area, on a controlled basis.

The area is also open to schools and facilities are available for hiking and bird watching.

Keith Cooper, director for conservation for the Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa said: "We congratulate Sappi for saving the area for conservation and allowing the public to have access to the area and for the work they are going to do to restore riparian zones.

"In the past there has been criticism against companies like Sappi and Mondi, that many riparian zones have been allowed to go over to alien vegetation."

AREA IDENTIFIED FOR WETLAND PRESERVATION

Protest mounts on Dassenberg plan

OPPOSITION IS mounting to the Dassenberg luxury housing development on the mountain slopes above Noordhoek, and local residents have called on Water Affairs Minister Kader Asmal to "do whatever you can" to halt the development. Environment Writer **MELANIE GOSLING** reports.

MEC for Community Safety Mark Wiley has spoken out against the controversial Dassenberg development in his capacity as a local resident, and UCT fresh water scientist Bryan Davies has slammed it as "insane".

But developers of the 170-unit housing complex say the 78ha site, although zoned rural and bordering the Cape Peninsula National Park, was earmarked for development in the 1980s, and the owner has a right to realise his investment.

The Silvermine Valley Coalition, representing 10 environmental and civic groups, wrote to Water Affairs Minister Kader Asmal yesterday expressing their fears for the Sun Valley wetlands on the Dassenberg property. They wrote: "We do not need to tell your

department that all the problems encountered in the wetlands around Noordhoek are a direct result of too much poorly planned development. We believe you need to intervene on this important issue, as South Africa is a signatory to the Ramsar Convention and is therefore obliged to 'formulate and implement planning so as to promote the conservation and wise use of wetlands'. We appeal to you to do whatever you can to prevent this inappropriate development."

The coalition said they had been shocked when the provincial government approved, on appeal, the rezoning, as both the Cape Metropolitan Council and the South Peninsula Municipality had turned it down.

Wiley said he had "learned with distress" of the decision. "Without wanting to question

the integrity of the decision of my colleague, (MEC for Planning) Michael Louis, my personal opinion is that the decision does not take reality into account."

He said he was particularly worried about the impact of increased transport and that the recent study on the Noordhoek Wetland Management Plan had specifically identified Dassenberg for preservation.

"I believe the (draft) South Peninsula sub-regional plans and the (draft) Urban Edge study should be elevated to provincial approval without delay to prevent provincial officials saying these studies don't have any locus standi and are therefore ignoring them.

"To delay will diminish the very reason tourists come to the Peninsula and will help destroy the major growth industry of this province," Wiley said.

The Noordhoek Wetland Management Plan states: "The development of Dassenberg Hill can only be seen as exceptionally insensitive and detrimental to the overall ecological and aesthetic value of the landscape, and

to the integrity of the Sun Valley Wetland. Development should not be allowed."

Davies, one of the scientists who drew up the wetland plan, said: "A unique opportunity will be lost unless the valley can be used as a corridor between the northern and southern components of the Cape Peninsula National Park. It's insane to develop Dassenberg. It must be conserved in perpetuity."

Geoff Underwood of Planning Partnership, the Dassenberg developer, said the Cape Metropolitan Area Guide Plan and the Noordhoek draft Structure Plan indicated that the land could be developed.

"At issue is not what whether the land should be developed but what form it should take. We have tried to incorporate the concerns into our proposals and 67% of the site will be set aside for conservation.

"There will be a 14ha buffer zone between the housing and the national park, and 31ha of the property inside the Cape Peninsula Protected Nature Area will be donated to SA National Parks," Underwood said.

(57)

CF 24/3/99

SOUTHERN BLIGHT

Plan for luxury holiday complex kicks up a storm at Agulhas

(56) ST(CM) 28/3/99

BOBBY JORDAN

A PLAN to build a 80ha luxury holiday complex at Cape Agulhas has caused a storm among locals who say the southern tip of Africa is being turned into another Camps Bay.

Environmentallists this week said the proposed 42-house Blue Lagoon holiday resort clashed with plans to preserve the Africa's southern-most stretch of coast between Agulhas and Pearly Beach as a national park.

The area incorporates the breeding ground of at least two endangered bird species and is largely inaccessible — most visitors are fishermen who arrive in four-wheel-drive vehicles.

Developers have submitted a rezoning and subdivision application, prompting a strong objection from the Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa.

The society said the application was so seriously defective it should be rejected "out of hand".

Blue Lagoon is the latest of several large developments in the Agulhas area, spurred by an influx of buyers from Gauteng. The town has grown at a rapid pace over the past few years and is regarded as the south coast's next Plettenberg Bay.

A plan to build 400 houses and a luxury golf course bigger than Agulhas town itself has already been approved. Other developments include 41 houses on the koppie overlooking the town and an adjacent 80-unit "nature reserve" development.

"These developers come in here with a bang and then they're off again to bugger up another place," said Golfie Prinsloo, chairman of the Suidpunt Conservation Association.

He said the problem was aggravated by a lack of building restrictions.

Other locals blame the Bredasdorp

town council for "milking" the town and raking in revenue from developers while the town suffers.

Some say the town is becoming a haven for "right-wingers" who are drawn by the "whites-only" atmosphere, unlike neighbouring Arncliffe that has a large coloured fishing community.

Much of the Agulhas area used to be occupied by a huge farm called Paapekuilfontein that was divided up early this century. The proposed Blue Lagoon resort falls on two parts of the original farm.

Conservation officials say the Blue La-

agoon proposal is unlikely to succeed.

"There's a lot of concern over the initial proposals because it's an extremely sensitive site," said local spokesman Barry Heydenrych.

"Of particular concern is that the proposal is for a linear development which is not in keeping with the general structural plan for the coast.

"But the proposal is still at an early stage and at the moment everyone is really just looking at the issues involved," Heydenrych said.

Adjacent landowner Doug Jeffery said the proposal was invalid because the

site had already been declared a heritage site by the previous landowners — a fact that had been pointed out to the developers.

"I think they're just taking a chance," Jeffery said.

Blue Lagoon development consultant Marius Rademeyer, of Malan Rademeyer and Associates, was not available for comment this week.

The company's independent environmental consultant, Anneke de Kock, said she was finalising a draft report that would be available for public comment next month.



LEADING LIGHT: Golfie Prinsloo, who is leading the Agulhas conservation drive against development Picture: KIM LUDBROOK

Sasol involved in row over toxic waste

(56) (55)

Environmental group claims leaking pits pose danger to Vaal River system

By MELANIE-ANN FERIS
Environment Reporter

Star 3/3/99

Sasol has become embroiled in a controversy with environmentalists, who claim hazardous waste from Sasol's facility near Sasolburg could be seeping into the Vaal River system and endangering Gauteng's water supply.

Sasol denies that its waste pits pose any danger, but Save the Vaal Environment (SAVE), an environmental group formed to protect the Vaal River and its environs, yesterday insisted the waste site was leaking.

Rand Water yesterday sent an official to the site to assess the danger to the Vaal River and its tributary, the Leu-spruit. So far, no independent verification of SAVE's claims has been found.

SAVE spokesperson Brent Gericke said the toxic waste leaking from the pits could end up in the Leu-spruit, from there into the Vaal River and eventually into the Vaal Dam, Gauteng's major water supply. The waste dams, left un-

maintained since Sasol entered into litigation with its waste treatment company in June last year, are also in danger of collapsing, Gericke said.

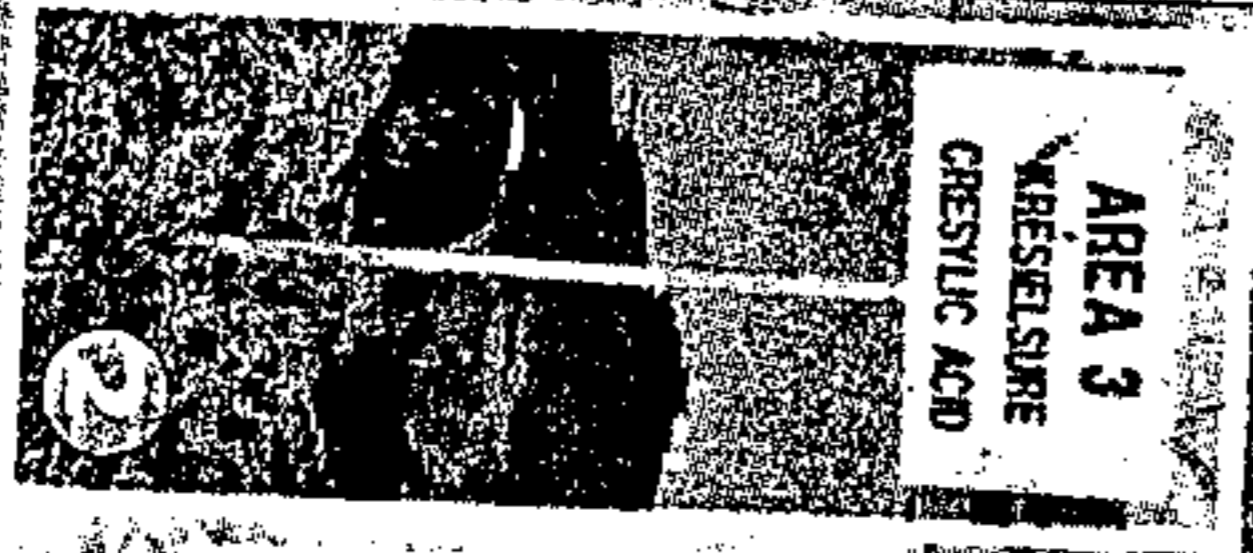
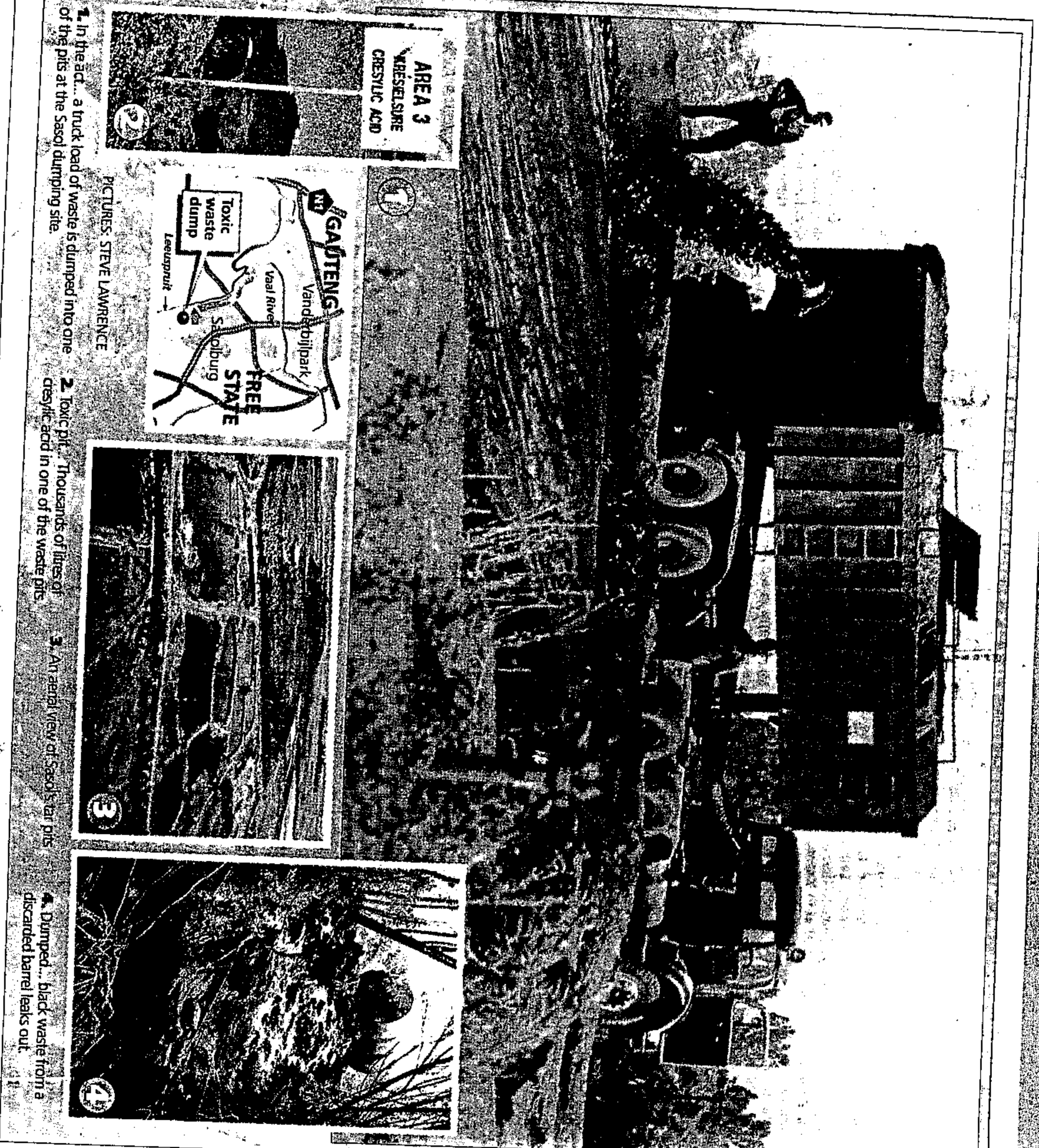
He added that over the past 40 years, tons of waste had been dumped into the pits. Gericke claims there has been a series of spills into the Leu-spruit in the past few years.

He said Sasol promised several years ago there would be no more dumping into the pits.

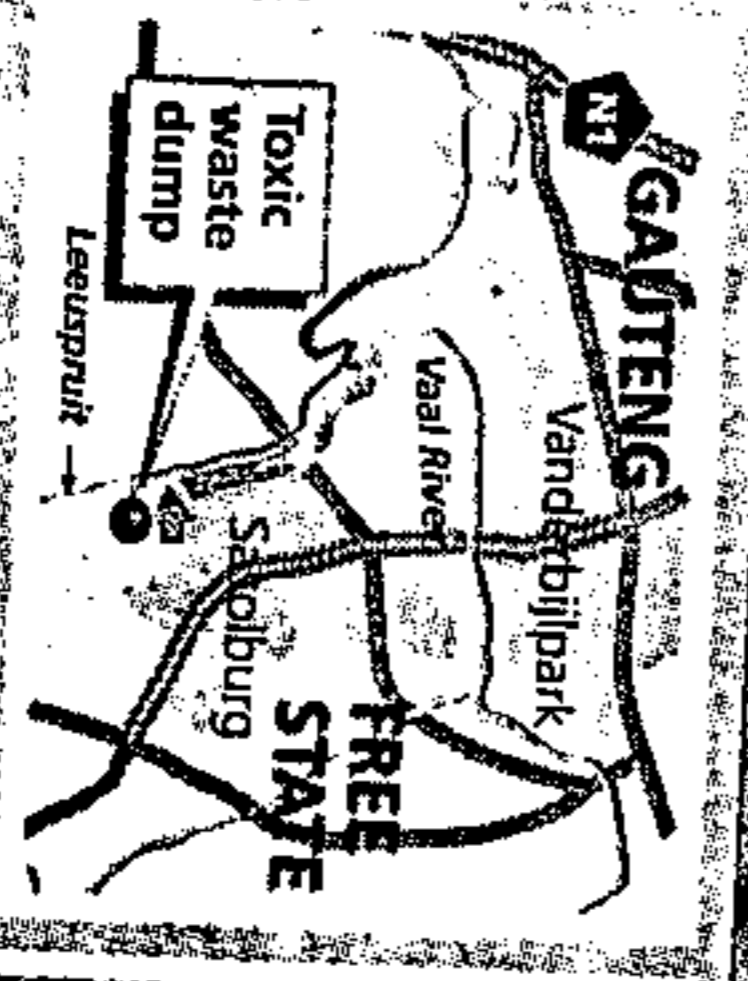
When *The Star* was on site yesterday, thousands of litres of chemicals were dumped into one of the pits.

The tar pits, spanning several kilometres in breadth, were filled with black waste, in which blackened steel barrels and thousands of fluorescent tubes containing mercury could be seen floating.

Johan van der Merwe, deputy director of water quality for the Department of Water Affairs in Bloemfontein, said: "At this stage there is no proof that there is seepage reaching the Vaal River. I am a bit surprised that there are rumours about seepage."



AREA 3
MRESSELSURE
CHRESYUC ACID



PICTURES: STEVE LAWRENCE

1. In the act... a truck load of waste is dumped into one of the pits at the Sasol dumping site.



2. Toxic pit... Thousands of litres of desyfic acid in one of the waste pits



4. Dumped... black waste from a discarded barrel leaks out.

3. An aerial view of Sasol's tar pits

Sasol may be drawn into scandal over toxic waste

Amanda Vermeulen

SASOL has become embroiled in another potential environmental scandal, this time involving old tar pits containing up to 1,5-million cubic meters of toxic waste near its Sasolburg plant in the Free State.

The hazard was brought to the urgent attention of the Rand Water Board by community-based pressure group Save the Vaal Environment. Rand Water sent a catchment co-ordinator, Peter Hoge, to the area yesterday to inspect the pits, suspected to be leaching into Leeuspruit, one of the feeder streams into the Vaal River.

The pits, which contain tar, waxes, paraffin and even medical waste, were established in 1955, and are still receiving waste. The original waste came from the now closed Sasol One synthetic fuel plant.

If the pits were leaking, it could pose a serious environmental hazard to the residents of the Vaal and other water boards downstream, which drew on the surface and ground water for domestic and agricultural purposes, Hoge said.

He said in-depth tests would be done on the surface and ground water near the tar pits, but that the site looked suspicious. "This could be the beginning of a long investigation."

Sasol said yesterday it was collaborating with the water affairs department to monitor the underground water regularly, using borehole samples.

"No evidence of leaching of organic material

BD 31/3/99 (56)
from the tar pits into the Vaal River system has been found. Johan van der Merwe from the department of water affairs in Bloemfontein is closely associated with the process."

The tar pits are also the subject of a legal action against Sasol by the contractor employed to reprocess them, Separation & Recovery Systems (SRS), a subsidiary of listed US group, American Eco.

Sasol gave the company a 10-year contract to clean up the pits about three years ago and must supply it with free creosote to treat the waste.

The recovery costs are about R2m a month, with an additional cost to Sasol to provide the creosote at a further R1,5m a month. Last June Sasol stopped supplying SRS with creosote, which led to the company closing that operation, retrenching its staff, and incurring an assessed loss of more than R20m in the 1998 year.

SRS is suing Sasol for damages, and the matter will be heard in court in April or May. While the case is in litigation, the pits cannot be treated, raising the danger levels of the environmental hazard.

The tar pits are a few kilometres away from the site of the proposed Sasol coal strip mine, against which Save won a court judgment. Sasol's appeal was recently dismissed by the Appeal Court, effectively halting its plans, which would have destroyed the surrounding wetlands for at least 20 years. Sasol is apparently planning to apply for another licence to begin strip mining on that site.

Sasol waste 'could poison Gauteng water supply' ⁽⁵⁶⁾

MELANIE-ANN FERIS

ET 31/3/99

JOHANNESBURG: Hazardous waste seeping from Sasol's waste facility outside Sasolburg near the Vaal River could poison Gauteng's major water supply, environmentalists fear.

Sasol denies that the waste pits pose any danger, but Save the Vaal Environment (Save), an environmental group formed to protect the Vaal River and its environs, yesterday said the site was a time bomb.

Save spokesperson Brent Gericke said the toxic waste leaking from the pits could end up in the Leeuspruit, a major tributary of the Vaal River. The Vaal River fills the Vaal Dam, from which the people of Gauteng receive most of their drinking water.

Yesterday an official from Rand Water visited the site to assess the danger to the Leeuspruit and the Vaal River.

The ageing waste dams, not maintained since Sasol entered into litigation with its waste treatment company in June last year, are also in danger of collapsing, causing another Merriespruit disaster, Gericke said.

The waste pits, which have been in use by Sasol since 1955, are close to a residen-

tial area and the Sasolburg prison.

Gericke said over the past 40 years tons of waste had been dumped into the pits and covered up with ash.

According to Gericke, Sasol promised several years ago there would be no more dumping into the pits.

Yesterday when journalists were at the site, thousands of litres of chemicals were brought in by truck and dumped into one of the tar pits.

The tar pits, spanning several kilometres, were filled with black waste, in which blackened steel barrels and thousands of fluorescent tubes containing mercury could be seen floating. Gericke said this dam was not lined, which allowed the waste to seep into the ground and into the underground water system.

Alfonso Niemand, spokesperson for Sasol, said the company, in conjunction with the Department of Water Affairs, monitored the underground water quality around the storage area on a regular basis.

"No evidence of leaching of organic material from the tar storage pits into the Vaal River system could ever be found," Niemand said.

Naturalists come on board

JOHN YELD
ENVIRONMENT WRITER

(56) ARG 1/4/99

The names of the new Western Cape Nature Conservation Board have been announced by provincial Environment Minister Kobus Meiring

As required by legislation, four are nature conservation experts: Dr Neil Fairall, Professor Jan Giliomee, Professor William Bond and Professor Mike Bruton. The other five members are Marlene Laros, Susan Brownlie, Bill McAdam, Charmaine Klein and Conrad Sidego.

Dr Fairall specialises in conservation planning and lectures at the University of Stellenbosch.

Entomologist Professor Giliomee also lectures at Stellenbosch University and has been widely involved in conservation circles for many years.

Professor Bond is an A-graded scientist at the University of Cape Town and a leading fynbos specialist.

Professor Bruton is a marine biologist and an expert environmental educationist.

Ms Leros and Ms Browlie are both professional environmental scientists of long standing.

Mr McAdam is chairman of the Board of Executors and one of the country's leading businessmen.

Ms Klein, who holds master's degrees in botany and environmental education, is co-ordinator of the Environmental Education and Resources Centre at the University of the Western Cape.

Mr Sidego, a political scientist by training, is senior general manager at Nasionale Pers.

There were more than 80 nominations from the public.

Tourists to help save Kruger (56) lions

MTG 1-8/4/99
Evidence wa ka Ngobeni

The Kruger National Park has called on tourists to help back up its contention that there are still plenty of healthy lions in the reserve — despite the impact of bovine tuberculosis (TB).

The call follows reports that TB is wiping out Kruger Park lions, which are a prime attraction for tourists.

Bovine TB is believed to have entered the park's southern border when buffalo herds crossed the Crocodile River into farming areas during the late 1950s. The likely source was infected cattle.

Since then buffalo have been the main host of the disease, while some spill-over to other large animal species has also occurred.

According to Kruger Park studies, the disease has now been identified in lions and in very low numbers of baboons, cheetahs, kudu and leopard.

About 32 out of 33 Kruger lions recently tested in the southern part of the park proved positive for tuberculosis.

Studies show there has been a reduction in lion numbers in a small portion of the southern part of the park in recent years, but the cause is unknown.

The park management has invited tourists to get involved by taking photographs and recording details of any lions they see during visits to the reserve. Prizes will be awarded to the best entries.

The R300 000 research initiative, dubbed the Lion Watch Awareness programme, is aimed at providing answers to the real causes of the spate of lion deaths in the park, and to increase public awareness through active monitoring of the lions.

Says park director David Mabunda: "Recent research has shown a decrease in lion numbers, but TB alone cannot account for such a decline.

"Other factors, such as changes in prey dynamics, poaching and emigration of lions to cattle farms to the north, should be taken into consideration.

"Our efforts to provide answers are ongoing, and this project is one of them."

Mabunda says bovine TB is killing "some" Kruger lions, but he is adamant that the entire population of Kruger lions is not threatened by the disease.

"In the entire recorded history of mankind, there is not a single disease which is known to have wiped out species.

"It is not in the interest of a disease organism to kill all its hosts, because then it will die out itself."

Scientists and wildlife managers are evaluating ways to deal with the disease, he says.

In the meanwhile, there is no need for tourists to panic: "There are still a great many lions roaming the veld, just as they did hundreds or thousands of years ago."

'Cream Poachers' are greatest threat to Africa's wildlife

The Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism said last week it will investigate a funding scandal involving the police's endangered species protection unit. The unit's commander, Pieter Lategan, takes on his critics

MTG 1-8/4/99 (56)

A Zambian representative at a conference of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (Cites) once said most people in Africa do not know the difference between a banana and an elephant tusk, but the illegal trade is organised and very profitable.

The endangered species protection unit (ESPU), a division of the South African Police Service, has been involved in investigating the illegal trade in wild fauna and flora since November 1988. The investigations started with ivory and rhino horn, in crates so dilapidated they practically came apart at Johannesburg International airport.

Suspects were many, rumours even more, and NGOs vehemently fought any legal trade. Poaching was rife. From 1990 to 1995, South Africa lost 78 rhinos and 80 elephants, but this figure was negligible when compared to the losses of other countries. Seizure of 100 tusks or more — close on 1 000 in one instance in Namibia — was not a rare occurrence.

Smuggling is an occupation with low overheads, huge profits and worldwide markets. The chain from the poacher to the end-user is a long and intricate one.

The almost romantic notion of smuggling syndicates, organised by a millionaire trader in an Asiatic country systematically poaching elephants and rhinos in Africa, is not quite true. Even less supported by fact was the idea that these mystical men were under order to kill all rhinos in Africa to increase the economic value of their ivory and rhino horn stockpiles in Hong Kong — or was it Singapore, or maybe Taiwan?

"Experts" on poaching and smuggling of African wildlife, from England, Europe and the United States, visited our continent and told us, with great authority, what was happening and how we should approach our task. Their task was to ensure that wild beasts continue to roam Africa so they may view them while on dangerous safaris, under constant threat of running out of cold beer.

They explained that when de-horned rhinos were killed, poachers cut off one of the rhino's ears to show to his controller the rhino no longer possessed a horn. We are not sure whether it had to be a left or right ear, but would think that the stump, weighing more than a kilogram, would have been better proof.

Just think of the investment left behind in the bush. Didn't the experts tell us a kilogram of rhino horn was worth \$24 000?

These advisers explained to us that because of the ivory ban, black market prices dropped from \$50 a kilogram to \$10.25 in one country, and \$8.35 in another. We Africans watched them in awe and polished our own act.

We went back to the bush, and what did we discover? The old truth about Africa was still

the same: time is on Africa's side, and if you cannot respect this, it will eventually destroy you. There is simply no quick solution.

The first conclusion we came to was that most elephants were killed because there was simply no reason to protect them. These huge beasts, which destroy crops and threaten to kill the farmers, simply could not compare in economical value to goats and cattle. Besides, they have so much meat and the tusks could be buried as an investment.

Secondly, we had to square up to the fact that the market for rhino horn was not nearly as well developed and lucrative as we were told. The maximum value for rhino horn is \$3 000 a kilogram, and there is no difference in price between the horn of a black or a white rhino. This was confirmed by visits to the Far East.

We also discovered that rhino horn was not used as an aphrodisiac. What a shock this was, as we always distinguished between a fake and the genuine product by biting it and waiting for the "reaction".

We have been told so many fallacies by international "experts" that we arrived at another conclusion, about a very active and lethal group which we have named the "Cream Poachers". Their profile and modus operandi are easily identifiable.

They always belong to an NGO, or are sponsored by one. They have no formal training in either conservation or law enforcement, and always carry a camera and a hidden tape recorder. They expose the "criminals" and are the "custodians of trustworthiness and law enforcement knowledge".

What do they poach? Money, money and money again. How? By selling their "expert knowledge" to people interested in the environment.

And in Africa we cry! Our rangers and law enforcers are not properly equipped. In some cases, shoes and ammunition for firearms are a luxury. We are killed by the wild animals that we protect because they know no better; by poachers because they do not care; and by these "investigators" through their criticism. Imagine how many men we could have equipped using money that Cream Poachers spend on laptop computers, or to produce glossy reports.

Where do we stand today? New initiatives in Africa can save our African natural heritage. The Lusaka Agreement of 1994, directed at the illegal trade in wild fauna and flora, creates an international task force that can undertake cross-border investigations, co-ordinate joint operations and handle controlled deliveries.

We can now follow a load of contraband to the end-user, or trace it back to the poacher. In Africa we have the best anti-poaching teams and are in the process of training more.

The international Interpol Subgroup on Wildlife Crime has been founded, and renders invaluable assistance to us. To a certain ex-



Pieter Lategan: 'Maybe not everyone in Africa knows the difference between an ivory tusk and a banana after all.' PHOTOGRAPH: NADINE HUTTON

tent, the illegal trade in ivory and rhino horn has been wiped out, or forced deeper underground — recovery figures are about 10% of what they were in 1992. Poaching of rhinos and elephants in South Africa is a rare occurrence.

Co-operation by range countries in Africa and end-users in the Far East is good. The scenario is one of optimism. Apart from financial assistance, what more do we need in Africa to produce even better results?

For one, our law enforcement structures will have to be updated to cope with possible increases in illegal trade. We cannot even forensically trace the source of illegal wildlife products, as a database has not been fully developed and the forensic tests are too expensive for most law enforcement agencies.

We certainly hope some NGOs will financially assist us in these projects, and we pray someone somewhere will listen to nature conservation law enforcement officers.

The controls over permit systems in Africa are not up to standard. Auditing is almost non-existent. Cites II permits are issued by traders with little intervention from official organisations — and maybe not everyone in Africa knows by now the difference between an ivory tusk and a banana after all.

Since late last year the ESPU has been under attack by certain NGOs. John Ledger, head of the NGO called the Endangered Wildlife Trust, has raised concerns about the ESPU's involvement in "Operation Jumbo".

The principal concern is the purported potential damage which could be caused by a report the ESPU published after surveillance of transboundary wildlife crime in 10 African countries last year.

The facts about Operation Jumbo are:

- An amount of \$460 000 was obtained from the International Fund for Animal Welfare (Ifaw).

- These funds were declared to the Minister for Safety and Security, Sydney Mufamadi, and approved by the director general of state expenditure.

- The ESPU's trips to the 10 African countries were sanctioned by each of the foreign governments prior to any visit.

- Ifaw never attempted to influence the ESPU's investigations, or the report.

- Unsubstantiated allegations about the management of the donated funds, based on mere conjecture, have been ventilated during a recent national television programme and in newspaper reports — and an unashamed attempt has been made to taint the work of the ESPU by alluding to certain "strange practices" purportedly adopted by the ESPU during an investigation conducted several years ago.

Historically, South African efforts at enforcing conservation laws have been ably complemented by colleagues in neighbouring countries. But the relationships established over the years are now being seriously prejudiced by these allegations, as is the integrity of the ESPU and its personnel.

In order to restore these relationships, the ESPU has decided to approach all appropriate structures to conduct an official investigation into Operation Jumbo. This includes the anti-corruption unit of the South African Police Service, the public protector and the Heath special investigation unit.

We cannot allow the work of nature conservation law enforcers to be sabotaged while there are rumours that poaching incidents are not reported, and that in certain countries helicopters are being used to hunt down elephants.

The situation in South Africa has worsened since 1996, the special investigation team of customs and excise has been closed down, the ESPU has only 10 vehicles — two years ago there were 25 — and we are again turning a blind eye to all the warnings.

Waiter, is that a CHAMELEON in my pinotage?

(56) ^{ST 4/4/99} University researchers in bold plan to settle reptile debate

BOBBY JORDAN

AN innovative research project in the winelands is about to settle the debate about whether or not chameleons get squashed into South African wines.

A team of environmentalists from the University of Cape Town plan to conduct a "chameleon-count" on the 655ha Spier estate outside Stellenbosch. The count will form part of a detailed "environmental audit" at Spier — the first of its kind — initiated in February and expected to last about four months.

According to Professor Mark Swilling of the Spier strategic planning team, the study will reveal valuable information about the ecological impact of wine-making.

"As a result of the study we'll give quite a high priority to chameleons — obviously it's quite a sensitive issue," he said.

Many environmentalists believe chameleons are fond of the

winelands habitat, but get squashed in their thousands by mechanical harvesters during the grape-picking season.

Most wine estate owners say chameleons tend to live outside the vineyards. They claim any chameleons shaken loose by mechanical harvesters are easily removed during "de-stalking" before the winemaking process.

The environmental project leader at Spier and senior consultant for UCT's Environmental Evaluation Unit, Lynton Burger, said much of the controversy over chameleons did not apply to the Spier estate because their grapes were still hand-picked. However, the research team would be in a good position to assess the number of chameleons living in vineyard areas.

"There are very different opinions out there. To my knowledge nobody has ever done a proper survey, so it will be interesting to see," Burger said.

Wine and Spirits Board spokesman Andries Tromp described the chameleon row as "a storm in a teacup". He said he'd

investigated the matter and found no evidence of wide-scale chameleon slaughter.

"I love the little guys. This whole thing has been blown out of proportion," Tromp said.

Chameleons, insects and any other form of life were easily removed, he said, adding that the local wine industry was a world leader in the environmentally friendly production of wine.

By last month more than 99 percent of wine producers had committed themselves to an eco-friendly producers' agreement called the Integrated Production of Wine.

Said Tromp: "The scheme is the result of a decision made by the SA wine industry to formulate and implement those practices which have been applied during the past years and result in minimal disturbance of the environment when cultivating vineyards and making wine."

However, environmental activists said this week they had photographic proof of "bag-loads" of chameleons collected at wine cellars.

Five activists were arrested

last month while protesting against the use of mechanical harvesters by chaining themselves to one on an estate outside Stellenbosch. They appeared in the Stellenbosch Magistrate's Court on March 23.

A spokesman for the group, Allan Tregenna, said yesterday they'd received support from a farmer in the area who had picked up 125 chameleons on 6ha of vineyard.

Tregenna complained about the indiscriminate way the estates used their mechanical harvesters — of which about 260 were in use around the country. He claimed each harvester did the work of about 200 workers.

"Grapes and everything from the vines goes straight into a pulping machine," Tregenna said.

"We're not saying the world will be a perfect place if they scrap mechanical harvesters, but it will be better for society and more people will have jobs.

"We've got to have some consideration for the environment — we can't just think about profit," Tregenna said.

Illegal building on Wild Coast goes on unchallenged, say conservationists

Appeal made to minister to implement 1996 court ruling to halt 'irreversible' damage to coastline

By **TOMY CARRIE**
Durban

Illegal cottages and holiday homes are still being built on the Transkei Wild Coast, despite a High Court ruling that unplanned development is causing "considerable and irreversible" environmental damage to the coastline.

Four years ago, the Wildlife and Environment Society launched court action against the minister of environmental affairs and tourism and three tribal chiefs in a bid to halt new shacks and cottages springing up like mushrooms along the sensitive Eastern Cape coastline.

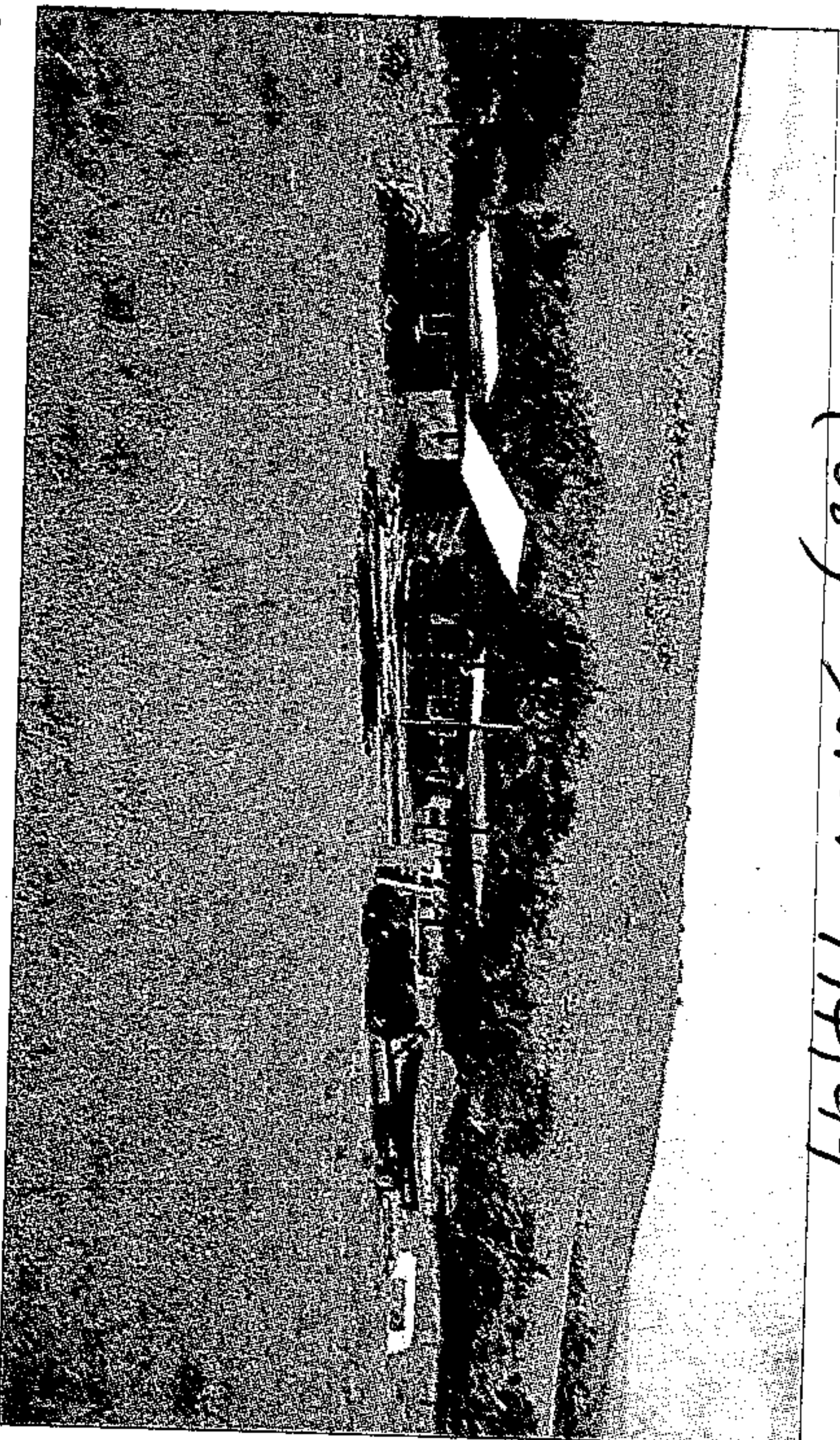
Although the society won the case and several cottage owners were subsequently taken to court, the cottages remain and new structures are still being built today, Keith Cooper, the society's conservation director, said in a statement issued this week.

Cooper said he had been given information and photographs showing new cottages built in several areas, including Manteku near Port-St Johns and the area south of Mkamabati.

When the matter was highlighted in 1995, it was alleged that rich "outsiders", predominantly residents of KwaZulu Natal, were bribing local chiefs "with brandy, beer and cash" to get "permission" to build their holiday homes on prime beachfront sites.

In some cases, it was said, the

(56) After 7/4/99



Threat to environment? ... the construction of new holiday cottages along the Transkei Wild Coast, such as this one near Port Grosvenor, has come under the spotlight again. Conservationists fear that unspoilt stretches of the coastline will be damaged and degraded further unless the state takes action urgently.

developers "ingratiated themselves" with local chiefs, sometimes undergoing sham tribal initiation ceremonies to take advantage of a 1936 law which gave chiefs the power to allocate land to "native people".

However, the wildlife society got the High Court in 1996 to grant an interdict against further development as well as an order compelling the minister of environment affairs to enforce the Environment Conservation Act of 1989 and the Environment Conservation Decree of 1972.

In his judgment, Mr Justice Pickering slammed the Environment

Ministry's "remarkable and disturbing reluctance" to halt environmental pillage of the coastline.

He said there had been a "slow and inexorable grinding of wheels across a bureaucratic landscape regardless of the urgency of the situation".

Three years later, little appears to have changed.

Although the Health Special Investigating Unit set up a tribunal to hear charges against nearly 150 cottage owners in 1997, the legal competency of the tribunal was challenged.

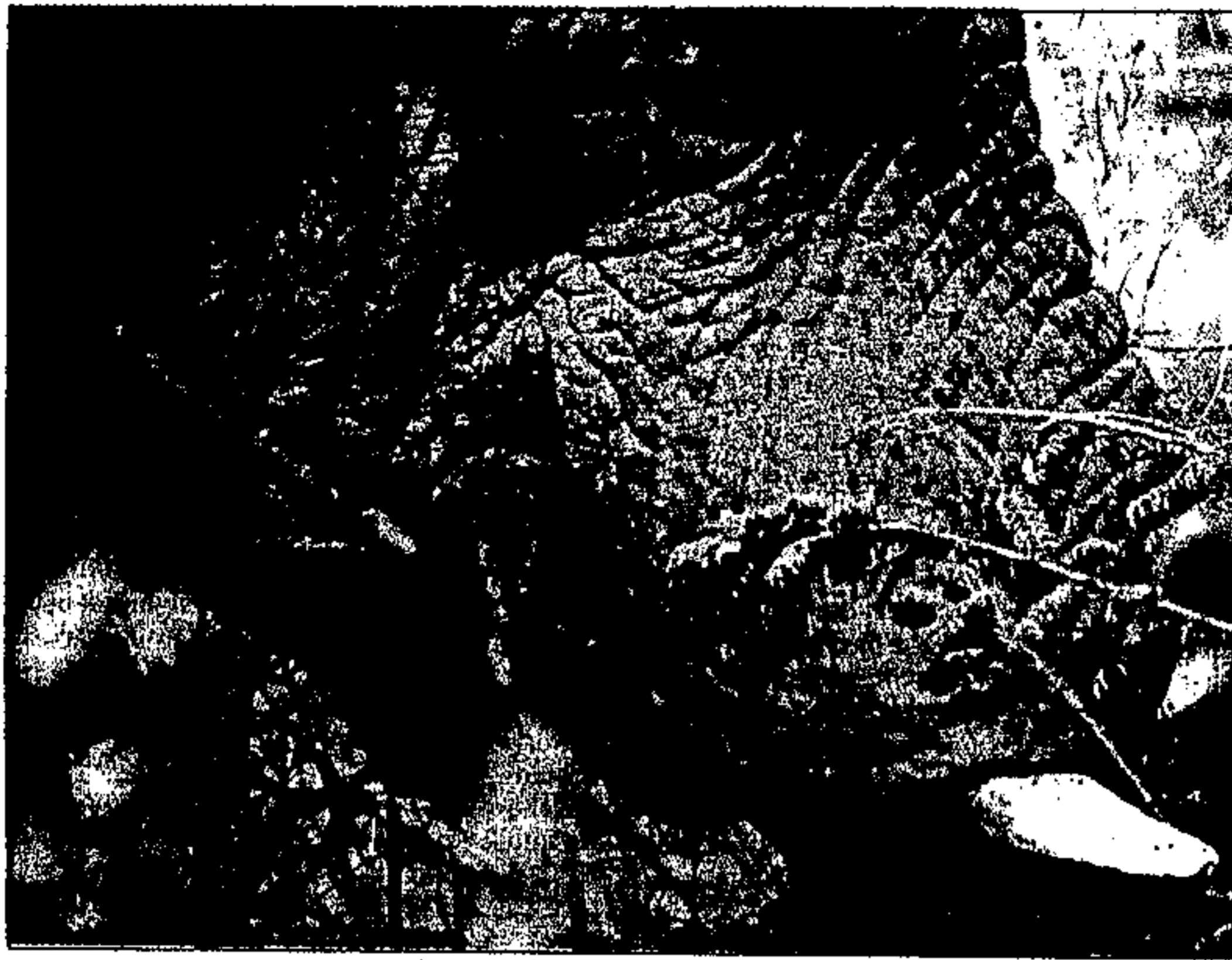
The Department of Environment Affairs and the Eastern Cape govern-

ment also pledged to halt further illegal development along the coast.

But now, with little action apparent, the Wildlife and Environment Society approached Environment Minister Pallo Jordan last month, offering the society's resources and full support in pursuing the matter.

The society says it has also offered the services of its lawyers, at no cost to the Environment Department.

Health Commission spokesperson Guy Rich is expected to issue a statement soon, and a spokesperson for Jordan has promised to look into the matter.



Tusk, tusk: Namibia, Zimbabwe and Botswana have been given the green light for a one-time sale of stockpiled ivory to Japan. PHOTOGRAPH: FRANSJE VAN RIEL

Why trade is a bad idea

MAR 9 - 15/4/99 (56)

Over the next two weeks 59 tons of African ivory will be sold to Japan. Leading elephant researchers argue this could open the door to wider elephant slaughter

Three shipments of 59.1 tons of ivory will be auctioned and sold to Japanese traders in the next two weeks, in terms of a recent international decision to allow limited resumed international trade in ivory.

It will come from stockpiles kept by Namibia, Zimbabwe and Botswana — which will sell 13.8 tons, 20 tons and 25.3 tons respectively. The three countries were given the green light for a one-time sale to Japan at a meeting of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (Cites) in mid-March.

This decision breaks a pattern established in a 10-year trade ban on ivory and is termed "experimental", suggesting that further ivory sales will be proposed if the present trades are deemed successful.

When these sales were initially approved in June 1997, several conditions were attached to the approval. The most important condition was that a system must be developed to measure the impact of resumed trade on elephant populations throughout Africa and Asia.

The authorisation given in March this year for the sales to go ahead reflects the satisfaction of a Cites committee with a draft description of a trade and monitoring system called "Monitoring illegal killing of elephants" (Mike).

We believe the committee's approval of Mike was inadvisable. This programme may be capable of measuring large-scale changes in elephant populations — and in this respect have value — but it is far from capable of gathering the details that would be needed to link subtle changes to their causes.

We are also uncomfortable with the fact that no requirement was made for this or any other monitoring system to be up and running before the current ivory trades were made. The combination of these two omissions with the notion that the present transactions are "experimental" spells a dangerous situation for elephants.

Whether any ivory trade at all is desirable is the subject of an intense

ongoing debate, not only in Cites meetings but also among elephant researchers, managers, conservationists and lay people all over the world.

Authorities do not agree on how the renewal of legal ivory trade would affect the many elephant populations spread across Africa and Asia. What is clear is that different populations would be differently affected, because nations differ in their agendas for elephant management and in the extent of their ability to manage or protect their wildlife.

For example, many members of wildlife departments in Southern Africa believe a renewal of international trade in ivory would promote motivation for conservation. Regarding trade in ivory as a cornerstone of their sustainable utilisation policies, they cull elephants in areas of density and stockpile the ivory for future sale.

A different attitude prevails in much of East Africa. There, a rash of poaching had drastically reduced elephant populations during the decade before the 1989 trade ban. Those populations have stabilised since the ban went into effect, but the socio-economic human situations that earlier fuelled extensive poaching have not improved. As a result, a continuing ban on international trade in ivory is viewed as imperative.

In Asia still a third perspective prevails. Asian elephants are a severely endangered species: regardless of the presence or absence of potential markets, all international trade in their ivory is illegal. Poaching is nonetheless on the rise, indicating the continuation of small-scale local and/or black-market trading.

Our concern is for elephants everywhere. There are places where the availability of a lucrative ivory market may increase the incentive for poaching.

There are also places where it may increase the incentive for culling, a costly operation, the extent of which is determined by the priorities of national governments.

The decisions that have just reached fruition — to trade in stockpiled ivory and to assess the impact of the trade on elephant populations —

are momentous and the link between them is essential.

The Cites committee was not authorised to approve trade in ivory in the absence of a method whereby the impact of the trade on elephant populations would be assessed.

We believe such a method is still lacking. Each of us has attempted to count elephants by various methods and can attest that a reliable, sensitive census is extremely difficult even in the best of circumstances.

To assemble a comprehensive programme that would not only be sensitive to minor changes in elephant populations in varied environments but that also would relate such changes to their underlying causes strikes us as nearly impossible — at best it would require knowledge about dimensions that are not covered in Mike's design.

Without a good monitoring programme, however, the impact of trade in ivory on living elephants will not be scientifically evaluated. So we must be more careful in the future. The next meeting of Cites is scheduled for April 2000 in Nairobi. If further requests for ivory sales are proposed, the following points must then be made:

- A satisfactory draft for a global elephant population-ivory trade monitoring system was not produced, nor was any system in place, before the 1999 sales were authorised.

- As a result, sufficient information will not be available in 2000 to justify further ivory sales.

- Scientific credibility must be a prerequisite for any system designed to monitor elephant populations. Such credibility is evidenced in the form of peer review, which was largely lacking in the case of Mike at the time of its acceptance by Cites.

- In the absence of an adequate means for assessing the relationship between trade in ivory and the health of all elephant populations that may potentially be affected by that trade, further sales must not be authorised.

Authors Katy Payne, Iain Douglas-Hamilton, Cynthia Moss and Joyce Poole are American and East African biologists whose research focuses on the behaviour and conservation of elephants

DEPARTMENT'S ORDER WELCOMED

Public to have its say on Knysna proposal

CT 12/4/99

(56)

SA NATIONAL Parks says its chief concern about an R800-million marina proposed for Knysna Lagoon is that it is not known what impact it will have on the estuarine ecology. Environment Writer **MELANIE GOSLING** reports.

THESSEN'S Island developers will have to return to the drawing board and re-advertise for public comment on the marina project.

After a public outcry about the developers' proposal to carve the island in the Knysna lagoon into 27 smaller islands with more than 600 houses and apartments, the Department of Environment called a meeting of the conservation and planning authorities to discuss the issue.

Peter Ngoasheng, of the department's directorate of environmental impact management, said after the meeting: "Public participation in this case is crucial.

"It is clear that the process of involving the public has been flawed. We have said the developers must re-advertise the project, call for comments and objections and get the public back on board.

"This will give the public a chance to raise issues and concerns they believe have not been addressed."

Ngoasheng said one of the main problems was that the public had not been involved in the current development proposal, "Concept 25". It had been involved only in an earlier proposal, "Scenario 7", which was different.

The current proposal is for a "canal estate" with 300 houses, 240 cluster houses, 120 boat apartments, as well as shops, offices, hotel and a conference centre. Some of the buildings would be four storeys high.

Once the island has been cut up by canals, about 10 of the smaller islands would be sold to private owners for between R2,1m and R3,3m.

Many local residents believe the project is inappropriate for an environmentally-sensitive estuary.

The decision by the Department of Environment comes after a consortium of Knysna civic and environmental groups called on Environment Minister Pallo Jordan to halt the development.

Jim Saunders, spokesperson for the consortium, welcomed the department's decision.

"We find it refreshing that it sat down and investigated the issue," he said.

Although some scientific studies had been done during the environmental impact assessment some years ago, there were gaps and some of the data was outdated, Saunders said.

"We're looking at employing our own panel of scientists to look at the environmental impact of the project and how it relates to the Knysna estuary," he said.

Lorna Watt of the Environment and Wildlife Society said: "We're pleased that the Department of Environment has recognised that there was a problem.

"We want to do our best for this town and the public participation

process must be carried out properly. The Thesen's Island development is in the middle of the lagoon and is a large project."

The move has also been welcomed by SA National Parks, which controls the Knysna Lagoon as part of the National Lakes Area.

Spokesperson Sarel Yssel said: "We felt there was scope for further public participation and the department has seen to it that this will happen.

"It gives the public an opportunity to address several issues."

SA National Parks said one of its main concerns was that it was unknown what impact a development of this size would have on the estuary.

It said that because of the complexity of the estuarine ecology, with its enormous diversity of plant and animal life, it was difficult to predict what might happen if changes were made to the system.

Environmental scientist Margaret

Marker said Knysna had lost 25% of its salt marshes around the lagoon since 1950 and these could not be restored.

"The construction of the Knysna Quays marina development has shown that it is extremely difficult to stabilise disturbed lagoon sands," Marker said.

"The Thesen's Island proposal requires considerable dredging and therefore disturbance of the salt marshes. The wellbeing of the estuary, which is already under stress, is dependent on the salt marshes.

"Any further pressure should be avoided at all cost."

'It is clear that the process of involving the public has been flawed'

Wildlife park (56) straddles borders

90 13/4/99

PRETORIA — After 10 years of negotiations, Africa's first transfrontier game park was agreed to last week when SA and Botswana signed a historic pact to manage two parks as a single ecological unit.

Adele Smit of the SA National Parks said yesterday that the Gemsbok National Park in Botswana and the adjacent Kalahari Gemsbok National Park in SA would be known as the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park. She said she hoped this would be a "model for conservation in the 21st Century".

Although the historic agreement was signed between the two countries last Wednesday, the two parks have been operating unofficially as a single unit for more than half a century. There has never been any physical barrier to wildlife from crossing between the two parks which together cover 38 000km² in the southern Kalahari desert that Smit described as "a vast ecosystem, relatively free of human influence".

Not limited by man-made barriers, except to the west and the south, there was a conservation area large enough to maintain two ecological processes once widespread in the savannahs and grasslands of Africa: large-scale nomadic and seasonal movements of wildlife, and predation by large free-roaming carnivores such as lions, leopards and cheetahs.

"These processes are extremely difficult to maintain, except in the largest of areas, and their presence in the Kalahari makes it a valuable area for conservation," said Smit. The agreement, first suggested by a Botswanan fact finding study on tourism developments in Southern Africa in 1989, secures these processes.

Both countries will pool their conservation expertise and experience to maintain the area's integrity, and work towards raising the international profile of the area, enhancing its status and potential as a tourist destination.

Smit said tourists would be able to move freely within the transfrontier park under regulations governing visitor behaviour. The increase in the economic potential of the park and surrounding areas would benefit local communities adjacent to the park.

Entrance fees to the park will be pooled and shared equally by both countries. Other revenue, such as money earned from accommodation and camping, will be kept in countries where it is generated. The two parks will operate autonomously in running their internal affairs and developing their tourist facilities.

Both countries recognise the sovereign equality and territorial integrity of the other, but have undertaken to harmonise their national legislation to remove any legal obstacle that may impede the integration and management of the two parks as a single ecological and tourism unit. — AENS.

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Namaqualand to become a national park

First transfrontier park in Kalahari also established after SA-Botswana accord

Star 19/4/99
OWN CORRESPONDENT AND SAPA

The world-famous Namaqualand region will become a national park, the SA National Parks announced yesterday.

SANP spokesperson Adele Smit said the 50 000sq km region, which comes alive with colour once a year when its flowers bloom, had the richest succulent flora in the world and supported a diversity of invertebrates, reptiles, birds and small mammals.

"Now the SANP is involved in a project to develop a system of national parks in Namaqualand to safeguard the region's biodiversity," said Smit.

She said the focus was currently on the well known Skilpad Wildflower Reserve near Kamieskroon, but that the consolidation of this reserve and several adjoining properties into a national park would ensure the conservation of the dramatic landscape.

"It is also hoped that the proposed park will benefit the local communities by creating job opportunities and helping to stimulate the regional economy," she said.

Before the national park can be proclaimed in Parliament, it needs to be named - and the public has been invited to sub-

mit suggestions.

These can be posted to: SANP Namaqualand Project, PO Box 117, Kamieskroon, 8241.

■ Southern Africa's first transfrontier park is a reality after being in use in that capacity for more than 50 years.

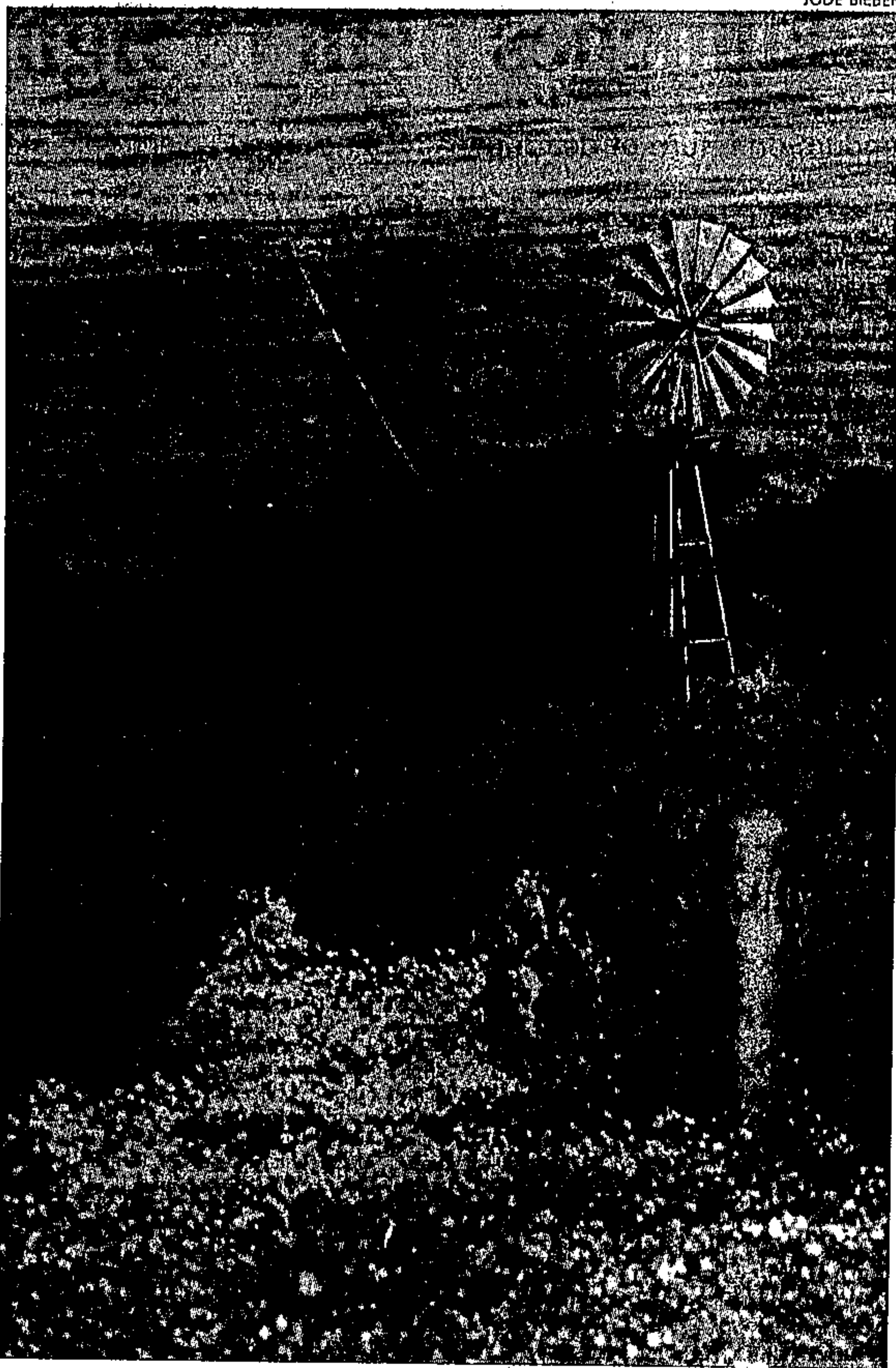
Botswana and South Africa have signed a bilateral agreement to manage their adjacent national parks - the Gemsbok National Park and Kalahari Gemsbok National Park - as a single ecological unit.

The new park will be known as the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park (KTP).

"Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park has been in de facto existence for more than half a century and has enabled the two countries to maintain this extensive area in the southern Kalahari as a single ecological unit.

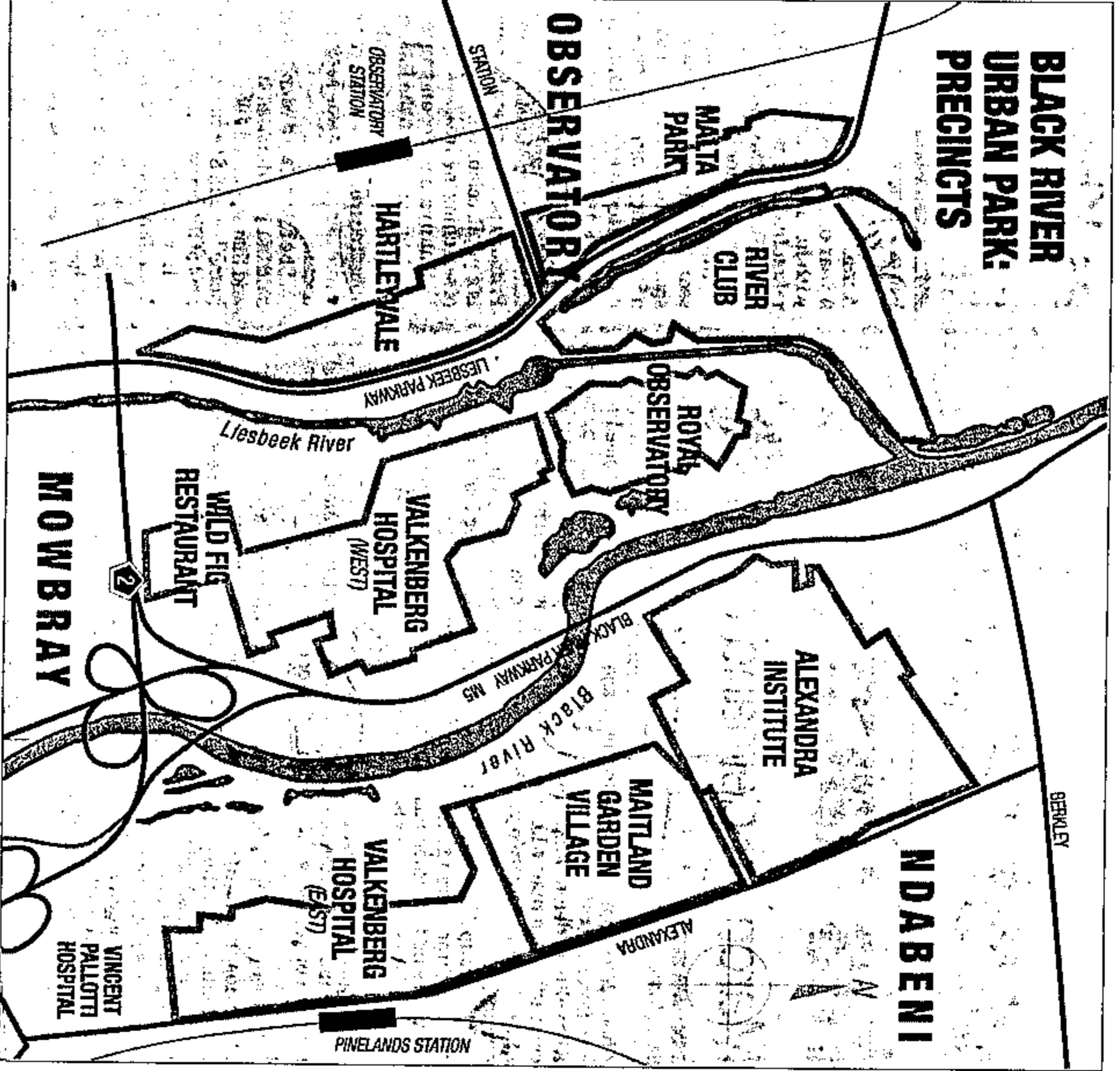
"In recognition of this agreement, no barrier to wildlife movement exists along the international boundary which separates the 9 591sq km Kalahari Gemsbok National Park in South Africa and the 28 400sq km Gemsbok National Park in Botswana," said Dick Parris, parks director of SANP.

"This is the first formally declared transfrontier park in Africa and it will hopefully be a model for conservation into the 21st century," he said.



Namaqualand magic ... SA National Parks intends establishing a system of parks in the region to safeguard the rich and unique biodiversity found there.

Mowbray/Observatory



Joint effort on river land

Proposals flood in for desirable but eco-sensitive area

JENNY WALL
Staff Reporter

For years there has been speculation about the future of the land at the confluence of the Black River and the Liesbeek River, a vast piece of ecologically sensitive land close to the city and major transport routes.

A draft Black River Urban Park Development Framework report has been drawn up, a joint effort of the City of Cape Town, landowners and interest groups.

The document is a working document, and no final decisions have been made. The participation process continues with a public meeting on April 17 at 10am at the River Club to discuss the development framework.

The 80ha area consists of sensitive ecological systems and habitats, open space and significant institutions, historical buildings and landscapes close to fairly dense residential, commercial and industrial developments.

The area is an ideal space for the creation of a park that fulfills a variety of human needs as well as the needs of the natural and built environment, says the report.

The ecological sensitivity of the site is well known. Recently, however, the area has come under consid-

Neighbours



Send your neighbourhood news and notices to Jenny Wall at 488 4218, fax 488 4075 or e-mail njwall@cityindependent.co.za

erable development pressure as landowners begin to rationalise their land holdings and threaten to release substantial tracts of land for private development.

Many proposals and ideas have been put forward for the land, including headquarters for His People Christian Missionaries, a plan for a private teaching hospital attached to the University of Cape Town, office park developments and a working farm village where mentally ill and disabled people can live and work.

It is highly desirable land: it is big, largely undeveloped, close to the

N2 and M5 and the Mowbray taxi and bus stations. Most of it is public land, either state or council-owned. Transnet owns a large portion of it.

Development in the area has always been sensitive because of ecological concerns. The report notes that additional development within the park is essential to ensure sustainability.

The report acknowledges that a balance between development and parkland must be achieved. The framework provides landowners and prospective developers with guidance on the location, scale and intensity of future development and how development will be integrated in the park.

The framework aims to conserve ecologically sensitive areas such as the wetlands and the city's only remaining nature reserve, the Raapenberg Bird Sanctuary. It also wants to conserve historically significant sites, and upgrade and rehabilitate degraded open areas and ecological systems.

The land has been divided into eight precincts for the purpose of the framework: Parkland, Valkenberg West (where what remains of Valkenberg Hospital is situated), Valkenberg East, Alexandra Institute, Maitland Garden Village, the River Club and the South African Astronomical Observatory. Maitla

(576) 488 4218

AKT 15/4/99

Most of the proposed development is in the Valkenberg West, Valkenberg East and Malta Park precincts.

Where development is allowed, the framework envisions relatively dense, mixed-use urban development. The majority of development will be limited to the edges of the park. Development within the park will be confined to a limited area.

The report says development should respect the ambience of the park.

Development has been proposed only on land considered under-utilised or less environmentally valuable.

Managing the area cannot be the responsibility of the City of Cape Town alone, the report says.

One option is to establish a "special purpose" organisation, legally constituted and representative of all interests in the park.

The need for a park in this area has been questioned. But, says the report, the city is in dire need of quality places for relief, recreation and small-scale production.

"With further metropolitan objectives to consolidate the city and intensify activity within the existing urban boundary, and continued population growth, quality recreational areas are a necessity."

Dassenberg housing given the green light

ANC vows to back court action to stop plan

Provincial planning minister Michael Louis's controversial approval of the Dassenberg farm development at Sun Valley has been unanimously supported by the province's Planning Advisory Board.

This was disclosed by Mr Louis in his response to strong criticism by the environmental lobby and the African National Congress of his decision to overrule the South Peninsula Municipality and allow 170 housing units on the farm – which borders the new Cape Peninsula National Park.

ANC MP Jannie Momberg, whose constituency includes Noordhoek and Sun Valley, said: "That area is much too beautiful to pack with houses. We totally support the conservationists and others who are opposed to this.

"I will be in touch with Neville Riley (chairman of the South Peninsula Municipality's planning committee) and we will do everything we can to support them, even if it means giving financial support for a court case."

Mr Louis said he had twice visited the site and had been advised and informed by "a wide range of competent, professional people".

JOHN YELD



ENVIRONMENT WRITER

These had included staff of the provincial directorates of transport, planning services, and land use management, as well as the Planning Advisory Board.

"They all supported the development subject to various conditions," he said.

During a meeting with environmentalists after making his decision, Mr Louis was challenged to name those who had supported his decision.

They were environmental scientist Neal Carter; land surveyor Ken Baard; engineer and chairman of the Table Mountain Aerial Cableway Company Louis de Waal; town and regional planner Derek Chittenden; architect Trudi Groenewald; and lawyer Michael Radomsky.

The chairman of the board is Christo Kannenberg, who heads the Cape Town company The Planning Partnership. Mr Kannenberg recused himself from the

decision about Dassenberg because his company was responsible for submitting the failed rezoning application to the South Peninsula Municipality, and the subsequent appeal to Mr Louis, on behalf of the owner.

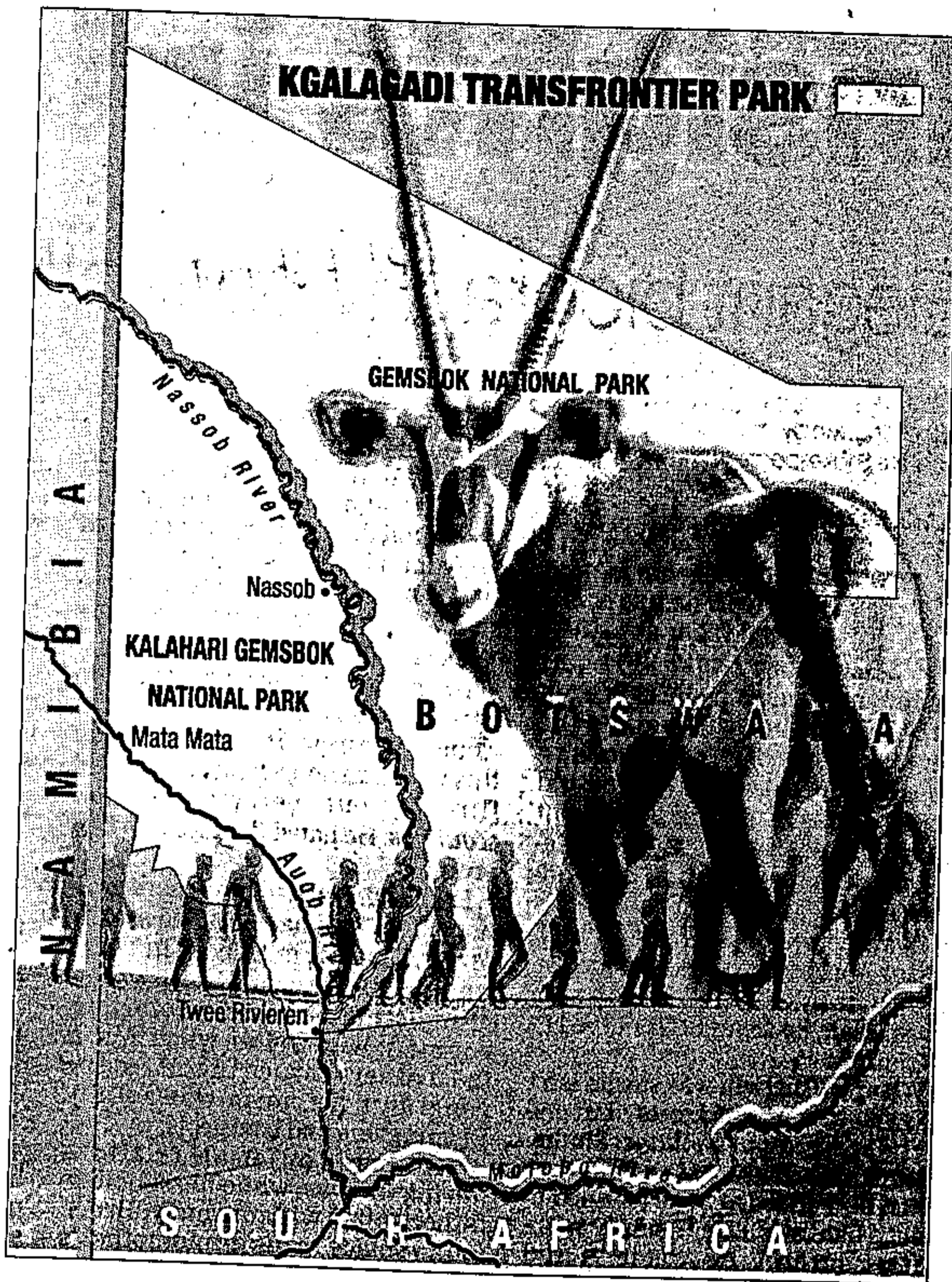
Mr Louis also said that all the comments relating to the development were documented and could be seen by all affected parties.

"The final number of units will have to be determined by the South Peninsula Municipality, based on the outcome of the environmental management plan/programme.

"It is important to note that a detailed site development plan, a revised layout plan, with a sensitively designed development as well as building platforms for each of these units, must be submitted to council for approval.

"The final say in regard to the proposed development – including the number of units – therefore rests with the South Peninsula Municipality."

But this is disputed by the environmental lobby, which has legal advice that Mr Louis's decision is now *functus officio* – in other words, it stands and can only be overturned by a court of law.



Botswana, SA set up Africa's first 'peace park'

JOHN YELD

In a move hailed by conservationists as a model for the future, South Africa and Botswana have signed an historic agreement

and the predation by large free-roaming mammalian carnivores.

"These two processes are extremely difficult to maintain except in the largest of areas. Their presence in the Kalahari makes it a valuable area for

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peace park

ARG 17/4/99

JOHN YELD

In a move hailed by conservationists as a model for the future, South Africa and Botswana have signed an historic agreement that will see the creation of the Kgalagadi Trans-frontier Park – the first official “peace park” on the African continent.

The two countries have agreed to manage their adjacent national parks – the 28 400km² Gemsbok National Park in Botswana and 9 591km² Kalahari Gemsbok National Park in South Africa – as a single ecological and tourism unit.

The signing ceremony to establish the new park – Kgalagadi means “land of thirst” – puts an official stamp on what has been a de facto trans-border park for more than half a century.

There are no fences – and hence no barrier to wildlife – along the international boundary separating the two parks.

In a major diplomatic coup, Botswana and South Africa have agreed to harmonise their national legislation to remove any legal obstacles to the integration and management of the new park as a single ecological and tourism unit.

Dick Parris, director of parks of SA National Parks, said a joint management committee made up of representatives from the conservation authorities in both countries had been working to formalise the arrangement since June 1992.

“This is the first formally declared trans-frontier park in Africa and it will hopefully be a model for conservation in the 21st century,” he said.

A new gateway is being designed for the first joint entrance, on the Nossob River, the border between South Africa and Botswana.

Tourists will be able to buy permits to travel through the park – an area almost twice the size of Israel – without constraints.

Entrance fees will be pooled and shared equally by both countries, but other revenue – from accommodation, camping and other facilities – will be retained by the country that generates it.

Mr Parris explained the importance of the agreement by pointing out that the southern Kalahari represented an increasingly rare phenomenon: a vast ecosystem relatively free of human influence.

“The absence of man-made barriers, except to the west and the south, has made possible the establishment of a conservation area large enough to maintain examples of two ecological processes that were once widespread in the savannas and grasslands of Africa,” he said.

“These are the large-scale nomadic and seasonal movements of wildlife

and the predation by large free-roaming mammalian carnivores.

“These two processes are extremely difficult to maintain except in the largest of areas. Their presence in the Kalahari makes it a valuable area for conservation.”

Mr Parris said projected benefits of the new park included:

- Guaranteeing the long-term conservation of the valuable wildlife resources in the southern Kalahari, thereby helping to maintain the integrity of the entire Kalahari ecosystem.

- Pooling expertise and experience on a “good neighbours” basis.

- Raising the international profile of the important conservation area through joint promotional campaigns, thereby enhancing its status and potential as a tourist destination.

- Increasing the economic potential of the park and the surrounding areas, bringing benefits to both countries and especially to the local communities near the park.

The agreement has been welcomed by the Somerset West-based Peace Parks Foundation.

The foundation was set up by industrialist and conservation patron Anton Rupert to facilitate and fund the development of trans-frontier conservation areas throughout Africa.

“This is a very important breakthrough for the growth and development of peace parks in the rest of Africa,” Dr Rupert said.

He was speaking from Chicago, where he is on a mission to the United States with the president of the Peace Parks Club, Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands, to raise funds for the foundation and to encourage investments in and around potential peace parks.

The agreement would show the world that southern African countries were genuinely committed to making the dream of a network of peace parks a reality, Dr Rupert said.

“The success of the Kgalagadi Trans-frontier Park gives strength to conservationists and community leaders who are striving to stitch together an ecological and social landscape divided by colonial borders.”

Foundation chief executive John Hanks said trans-frontier conservation areas were used by 98 countries to protect habitats and animal species.

“They are often called peace parks because they require peace and cooperation between the participating countries,” Dr Hanks said.

“They overcome the global problem of national boundaries often dividing natural systems, which leads to inadequate or incompatible protection of wildlife and the environment.

“Southern Africa is unique in having at least 10 trans-frontier conservation projects in progress,” he said.

Government departments lock horns over St Lucia

ARG 17/14/99

(56)

NIKI BARKER

Lake St Lucia might well be called the Lake of Storms. It is Africa's largest estuary and a wetland of international significance – and is once again at the centre of a bitter controversy.

St Lucia, in northern Zululand, made international headlines 10 years ago when South Africa's conservationists fought their biggest battle against strip mining.

Today, the controversy is again environmental, but pitted against each other are two government departments battling over the thorny issue of commercial plantations. The Department of Water and Forestry Affairs (DWFA) is preparing to privatise its state-owned timber plantations, several of which fall inside the designated Greater St Lucia Wetland Park, and argues that it can guarantee short-term economic benefits for impoverished communities in the area.

But the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), which aims to exploit the park for eco-tourism and job creation, says commercial forestry is fundamentally incom-

patible with tourism development.

It wants the 12 000 hectares of commercial plantations that fall inside the valuable indigenous Dukuduku State Forest on the western shore of Lake St Lucia to be removed immediately.

The timber lots were established long before current environmental controls were implemented and, the DTI says, are environmentally destructive and hamper prospects of attracting tourism investors.

But the DWFA is concerned that its privatisation deals will be jeopardised without the Dukuduku plantations and is putting commercial forestry as an immediate job-creator, pointing out that the proposed tourism development of Lake St Lucia has yet to materialise.

A DWFA conservation manager warned, though, that the western-shore plantations have a low yield per hectare, indicating that the land is not all that suitable for forestry.

"Some of those plantations are waterlogged and not really viable. And where trees have seeded themselves in the wetlands, they should be ripped out immediately."

However, he said it would create management problems if the trees were simply removed. They would have to be harvested and then the area managed to ensure that alien vegetation did not take over.

There is also increasing evidence

that timber

creates enor-

mous ecologi-

cal damage –

far more than

the proposed

strip mining

of the dunes

at St Lucia

would have

done.

A KwaZulu

Natal envi-

ronmental

consultant

said: "The

commercial value of pine and euca-

lyptus in Zululand is exceeded only

by sugarcane. There's good money

in forestry. But when trees are

planted in unsuitable areas, they

can cause significant damage."

The alien trees that make up

plantations use an enormous

amount of water – enough to cause

a significant change in the water table. This would reduce the amount of fresh water in Lake St Lucia, increase the salinity of the lake and alter the eco-system. It would also have a significant effect on fish-breeding.

A drop in the water table would also lead to a reduction in grasslands and an increase in woody and poisonous plants, which would reduce the grazing for cattle and even hippo.

But forestry in the Greater St Lucia Wetland Park would not be an issue if the promised tourism boom had materialised.

Several government departments, non-governmental organisations and parastatals have been throwing money at tourism development, but they are hampered by a Byzantine maze of archaic legislation, land claims, tribal tradition and individual incompetence.

Investors, both large and small, have been scared off by excessive bureaucracy and endless delays for consultation.

The local skills base is extremely small and has no legacy of tourism awareness.

Meanwhile, there appears to have been a compromise between forestry and tourism on the Eastern Shores game reserve of St Lucia. They have agreed that the existing plantations will be harvested and not replanted.

Land currently under timber will be allowed to regenerate and the area will be managed by controlled burning under the supervision of the KZN Nature Conservation Service (NCS), formerly the Natal Parks Board.

With its stock of animals, birds, and access to coastal beaches, it is already an established tourism attraction and generates enormous income for the NCS, while there is some spin-off for the local community through a community levy.

It would be up to Forestry and Water Affairs Minister Kader Asmal to issue the ministerial decree to withdraw the planting permits on the western shores of the park, a tough decision when weighing up the long-term benefits of ecological regeneration against the quick-fix of revenue from privatisation and immediate job-creation. – African Eye News Service

Thesen Island conflict deepens

Conflict over the proposed R800-million "canal estate" development on historic Thesen Island in Knysna Lagoon has deepened.

The national Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT) decided last week that public participation in the controversial development proposal - "Concept 25" - was flawed and that it should be re-advertised for public comment.

But the would-be developers said they had "irrevocable rights" in favour of their proposal, and that they would definitely not re-advertise it.

Concept 25 involves dividing most of Thesen Island into 27 smaller residential islands separated by canals, and constructing 299 single houses, 241 group housing units, 120 apartment units, private and public open space, and shops, offices, an hotel and confer-



ence centre/eco-inn.

In December, Western Cape provincial planning minister Michael Louisa approved an amendment to the Knysna/Wilderness/Plettenberg Bay regional structure plan and the rezoning and subdivision of the island, clearing the way for the development.

But his decision was greeted with strong opposition from some Knysna residents and environmental groups, who formed a powerful consortium to oppose the proposals. The consortium asked Environmental Affairs Minister

Pallo Jordan to intervene.

Dr Jordan's department duly convened a meeting on April 1 of all the statutory planning and conservation authorities involved, including its own coastal management unit, the Knysna town council, SA National Parks, and Mr Louis's provincial planning department.

DEAT spokesman Peter Ngosheng said afterwards that the meeting had decided the proposed development should be re-advertised for objections, because the public participation process had been inadequate.

"The public had only a limited opportunity as far as inputs into this process were concerned... We are telling the developer to re-start the process - the public should be given an opportunity to raise their concerns."

But planner/developer Chris Mulder said there was disagreement about

what had been decided at the April 1 meeting. He said there were some issues which still needed to be clarified relating to the environmental management plan for the development and some property ownership details, but that overall, irrevocable rights for the development had been granted.

"Definitely, Concept 25 will not be re-advertised," he insisted.

Jim Saunders, spokesman for the consortium of residents and conservationists, welcomed the DEAT decision.

Meanwhile, Mr Louis has dismissed a comprehensive, 20-page set of objections by the consortium, saying his decision on Thesen Island stands.

Confirming that the document had been received by his department, he said: "The decision of the competent authority - myself in this case - is *functus officio* and can only be overturned by a court of law."

Board to boost conservation management in province

ET 20/4/99 (56)

MELANIE GOSLING
ENVIRONMENT WRITER

CONSERVATION has often been seen as the Cinderella department in most South African provinces, and the Western Cape has been no exception.

As Cape Nature Conservation's (CNC) budget shrank each year, so conservation projects were curtailed, or even ground to a halt.

To make it worse, staff of the CNC had to watch the money they earned from tourism in their world-class nature reserves disappear into the general coffers of the provincial government, and not be ploughed back into conservation.

Now that will all change.

Yesterday, Environment MEC Kobus Meiring announced the establishment of the Cape Nature Conservation Board, based on the Natal Parks Board model, which will radically transform conservation management in this province.

The main difference will be that under this new statutory board the CNC can keep the money it generates and use it for conservation management and tourism development.

It also means that the CNC can

raise international funding, which it could not do as a provincial department, and it can now enter into financial agreements with private enterprise. This could mean that a private company may run the rest camps and restaurants in the reserves, allowing the department to concentrate on conservation management.

When the members of the new board were announced yesterday, Premier Gerald Morkel said the move would play a pivotal role in local tourism development, job creation and the involvement of local communities in sustainable utilisation of reserves.

"This will include the creation of commercial trade opportunities, forging beneficial partnerships with the private sector and obtaining international funding.

"All this will enhance the conservation of our natural heritage for present and future generations," he said.

All the reserves will remain the property of the CNC.

The nine founding board members, who were nominated by the public, are:

● William Bond, an A-rated scientist and head of UCT's depart-

ment of botany.

● Sue Brownlie, an environmental management and planning consultant.

● Mike Bruton, a marine scientist who was well-known to the public for his involvement in the Two Oceans Aquarium and is now director of MTN's science and environment programmes.

● Neill Fairall, former assistant director of scientific services at the CNC and now an environmental consultant.

● Jan Gilomee, head of the department of entomology at the University of Stellenbosch, with a particular interest in conservation and development issues.

● Charmaine Klein, co-ordinator of the environmental education and resource unit at the University of the Western Cape.

● Marlene Laros, environmental consultant and former NGO lobbyist for improved environmental governance.

● Bill McAdam, executive chairman of the Board of Executors and trustee of the World Wide Fund for Nature.

● Conrad Sidego, senior general manager of strategic planning at Nasionale Pers.

(nb) CT 21/4/99

Kogelberg is SA's first biosphere reserve

MELANIE GOSLING
ENVIRONMENT WRITER

LAND inside SA's nature reserves and national parks is well protected, but beyond their borders the onslaught on the natural environment is stepping up.

The international environmental community recognised this several years ago, and knew that unless they came up with some plan, the planet might eventually consist of a series of isolated "islands" of national parks in a sea of reckless development.

This led to the formation of Unesco's Man and Biosphere pro-

gramme, aimed at trying to create areas which included people and towns, where all development would be geared towards achieving a balance between humanity's needs and those of the natural resource base on which all life depends.

So far there are 350 biosphere reserves in 88 countries, and this week SA joined the list when Environment Minister Pallo Jordan inaugurated the Kogelberg Biosphere Reserve — the first biosphere reserve in the country, and our first internationally registered conservation area.

Said Jordan: "We have placed

huge pressures on the earth's resources with our growing demands for more energy and more food, yet a huge proportion of the world's population still exists on the brink of survival.

"The effects of current patterns of trade, the extremely uneven distribution of wealth and the highly uneven access to technology, information and knowledge, present a sobering picture of the challenges that face us as we move towards the 21st century.

"To ensure the future of our planet, it is of the utmost importance that we work for sustainable development, incorporating care

for the natural environment, greater social equity and respect for rural communities. Biosphere reserves can offer such examples."

The 90 000ha reserve, which starts about 40km east of Cape Town, includes 23 000ha of marine environment. It stretches along the coast from Gordon's Bay to the Bot River Vlei, stretching 2km out to sea, and inland to the Groenlandberg, the mountains near Grabouw.

The reserve consists of three major zones: A core wilderness area, which includes the Kogelberg Nature Reserve, buffer zones and transitional zones.

KZN conservation put millions in failed bank

Niki Barker

The already cash-strapped KwaZulu-Natal Nature Conservation Service faces further financial stress, with the disclosure this week that a considerable sum of money deposited with the embattled New Republic Bank (NRB) in Durban has been frozen as a result of NRB being placed under receivership.

It is claimed that the conservation service deposited R48-million with NRB.

This money had been borrowed by the conservation body at low interest from an offshore account and re-invested in NRB at higher interest rates, a source within the service who requested anonymity said this week.

The bank's curator, Pieter Strydom, confirmed that the KwaZulu-

Natal Nature Conservation Service had deposits with the bank, but would not confirm the amount involved.

"All funds are frozen until further notice," he said. "There is money that has been deposited by the KwaZulu-Natal Nature Conservation Service, but I cannot disclose the amount."

The Reserve Bank has applied for the liquidation of NRB after the curator found its liabilities exceeded its assets by R28-million. The Durban High Court last month rejected the Reserve Bank's application for liquidation of NRB, but this week granted it leave to appeal the decision.

Anita Wong, a conservation service representative, said this week not all of the money invested in NRB was borrowed funding. She was unable to disclose how much of it was borrowed.

A loss of R48-million would be a

severe blow to an organisation already burdened with budget cuts and operations running at a loss. However, Wong said the conservation body is confident not all the money will be lost. "It's impossible to lose all that money, as the bank is not insolvent. We have enough cash reserves to pay back any loans."

She added that it would take about three years to recoup the money deposited in the NRB, but that the frozen account would have absolutely no impact on the day-to-day operations of the organisation.

Funds to pay salaries and other operational costs are held in a different bank account, she said, and the money in the NRB is investment funding. "It is part of our policy to invest money at high interest, where we can maximise a return on an investment."

(56)

MTG 22-29/4/99

Wong insisted the funds that have been frozen are not public monies, but savings effected by the conservation service and accumulated capital. She claimed the money was gaining interest while it was frozen.

Strydom denied this: "A frozen account does not pay interest. I have received one offer for the bank, where the interested buyer offered to pay back all the money from depositors, at no interest after five years, but I could not accept that offer."

The KwaZulu-Natal Nature Conservation Service holds funds for various trusts, including the Isivuno Trust and a community levy trust.

The community levy is a fee it charges tourists over and above entrance fees and accommodation tariffs, which is placed in a trust fund for use in development funding in communities. The Isivuno Trust holds money donated by private

donors for the same purpose.

The separation of the two trusts is a result of the amalgamation last year of two bodies to form the present KwaZulu-Natal Nature Conservation Service.

The Isivuno Trust was a creation of the former KwaZulu-Natal Bureau of Natural Resources, while the community levy was a Natal Parks Board initiative. Wong says the new board is looking at ways to combine the two trusts.

The new organisation is currently busy with extensive internal changes, in an attempt to bring it in line with new policies governing the running of parastatal organisations. Already questions are being asked about its fitness to run development projects.

A loss of a substantial sum of investment capital could further jeopardise the organisation's credibility regarding tourism development.

High Court judges rule against Environment Affairs minister in

JEAN LE MAY

Environment Affairs Minister Pello Jordan's move to "restructure" the fishing industry for the benefit of new entrants has backfired.

Two Cape High Court judges yesterday ruled against him in a case which could have widespread implications for the industry.

The effect of the judgment is that the total commercial catch of crayfish for 1998/99 must go to people who had quotas for the 1997/98 season.

This includes big companies such as Irvin & Johnson, which held huge quotas for years.

And the most recent entrants, consisting largely of previously disad-

vantaged fishermen - the very people Dr Jordan was trying to help - are excluded.

Langklip See Produktie and 60 others v the Minister of Environmental Affairs and 157 others went to court because many of the applicants had their rock lobster quotas reduced by 25% or lost them altogether. The tonnage made available was split

among new entrants.

The case began on January 5 when Mr Justice Thring ordered everyone involved to stop catching lobsters until the issue was settled.

Most respondents applied to court to be released from the ban and were allowed to carry on fishing.

However, none of the applicants applied because they were warned

they would be opposed by the minister, said their lawyer, Peter Edwardes.

None of the applicants has fished since the application was launched and they have suffered grave financial losses. And apparently the case need not have lasted so long. It was common knowledge that the judge president offered to have the case

urgently reviewed, but this was refused by Dr Jordan.

At issue was the interpretation of a section of the new Living Marine Resources Act which said that for six months after the Act came into force, the minister had to follow the procedures of the old quota board in considering applications.

The court found that the minister

had not acted in accordance with those procedures.

In reaction, the chief director of Marine and Coastal Management Monde Mayekiso said he didn't want to comment on the judgment itself, but its implications would be studied by Dr Jordan's legal team to establish a course of action available to the minister.

ARD

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crayfish quota case

66

Floating fibres a menace to community

In a place in Mpumalanga that does not appear on the map, people believe they are being slowly choked to death by asbestos.

Near the Swaziland border at Msauli, a white asbestos waste mountain five storeys high and two city blocks wide scars the undulating countryside.

This mine, which has been in existence since the 1940s, belongs to the African Chrysolite Asbestos (ACA) mining company. At its peak it employed more than 3000 workers but the number has shrunk to just over 200 today.

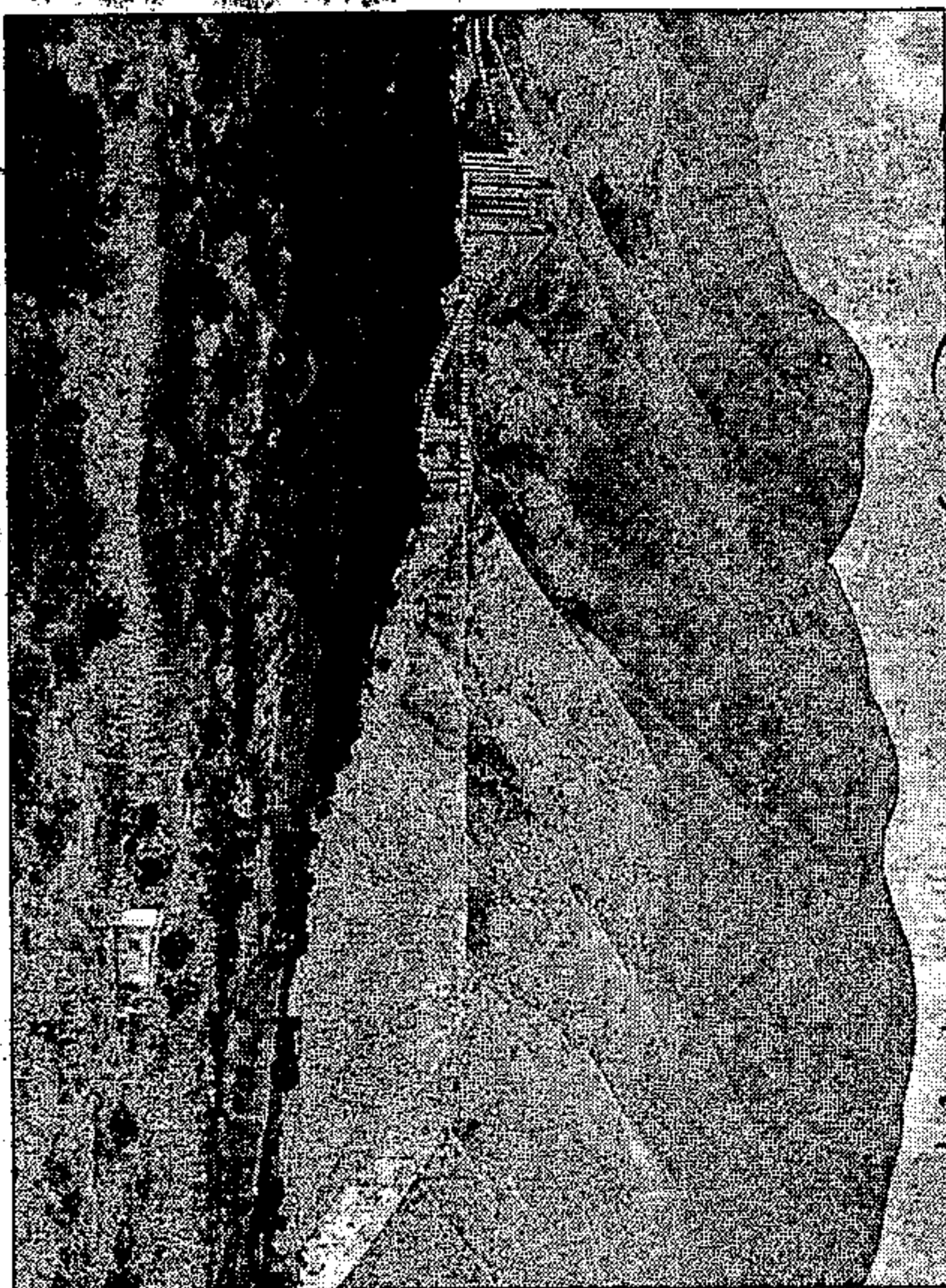
Eight villages surround the mine and dump. The mine compound even has a primary school on its premises. Most residents in the area appear to have respiratory problems. They snifle perpetually, blaming their illness on what they call "maboya" - the white fibres that fly off the dump.

Little harm

The mine is the major source of employment for the locals. So far, no scientific study has been undertaken to measure the effects of the chrysolite asbestos mined there - said to be the most "benign" of the three different types of asbestos.

ACA technical director F W Knox believes that the mine has done little harm to people's health.

"It is a known fact that chrysolite asbestos poses almost no danger to anyone. As a mine we assist both our former and active workers to get compensation from the government. But if they get their payments late, blame the government, not us. We occasionally spray water on the dump and we are proud to say that our level of asbestos fibres in the air is, according to our estimates, acceptable."



BROODING PRESENCE: The chrysolite asbestos mine of Msauli, near the Swazi border, with the dump to its side. Photograph: KENNETH MULLER

Knox says ACA is not responsible for the surrounding communities.

However, reality suggests that something is not right in this area.

At a garage near Msauli, I approach a group of men sitting in the shade and ask for directions. Most wheeze as they give them to me.

Jan Msithini (35) worked in the ACA mine for 15 years and was given R15000 as a severance package when the mine realised he had a "bad chest".

"The only job I've ever had has been at the mine. I dug, crushed and carried asbestos for as long as I can remember. When I joined the mine I was fit and healthy, but look at me now. Even my own age group call me *mkhulu* (old man) because I've aged so much." Zaccheus Sibiva is 36 but looks

about 55, and walks like a living ghost. He also worked at ACA for 15 years until he was retrenched last year. All he can manage to say is: "It's better I die than remain so tired every day."

Everyone agrees. Sibiva subsists on pap and sugar water because he spent most of his money on witchdoctors. Every time he attempts to say something, he spews out sputum and gives up trying to speak.

Two others describe themselves as "refugees" from the local hospital, where they are "serving a TB sentence". They are still employed at the mine. They say officials told them to wear protective clothing, including masks. But they also told them to work faster. "It's hot down there, and before long you can't breathe properly. So, to get

more oxygen, we all took off the masks and breathed the 'maboya' directly." None of them know about the dangers of asbestos. One of them says his daughter once told him about it but he dismissed her for being childish.

In Kamshayi, five minutes away from the mine, two elderly women are sitting outside a house, staring vacantly and panting. They have been living near the mine for more than 20 years. They say they are waiting to be buried because most of their friends are dead or bed-ridden. They say they can't walk far because they tire easily.

Professor Tony Davies of Wits University told a conference in Johannesburg this week that before the mining houses sponsor primary healthcare in Lesotho or other remote places, they should think about sponsoring care centres in the areas where they recruit mine workers in order to monitor and intervene early once lung diseases are identified.

Not as deadly

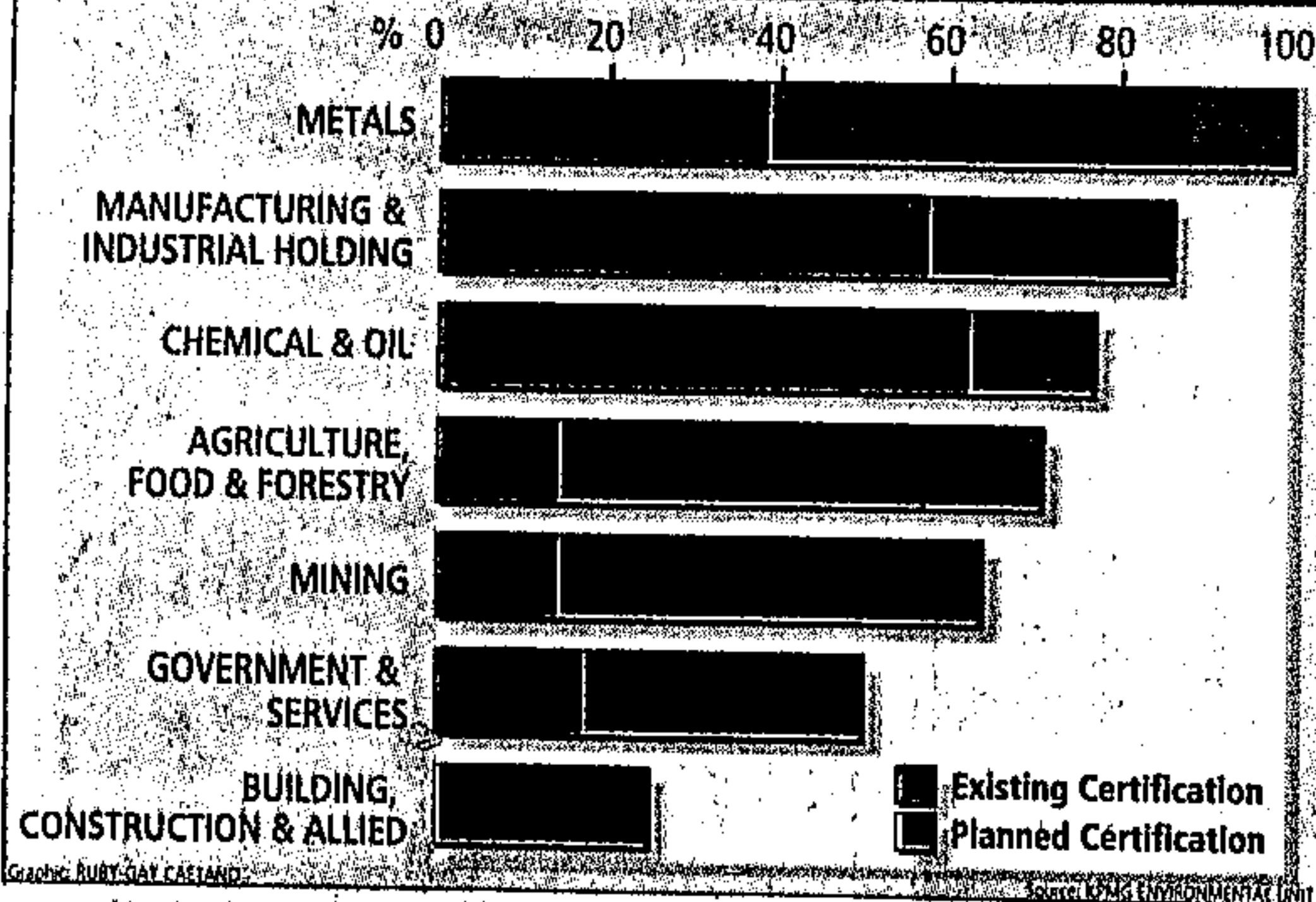
Some experts claim that chrysolite asbestos is not as deadly as brown and blue asbestos. But a study carried out by University of Cape Town experts in 1995 on behalf of the National Union of Mineworkers found a significant number of workers suffering from various degrees of lung disease.

Between 30 and 35% of the workers suffered mesothelioma, a complication related to exposure to asbestos.

NUM shop steward Willie Mkhwa-nazi says that when the atmospheric readings are dangerously high at Msauli, or when the mine area looks "hazy" from the fibres, water is sprinkled on the dump. He adds that despite the obvious problem with asbestos fibres, the mine has never been penalised for not keeping fibres below the acceptable level.

576
Khan 24/4/99

ISO 14001 - ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT STANDARD



There's profit in a clean back yard

ST(BT) 25/4/99 (56)

ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT
By JANETTE BENNETT

MANAGING risk is the major benefit of an environmental management system, according to companies which have established an EMS.

KPMG Environmental Unit's 1999 survey of EMSs in SA, released this week, shows that 95% of companies with an EMS cite compliance with laws and regulations as a benefit, 88% cite reducing unforeseen liabilities, 83% demonstrating due diligence, and 80% improving risk management.

The landscape of corporate responsibility towards the environment has been changed by new environmental legislation, and by a recent Supreme Court of Appeal victory by the Save the Vaal Environment lobby group, which halted Sasol's plans to strip-mine the Rietspruit wetlands.

"An EMS will become a key feature in companies' defence as issues of environmental liability begin to test the environmental rights of the Constitution in the courts," says Wayne Visser, KPMG Environmental Unit manager.

International trade is also sweeping in the new era of environmental responsibility and accountability, and 68% of companies said international trade acceptability was a benefit of an EMS.

"An EMS is becoming a passport for entry into international markets and a licence to trade," Visser says.

The survey, endorsed by the Institute of Directors in SA, shows public relations is seen as a major benefit — 88% of companies say an EMS improves company image. As many say it betters relationships with the public.

Reducing impact on the environment by improving performance was seen as a benefit by 88% of companies.

KPMG surveyed 83 companies which have established an EMS. Previous surveys have shown about half of SA's big companies have an EMS — lagging the rest of the world by about five years — and these tend to be companies in traditionally high-impact sectors such as mining and chemicals.

The sample included international companies working in SA, and the survey says the most distinctive feature of these companies is their higher tendency to implement integrated environ-

ment, health and safety management systems. Implementation of integrated systems by SA companies are likely to follow this global trend, Visser says.

The survey says the old issue-driven, "problem-fix" approach still characterises environmental management in SA, but there is a steady shift towards a more mature approach of integrated environmental management.

This is borne out by the low percentage of companies (42%) who consider environmental donations or sponsorships as part of the EMS. Visser sees this as a welcome move away from "green gloss" — superficial public relations — to environmental issues becoming part of core business.

Most companies (97%) use the ISO 14001 international standard as a basis for their EMSs, and of these 32% are already ISO 14001-certified, 41% are planning to certify and the remainder use the guidelines informally.

Companies say the biggest problem (68%) they have with EMSs is an increased demand on administration, which is "of concern", given that the ISO 14001 was meant to be less paper-intensive. Other problems are high costs (41%), lack of support from authorities (37%) and lack of commitment by top management (17%), anticipated poor return on investment (31%), lack of resources (31%), and conflict of interest within organisations (20%).

The survey says environmental management is still poorly linked with financial management. This especially reflects the lack of financially quantified benefits and costs and the low incidence of environmental accounting systems in operation, it says.

Evidence that this is changing can be found in the new international accounting standard, the IAPS 1010, on consideration of environmental matters in financial auditing, which is expected to be adopted soon in SA, Visser says.

He adds: "An EMS is the new acid test of sound corporate governance and commitment to environmentally sustainable development."

I am not misleading the public - Louis

Municipality will determine how many houses built at Dassenberg, says minister

PRLT 29/4/99 (56)

Western Cape Planning Minister Michael Louis has given an assurance that the South Peninsula Municipality (SPM) will determine how many houses can be developed on Dassenberg farm at Noordhoek.

Mr Louis also said he had not disregarded the advice of his Planning Advisory Board (PAB), but had put more restrictions on his approval than had been recommended by the board.

He stressed he had not approved the developer's proposed layout for 176 houses, as the application had been approved subject to numerous amendments - including SPM approval of a detailed site development plan of up to 170 units.

Nor had he attempted to mislead anyone in his comments about the issue in a letter to the media.

"It was a sensitive application... I do respect the PAB's recommendations, and in this instance I knew I went even more stringent than they advised me to be," Mr Louis said.

"I didn't reject anything that the PAB said (and) I haven't been misleading the public."

His comments came in a comprehensive interview with the Cape Argus about his controversial decision to uphold an appeal for rezoning of the Dassenberg property for single residential development.

The interview was attended by senior provincial planning officials. The rezoning application for Dassenberg was rejected by the SPM - a decision supported by the Cape Metropolitan Council, conservation groups and SA National Parks (formerly the National Parks Board).

Asked to explain why he had upheld the developer's appeal in the face of decisions taken by democratically elected local institutions, Mr Louis said he had been under a legal obligation to consider the matter.



JOHAN YELD
ENVIRONMENT WRITER

"I can't tell you how many times I've gone through this Dassenberg document... I looked at it seriously. I don't take any application lightly. At the end of the day I need to look at the owner's legal rights as well."

"I think in this country we need leaders that make decisions that are sometimes not popular decisions because of the legalities."

"So with respect, looking at this application, the one thing I can say is that I didn't make a political decision. And I think that needs some form of credibility."

"I took a decision because I looked at the rights of the individual. I take my job seriously... I've got certain information in front of me and I have to make a juristic decision..."

"I know the nobility of the way I looked at this application - the way I considered the facts."

Mr Louis said he had been unhappy about approving a maximum number of 170 units.

"I wanted to put 70 or 80 on that site, but I couldn't justify it legally. I can't sit here and thumbsuck a figure of how many houses, because I'm not an entrepreneur."

"Because I'm legal custodian of the land of the country, I had to be able to legally motivate it (his decision)."

"And my department couldn't give me some form of substance to get it to justify a lower mark, otherwise I would have done it honestly." His department had recommended 170 units, and had assured him

that the SPM would determine the actual number of houses to be built and would have to approve a detailed site development plan.

"And I was satisfied with that," said Mr Louis. "There are certain rights on that land - I need to look at the legalities because I don't want to fight another court battle with them (the developers)."

"The council (South Peninsula Municipality) will determine, at the end of the day, what has been approved."

According to legal advice obtained by some environmental organisations, Mr Louis's approval of a maximum number of 170 units means the developer is now entitled to build that number, and that only the size and specific locality of each need to be negotiated with the local authority.

But Mr Louis said this did not accord with advice from his department.

"And I want to say this categorically: if the advice that I've got from my department is wrong, I'm prepared to revise that decision, because I believe that 170 units is a lot of units for that site."

So why then set a maximum number of units at all?

"Because there is a complication - because the Planning Advisory Board recommended a higher density," said Mr Louis.

The Dassenberg property is 78,7ha, of which 31ha lies within the Cape Peninsula Protected Natural Environment and which, in terms of Mr Louis's approval, must be ceded to the Cape Peninsula National Park.

Mr Louis said the Planning Advisory Board had recommended that an area of about 10ha be developed, including low-, medium- and high-density housing.

His department had confirmed to



Controversial decision: Western Cape Planning Minister Michael Louis

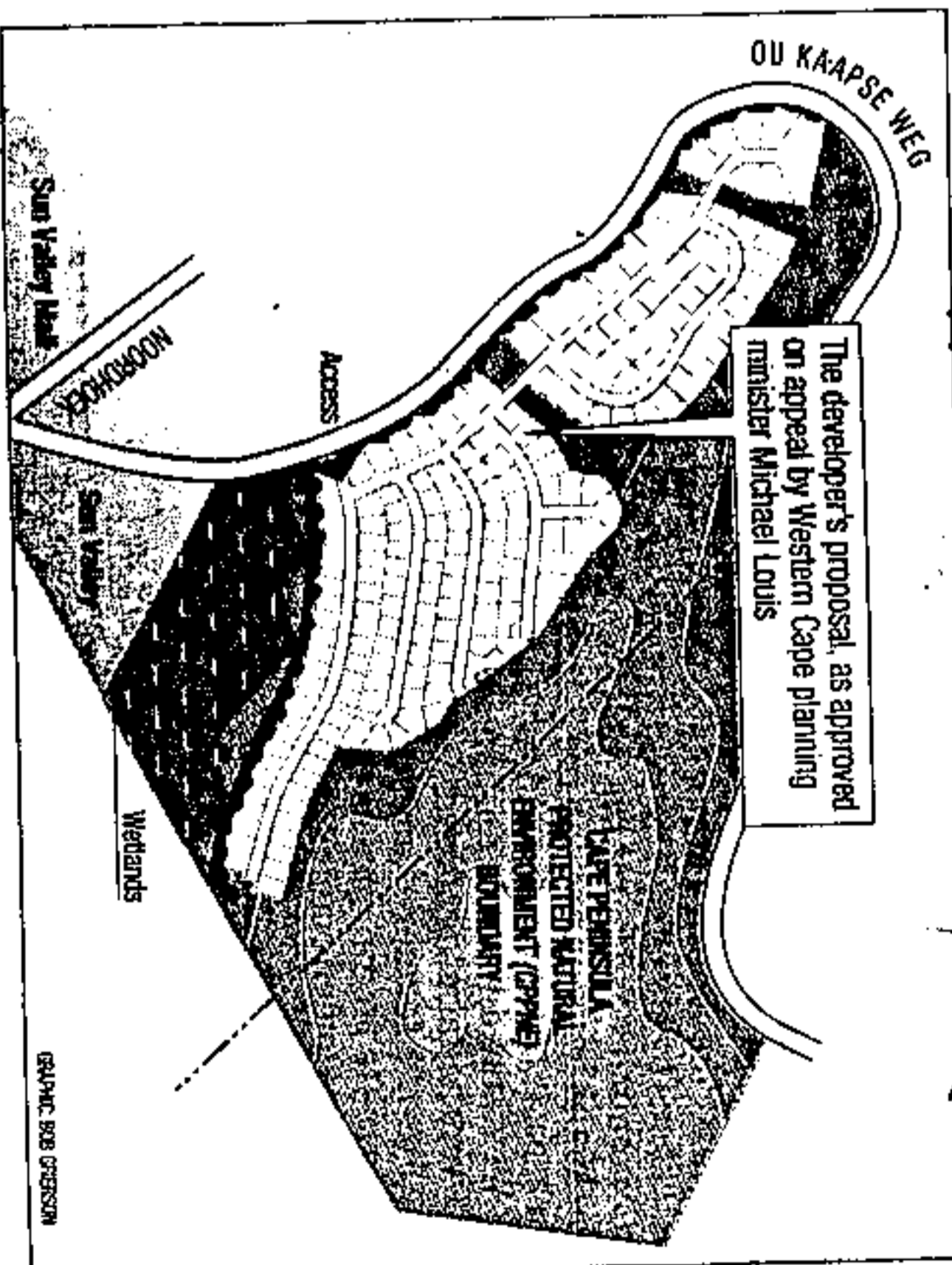
him that, in terms of the board's recommendations relating to high-density development, this could result in up to 280 housing units on the site.

"I said I wouldn't like there to be so many units on that site. I can't keep it open-ended, let's restrict it."

Because of the requirements to be approved by South Peninsula Municipality - such as drainage - the developers would not be able to get near the 170 unit maximum mark, Mr Louis predicted.

Asked if the SPM's decision would stand if decided that only five or 10 houses could be built, Mr Louis said: "That's right. The developer has the right of appeal (to the minister) but I can say that decision will stand..."

"Regarding Dassenberg, if there's any way it's been misinterpreted or that there's definitely a right to 170 units, I can give you the assurance I



The developer's proposal, as approved on appeal by Western Cape planning minister Michael Louis

Not approved: planning Minister Michael Louis says this is the developer's proposal for Dassenberg and is not what he had approved

will definitely ask for an amendment of my conditions, because it's not my intention."

Mr Louis's officials pointed out that the minister could not have approved the Planning Advisory Board's recommendation for some high-density development, as this was not what the developer had applied for.

In a "discussion document" tabled during the meeting, Mr Louis said most of the restrictions imposed, and further processes prescribed, for Dassenberg related to the environment.

"A neglected wetlands area, areas subject to illegal occupation, infected (sic) with alien vegetation (floodkrans and blue gum), dumping of rubble, etc, will be rehabilitated and in future managed according to a sound environmental plan as a result of the approval."

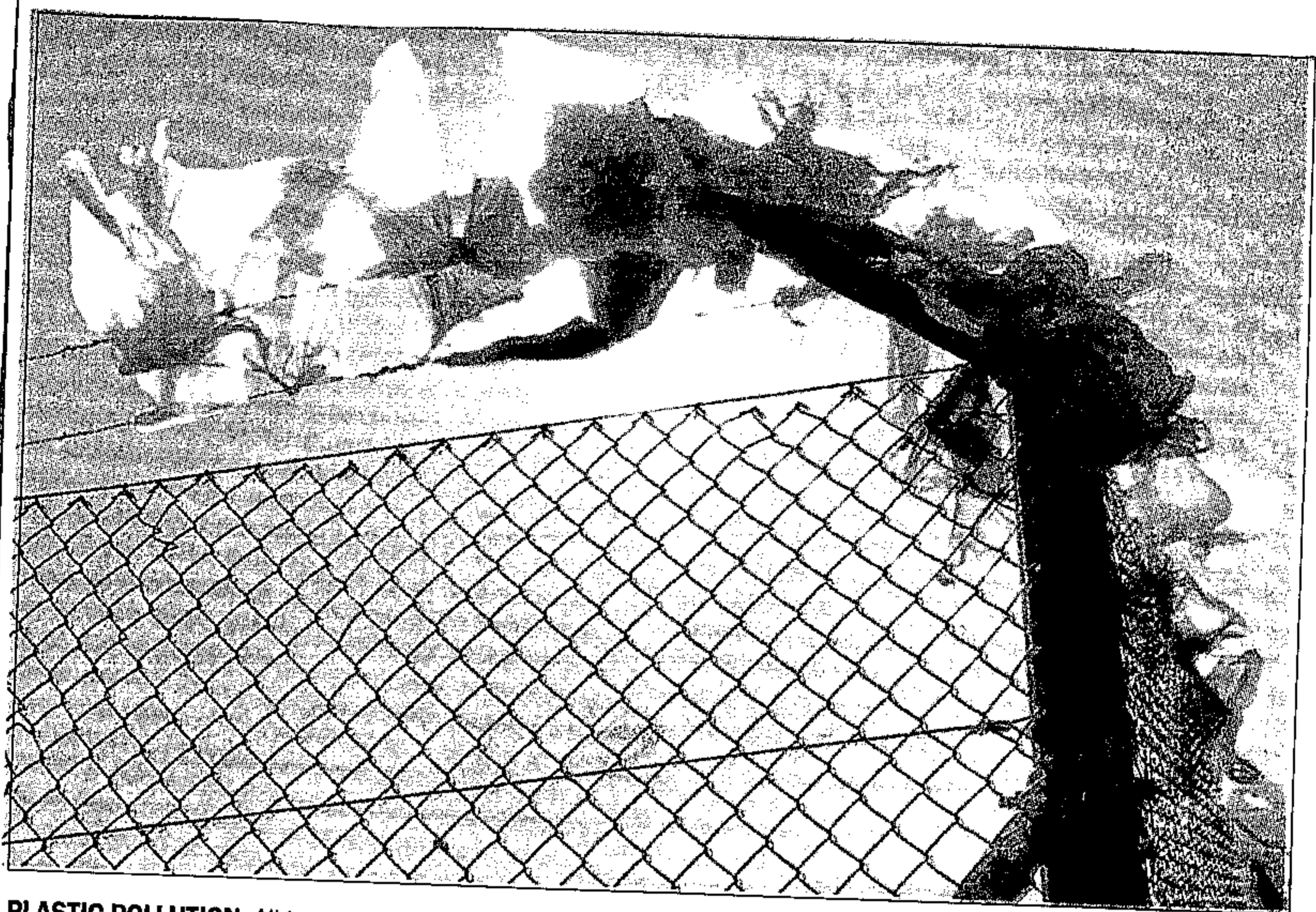
"A scarce leopard toad in the wetlands area will be protected (where it is currently unprotected)."

"The upper slopes of the hillside have now been secured against the erection of any further structures and an area of 31ha will be transferred free of charge to the National Parks Board..."

"The environment and the broader area can only gain by the approval of the application."

Mr Louis also said he and his department dealt with urbanisation, developmental and environmental matters on a daily basis, "where in most cases development and conservation are opposite poles and most likely to be controversial."

"I am proud of the way we have performed in taking due cognisance of environmental matters in our considerations - as is also evident in this instance."



PLASTIC POLLUTION: All too common a sight throughout South Africa, but neither the consumers nor the major retailers appear to be interested in reducing the plastic menace.

PICTURE: DENZIL MAREGELE

Scheme to recycle carrier bags given cold shoulder

CT 29/4/99

(56)

MELANIE GOSLING
ENVIRONMENT WRITER

SOUTH AFRICA produces three billion plastic bags a year, and a vast number of them end up littering the streets, clinging to fences and dotting the countryside.

In the clean-up before the 1995 World Cup, Cape Town City Council spent R6 700 a kilometre clearing the verges along the roads, and collected up to 3 000 carrier bags a kilometre.

Now two young entrepreneurs, Jason Nolan and Theo Cloete, have come up with an idea of how to persuade people to recycle their plastic shopping bags — which account for 60% of all the plastic bags made — but say they can't get their project off the ground because the major supermarkets and retailers are not interested.

Said Nolan: "We've come up with an idea that gives shoppers an incentive to recycle their bags, by hooking the recycling in with a chance to win a R1 million prize in a monthly national competition.

"The plastics industry is supportive, the environmental groups are too, and our market survey showed that 95% of shoppers would bring their bags back if they stood a chance of winning R1m.

"The only hassle we're having is getting the big retailers and the supermarkets to adopt the idea. They're just not interested."

Their plan is to print 20m specialised competition bags a month, to be sold in major stores and supermarkets for shoppers to use instead of the free bags.

The competition bags will carry the retailer's advertisement on one side and a lottery number and environmental information on the other. One of the numbers will be detachable, which the consumer tears off and keeps.

When the shoppers return to the supermarket or chain store, they will bring their old bags with them and dump them in a recycling bin.

These bins would be taken to a central point and every month there

would be a draw from these bins, and the shopper whose number comes up on one of the bags wins a million.

The rest of the plastic bags would be shredded or granulated and the used in various products made from recycled plastic.

Nolan and Cloete devised the scheme as a business venture, but say they would donate 30% of the money made from the bags to the World Wide Fund for Nature, and another 10% to research and development for uses of recycled plastic.

Douw Steyn, environment officer for the Plastic Federation of South Africa, said yesterday he had discussed the plan with Nolan and Cloete, and supported it in principle.

"Obviously no one is recycling plastic bags for the benefit of the environment, they're doing it for financial benefit, but I think it is a very good idea.

"But if they can't get the backing of the retailers, they can't make it work," Steyn said.

Peninsula park a model for rest of world — banker

CT 30/4/99

(56)

STAFF WRITER

THE Cape Peninsula National Park — one of only a few in the world within a metropolis of some four million people — could serve as a model for other urban nature areas.

Speaking at a conference in the city last night, Francois Falloux of the World Bank said the park had proved to be a pioneering project. The only other similar example is the Tiguca Park in Rio de Janeiro.

The Cape Peninsula park, established last year, is partly funded by a R73,8 million grant from the Global Environmental Facility channelled through the World Bank — the single biggest donation to conservation in South Africa.

The grant has provided funds for a three-part Peninsula biodiversity project. Half the funds were allocated to SA National Parks to establish the Cape Peninsula National Park. Another R30 million was deposited into the Table Mountain Fund, started by the

World Wide Fund for Nature after local donors raised R10 million.

The remainder of the grant, R6 million, was allocated to the Cape Action Plan for the Environment for the preparation of a comprehensive conservation strategy for the Cape floral kingdom. The Cape Peninsula National Park plans to apply for World Heritage Site status along with seven other protected areas in the Western Cape.

Encouraged by progress made at the Cape Peninsula park, the Global Environmental Facility is expanding its support to new projects such as the Greater Addo Park in the Eastern Cape, the Greater St Lucia Wetland Park in KwaZulu-Natal and the planned Namaqua National Park in the Northern Cape. It also funds research into conservation farming and substitutes for coal-firing methods.

According to Cape Peninsula park manager David Daitz, the park has the highest number of

threatened species of any equivalent-sized area in the world.

"Our greatest challenge has been to manage a national park without visible boundaries in the midst of a growing metropolis. Our other major challenge is to become self-sufficient by the year 2010, mainly through tourism-generated revenue," Daitz said.

During his tour, Falloux inspected the park's successful alien vegetation clearing programme, which has resulted in almost 6 000 hectares of invasive species being cleared and the establishment of 20 small contractors.

"Falloux has been instrumental in ensuring that the Table Mountain Fund reaches beyond traditional conservation organisations by encouraging partnerships between community organisations and the formal environmental sector. This has encouraged citizens to become active custodians of their environment," said Brett Myrdal of the Table Mountain Fund.

THESEN'S DEVELOPER HITS OUT

'SA Parks can't do the job'

DEVELOPERS of the Thesen's Island marina have deflected criticism from the Department of Environment Affairs, claiming that their call for public comment was carried out as stipulated. Environment Writer **MELANIE GOSLING** reports.

THESSEN'S ISLAND developer Chris Mulder has challenged the Department of Environment Affairs to "prove" that their environment impact assessment (EIA) was flawed.

This comes after the department said the developers would have to advertise for public comment to give people a chance to raise issues they felt had not been addressed.

The department said earlier this month that the public participation process, an integral part of EIA, had been "flawed".

At a press briefing yesterday Mulder said: "The process was impeccable. They must prove it's flawed."

Asked when he intended re-advertising for public comment, Mulder replied: "I don't know if we have to. We've not heard a thing from the Department of Environment Affairs."

He said their development application had been "sitting with the department since July last year" and had not been attended to.

But Peter Ngoasheng of the environmental impact regulations section at the Department of Environment Affairs yesterday said the Environment Conservation Act stipulated that anyone proposing to undertake the construction of roads, marinas or any work below the highwater mark had to conduct an EIA for each activity.

Part of an EIA entailed calling for public comment. Ngoasheng said the developers had been notified of this in a letter on April 12.

"They came back and said they needed us to specify exactly what activities needed to be re-advertised, because they can't re-advertise the whole development, Concept 25. We will do that next week," he said.

Mulder also hit out at the SA National Parks, which controls the Knysna Lagoon.

He said the development would improve conservation by developing a nature reserve around the island. National Parks already manages the marshes as part of the proclaimed conservation area, but Mulder commented: "They're not managing to do the job. They can't cover the ground. They have a funding problem."

SA National Parks was not available for comment.

Some scientists and the residents believe the development could have a serious impact on the Knysna estuary, which has the highest diversity of flora and fauna in the country.

The developers said yesterday that the island was already polluted from the sawmill on the island, which is due to close.

The developers plan to establish an environmental centre, build a bird hide, restore historic buildings, conserve the salt marshes and incorporate design features to encourage breeding of fish and birds.

Professor Richard Fuggle of UCT's department of environmental science said: "One of the things posing a severe impact is siltation. Also, other developments on Knysna's waterfront built on unconsolidated sediments have given problems. My understanding is that none of these issues has been put to bed."

P.T.O For picture

THESEN'S DEVELOPER HITS OUT

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CONTROVERSIAL: Developers of Thesen's Island say their controversial R800m canal estate will conserve the island's sensitive salt marshes which SA National Parks is failing to protect.

Environmental oestrogens are being blamed for a global slump in sperm counts. Shaun Smillie asks what they are and why they are so dangerous.

The plastic time bomb

(56) ARG 1/5/99

Mankind is in trouble: global sperm counts are falling and an increase in reproductive deformities has been noted. Now some experts are arguing that plastics may be a part of the problem.

Scientists believe that several factors are behind male infertility. Stress and smoking are two of the causes, but the main culprit may be environmental oestrogens. Often referred to as pseudo oestrogens, they have made their way into everything we eat, drink and sometimes even breathe.

Pseudo oestrogens are found in hundreds of chemicals used in plastics, insecticides, detergents and even toiletries. Cattle are fed the artificial hormones so they reach maturity faster.

Together these environmental oestrogens are known as endocrine disruptors.

Some studies suggest that global sperm counts are falling by 3% a year and other studies show an increase in testicular cancer and sperm deformities.

In South Africa it is difficult to assess the state of male fertility. However, research done by the Tygerberg fertility unit in Cape Town suggests a possible increase in abnormal sperm morphology, which means that more sperm cells are turning up dead or deformed.

The andrology department at the University of Pretoria has found that sperm morphology has decreased significantly from 1994 to 1998.

But, according to scientific literature, it is not only men who are under threat.

In women a link has been established between pseudo oestrogens and breast cancer as well as endometriosis, a disease associated with infertility.

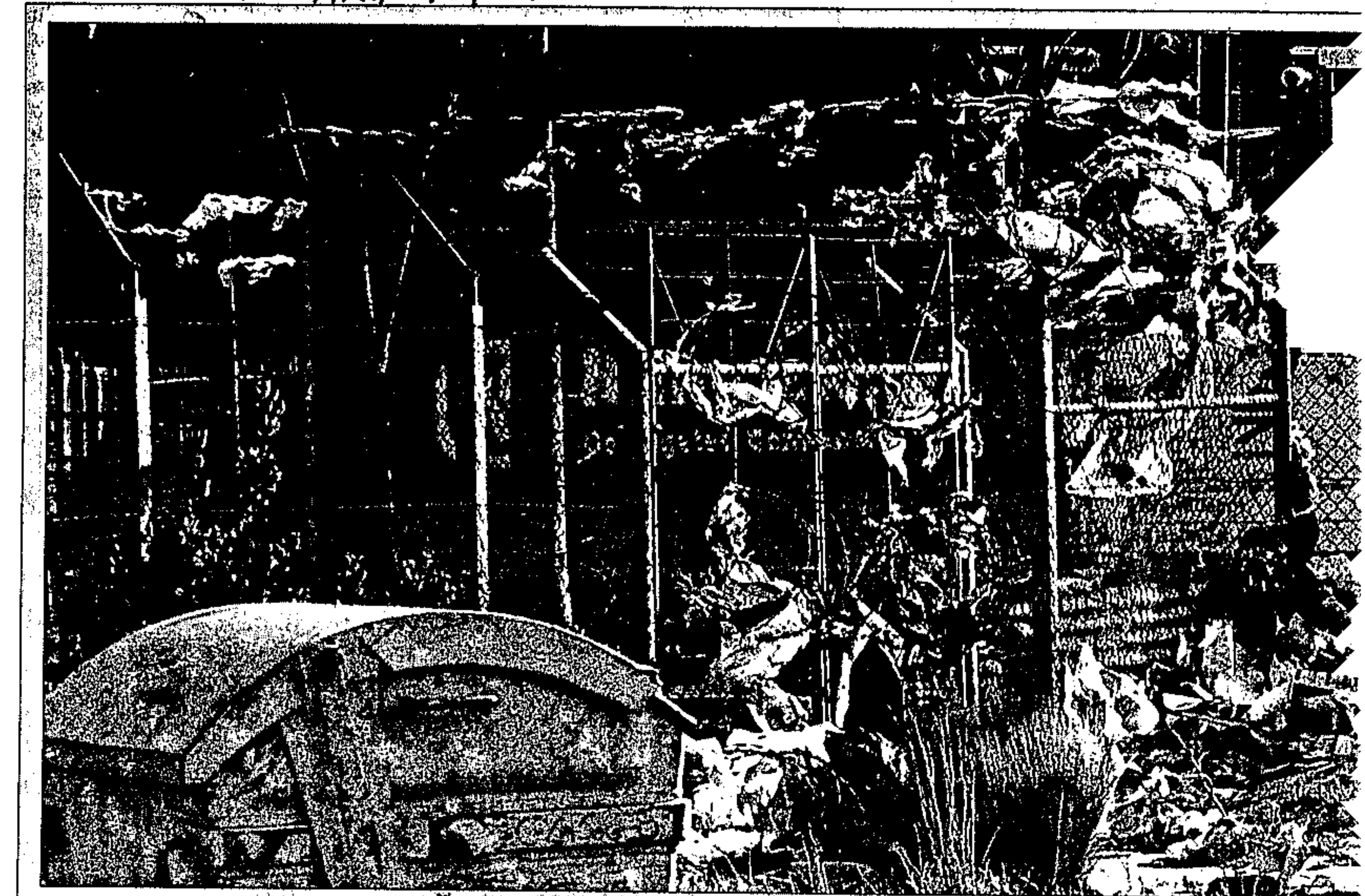
"Pseudo oestrogens mimic the female hormone oestrogen, which influences the development and maintenance of female sex characteristics," says Dr Tiaan de Jager, deputy director of medical sciences at Pretoria University's urology department.

Unlike natural oestrogens, most artificial oestrogens have a long half-life and slowly accumulate in the body. "As yet there isn't a direct causal relationship between human reproductive health disorders and oestrogen exposure," says Dr De Jager, "but there is direct evidence on the harmful effects of these artificial hormones from animal studies."

Laboratory research has revealed that male rats exposed to environmental endocrine disruptor chemicals exhibit increased infertility rates, which result from low sperm counts and undersized testes and other reproductive organs.

"Studies in the United Kingdom have also revealed that trout living in waters with high nonylphenol concentrations, a pseudo oestrogen used in the plastic industry, have actually changed sex, from male to female," says Dr De Jager.

What is alarming is that screening



TOO MUCH TRASH: the plastic bag may be hated by environmentalists, but its versatility has made it an indispensable part of modern day life

New 'national flower' is a thorn in the side

Sarcastically referred to as our national flower, often seen flapping from barbed wire fences or choking up river systems, this "flower" has become the bane of environmental groups who would like to see it forced to extinction.

The plastic bag may be hated by some but its versatility has made it a virtually indispensable part of modern-day life. In South Africa the problem of how to tackle plastic pollution remains.

There is no doubt about it, plastics are harmful to the environment: every year livestock die after eating plastic.

It was estimated that on every square kilometre of ocean there were 2 000 pieces of floating plastic, which had led to the death of cer-

tain marine life like turtles, which ingested it, said Muna Lakhani, the chairperson of the KwaZulu Natal Waste Minimisation, Re-use and Recycling Forum and a member of Earthlife Africa.

Phthalates and other pseudo-oestrogens found in plastics have been linked to cancer and reproductive abnormalities.

A possible solution is recycling or in the case of retail outlets, offering alternatives to plastic bags.

"The problem that you have with recycling plastics is that you need quite a few different bins, as there are so many different types of plastics," says Mr Lakhani.

According to Bill Naude, executive director of the Plastic Federation of South Africa, when it comes

to recycling South Africa is among the top in the world.

"South Africa recycles about 13% of the plastics it utilises each year," he says, "which in comparison to the likes of Germany is a lot."

As for finding an alternative to the plastic bag, again it is not that easy.

Overseas, paper bags have in cases been introduced but large shopping stores say that paper bags would be far more expensive.

With the cost involved, Roelf Venter, managing director of the Spar group, believes it would be difficult to introduce such a concept.

Another alternative could be in finding a totally biodegradable plastic.

"Certain plastics take hundreds

of years to break down in the environment and those that are designed to break down only break down into smaller pieces," explains Mr Lakhani.

In Germany though, manufacturers have succeeded in creating a truly disposable plastic bottle.

But where both environmentalists and plastic manufacturers are beginning to see eye to eye is in the use of a re-usable plastic bag.

By creating a bag that is thicker, a shopper would be able to re-use the bag for further shopping trips.

Pick 'n Pay is investigating the use of stronger bags and they are under trial at some of their regional stores.

But there is a catch. To make the re-usable bag viable consumers will

tests on water in the Pretoria area tested positively for nonylphenol in high enough doses to cause abnormal sexual differentiation in trout.

While endocrine disruptor chemicals are finding their way into our water and food supply through a variety of different sources, a major concern is plastic. But not everyone

agrees that pseudo oestrogens in plastics are harmful to humans.

"Pseudo oestrogens like dioxins can only be released if plastic is burnt, even then it is at low levels," says Bill Naude, executive director of the Plastics Federation of South Africa.

"Even with something like cling-

wrap. For it to release pseudo oestrogens it would have to be heated, then cooled, then reheated and even then the levels released would be immeasurable."

Dr De Jager disagrees. "Experiments confirmed that nonylphenol used as antioxidant in the plastics industry is oestrogenic. Evidence is

mounting that endocrine disruptors can do damage at extraordinarily low doses and that they may already be compromising not only the reproductive health but also the general health of the next generation."

The Pretoria group has conducted tests on nine brands of cling-wrap, ranging from industrial to off-the-

Praise for Peninsula Park from World Bank

(96) ARG 3/5/99
ENVIRONMENT WRITER

The managers of the new Cape Peninsula National Park have made an "excellent" start, says the World Bank.

It says the new conservation approaches being developed in the park can become models for use in protected areas elsewhere in the world.

This is the assessment of Francois Falloux of the World Bank, who was in Cape Town to assess progress in the park.

The development of the park, officially proclaimed last year, is being funded in part by a \$12,3-million (R74,4-million) grant from the Global Environmental Facility (GEF), which is administered by the World Bank. This is the single largest amount donated for conservation in South Africa.

The Global Environmental Facility has also donated \$5-million (R30,25-million) to the Table Mountain Fund, which is used to support non-government conservation projects in the Peninsula and for land acquisition for the new park.

Another \$1-million (R6,05-million) of Global Environmental Facility money has been donated to the Cape Action Plan for the Environment to develop a conservation strategy for the Cape floral kingdom.

Mr Falloux said he had been particularly impressed with the park's programme to remove invasive alien vegetation.

The programme has involved the clearing of 1 810 hectares, vital follow-up on some 4 200ha which were previously cleared, and the establishment of 20 small contractors employing a total of about 300 people in clearing operations.

Noting that programme's target of creating 500 new jobs over six years, Mr Falloux said: "We believe the target will be achieved, and maybe go beyond 500 jobs.

"And there's also the important social aspect - it's a tremendous opportunity for people from disadvantaged communities.

Mr Falloux said the grant to the Peninsula park - initiated in 1996 at a World Conservation Union meeting in Montreal - was the Global Environmental Facility's first intervention in South Africa.

In turn, it had stimulated involvement in other projects in South Africa and neighbouring countries. These were:

- A project to develop the Greater Addo National Park, which could involve a grant of \$12-million (R72,6-million).

- Development of the Greater St Lucia Wetland Park, which could involve a grant in the region of \$12-million (R72,6-million).

- A "trans-frontier" park in the Maluti mountains between KwaZulu Natal and Lesotho, probably involving an even bigger amount.

- A donation of about \$1-million (R6,05-million) to help establish the new national park in Namaqualand.

- A similar amount to support the newly proclaimed Kgalagadi Trans-frontier Park in the Kalahari between South Africa and Botswana - the first official "peace park" on the African continent.

Bill for fires burns hole in budget for conservation

Province asked for more funds

ARU 3/5/99 (56)

**JOHN
YELD**



ENVIRONMENT WRITER

DEVASTATING mountain fires have played havoc with Cape Nature Conservation's already inadequate budget, forcing it to appeal to the Western Cape government for urgent extra funds.

In April alone - the first month of the new budget year - Cape Nature Conservation spent R4.5-million on firefighting. This was R1-million more than the cost of similar operations during the whole previous year, and more than 13% of Cape Nature Conservation's entire annual budget this year - and worried officials point out that their main fire season still lies ahead in the summer months.

Cape Nature Conservation arranged a reconnaissance flight over the huge burnt-out areas for a

Apart from 27 small fires in the South-West region, mainly the Hot-tentots Holland, Kogelberg and Lintenberg areas, three big fires between February and April had burnt some 130 000ha.

From February 13 to 20, an estimated 15 000ha were burnt in the Platberg area near Franschoek after a fire started on a Safcol plantation.

Motte plantation near Franschoek. They eventually merged into one massive conflagration, burning 45 000ha, which Cape Nature Conservation fought until April 7.

And in the West Coast region there were 23 small fires between October and April. Staff had also spent more than a month fighting three major fires in the Cederberg and Groot Winterhoek wilderness areas, and in the Matroosberg.

Mr Bekker said fire patterns had been significantly influenced by the exceptional climatic conditions since last October. "The particularly dry veld, the excessive heat and old (mature) fynbos veld created ideal conditions for fires." Although the ecological consequences of the fires could only be



Conservation

ART 3/5/99 (56)
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Cape Nature Conservation arranged a reconnaissance flight over the huge burnt-out areas for a high-profile delegation of provincial decision-makers, including premier Gerald Morkel, environment minister Kobus Meiring, director-general Niel Barnard and Jocelyne Kane-Berman, head of the department of the environment, culture and sport.

They were briefed by deputy director Fanie Bekker and his senior managers, who said it was "highly unusual" to have such large, connected areas burnt at the same time.

Mr Bekker told the Cape Argus afterwards that, from October last year to March, Cape Nature Conservation had been involved in fighting 50 fires. Fires in the Overberg and Southern Cape regions had been relatively small, but those on the West Coast, particularly the south-west regions, had been particularly severe.

JOHN
VELD



ENVIRONMENT WRITER

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'The exceptional amounts spent on firefighting during April could not have been predicted'

The fire that started on February 26 on the Stettysberg near the Brandvlei prison spread over the mountains in two different directions, to Du Toit's Kloof and to Viliersdorp. About 70 000ha of mountain fynbos were burnt over three weeks before the flames were doused on March 18.

On March 24, two fires started almost simultaneously at separate places in the Hottentots Holland nature reserve, at Kylemore in the Banhoek valley, and in the La

Motte plantation near Franschoek. They eventually merged into one massive conflagration, burning 45 000ha, which Cape Nature Conservation fought until April 7.

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Although the ecological consequences of the fires could only be determined by thorough scientific research, it could already be said with certainty that the effect of the fires on immature fynbos veld - younger than eight years - would be particularly severe, he said.

Although fire was a natural element in the fynbos ecosystem, it was "absolutely exceptional" to have such huge areas burnt.

"Few of the important plant species will be able to regenerate, and this could result in a reduction in biodiversity."

Also, the vast area that had burnt had created a temporary "ecological desert".

A monoculture of plants of the same age will regenerate with little opportunity for natural dynamic and genetic interaction.

"Many animals are adversely affected by the absence of suitable habitat and may have to move out into agricultural areas in an



Slip-sliding away: part of the fire-devastated mountainside above Fish Hoek. Heavy rain caused major mudslides into the valley below and Cape Nature Conservation has warned of similar problems in the Boland after major fires there in recent months

JOHN VELD

attempt to survive. And at the same time, there could be an imbalance between predator animals and their prey, which causes an increase in the number of incidents involving problem animals."

The exceptionally dry conditions, the high day temperatures and the high fuel load (the concentration of plant material) in the fynbos had resulted in the fires burning at exceptionally high temperatures, Mr Bekker said. "This negatively affects the soil structure, the regenerative potential of some plant species and also the natural ability of the soil to retain water."

"Soil permeability is severely compromised by the huge, continuously burnt areas, and heavy winter rains can lead to mudslides, ero-

sion and siltification."

Because it was mainly mountain catchment areas feeding the Wemmershoek, Theewaterskloof and Steenbras dams which had burnt, the availability of suitable water for the Cape metropolitan area could be affected, he said.

The increased firefighting costs come at the same time as Cape Nature Conservation is wrestling with a greatly-reduced budget.

But the exceptional amounts spent on firefighting during April - R4,513-million - could not have been predicted, Mr Bekker said.

In 1996/7, firefighting costs were about 1,9% of Cape Nature Conservation's overall budget. By 1998/99, these costs had jumped to 9,2%, and they were already running at

13,25% of the present budget. Also, because the Boland fires had swept through some of the most popular hiking routes, Cape Nature Conservation would lose tourism income, he added.

"Apart from the substantial financial loss because three nature reserves - Lintierberg, Hottentots Holland and Jonkershoek - were closed over the Easter weekend, it will take months for the veld to be rehabilitated to the point where it will be attractive to hikers again."

"We've therefore been forced to ask the province for additional funds. Thanks to the reconnaissance flight, Mr Morkel, Mr Meiring and Dr Barnard have been fully briefed on the situation."

Plans to prosecute at least 150 owners of "illegal" cottages on the Transkei

Wild Coast are sparking a lively and intense debate about the future development of South Africa's most scenic and least developed coastline.

The development of cottages along the Wild Coast - often on prime beachfront sites - is being investigated currently by the Health Commission's Special Investigating Unit with a view to prosecuting people who have acquired development rights illegally in

'Brandy for land' dealers could lose homes

5/5/99 (7b) *SM*

the Sikombe/Nyameni area south of the Wild Coast Sun.

This follows a much-publicised court case five years ago during which claims were made that several chiefs had granted holiday cottage rights to white developers after being bribed for as little as R200 and a case of brandy.

While the "brandy for land" cottage issue was focused in the past mainly on environmental concerns, recent developments

have also highlighted apparent political divisions at community level amongst traditionalists and ANC structures.

It emerged this week that a number of "illegal" owners from KwaZulu-Natal and elsewhere have begun lobbying traditional and community leaders along several parts of the coastline in an effort to halt prosecutions by the unit. Senior Pondo traditional leader King Mpondombini Sigcau has

called a meeting next month to discuss the cottages issue after being lobbied by an Eston farmer who built a R70 000 cottage in the Mbotyi area.

Stanley Godlwana, a member of the Qaukeni regional authority and advisor to the Pondo monarch, said King Sigcau wanted to invite interested groups to a meeting on May 28 at Qaukeni to discuss concerns about the cottage issue.

"It seems that a few whites

who claim to be environmentalists are trying to chase away other whites from the Wild Coast. We want to know what all the facts are and to discuss this issue rather than going to court.

"It seems that some of the whites who are building cottages can help the Pondo people and we don't want them to be chased away."

A number of "illegal" owners who have telephoned *The*

Mercury over the past two weeks - but who declined to reveal their names - complained that environmental arguments were a smokescreen by "legal" cottage owners to ensure exclusive use of the coast.

They claimed they had been allocated holiday cottage plots legally and to have receipts from magistrates and tribal authorities to prove this. They also pointed out they provided jobs to people in one of South

Africa's poorest rural areas.

However, Philip Ndovela, an ANC councillor in the Sikombe/Nyameni area questioned whether members of the local community derived meaningful economic benefits by being employed as nannies, fishing gillies or security guards by "illegal" cottage owners.

He acknowledged that unemployment was high and that some members of the local community welcomed any

chance to work, however humble, for new cottage owners.

However, he said the community in his area had initiated several of their own cultural and ecotourism projects which were now jeopardised by both uncontrolled and insensitive development.

"Some of these owners rent out their holiday cottages to outsiders - so a lot of the money goes to outsiders rather than to the local community."

"We have also had several complaints about the behaviour of the new cottage owners. They drive over community land as if they own it," he said.

Greens gain legal clout over miners (nb)

ARG 6/5/99

TONY CARNIE
ARGUS CORRESPONDENT

Durban – Environmentalists have welcomed a landmark judgment which sets out the Supreme Court of Appeal's most powerful legal pronouncement so far on protecting the environment.

The "David and Goliath" case ended in victory for a small group of property owners and environmentally-conscious citizens who were opposed to open-cast coal mining next to the Vaal River by the Sasol Mining group which had been approved by the Gauteng director of mineral development.

The Appeal Court declared that it was time to adopt a new respect for the environment and to change the traditional legal and administrative approach towards environmental concerns.

The court acknowledged the "enormous damage mining can do to the environment and ecological systems" and supported the principle that development for the present generation should not compromise the ability of future generations to

meet their own needs.

Delivered by Appeal Court judge Mr Justice P Olivier, with the concurrence of Chief Justice Ismail Mahomed and three other judges of appeal, the court's ruling was that South Africa's Constitution included environmental rights as "fundamental, justifiable human rights" which required that the environment be accorded "appropriate recognition and respect" by state administrators.

"Together with the change in ideological climate must also come a change in our legal and administrative approach to environmental concerns," Judge Olivier declared.

The high court had ruled in favour of the Save the Vaal Environment group (Save), but Sasol and the Gauteng regional director of mineral development appealed on the basis that the concerns of Save members were "premature".

The court rejected this claim, finding that granting a mineral licence could lead to grave results.

The decision has been heralded as a major victory for the environment by environmental attorney Malcolm Gray.

Police clash with forest-dwellers protesting at relocation from reserve

OWN CORRESPONDENT

Durban - Police and military reinforcements from Ulundi and Richards Bay have been sent to St Lucia after police came under fire yesterday from militants armed with AK-47s and handguns during ongoing violence which erupted in the Dukuduku Forest this week.

Last night, Kwazulu Natal Safety and Security MEC Nyanga Ngubane said he would ask Premier Lionel Mtshali to convene an urgent cabinet meeting to discuss the crisis with Forestry Minister Kader Asmal "so that we can bring this issue to complete finality".

Ngubane, who is also in charge of traditional and environmental affairs, blamed a "small clique of saboteurs" for intimidating and forcing Dukuduku forest dwellers to blockade the road to St Lucia with burning trees.

"We cannot allow this situation to continue, because it is starting to undermine the tourism of Kwazulu Natal and South Africa as a whole," he said.

By late yesterday, at least eight people had been arrested for public violence following a series of clashes.

Earlier in the day police retaliated with teargas and rubber bullets after coming under fire from a mob of about 300 forest dwellers, following renewed attempts to blockade the only road between Mtubatuba and St Lucia.

The road was closed for a while after protesting forest dwellers set fire to logs and planks and pulled debris onto the road.

Police spokesperson Superintendent Mayan Naidoo confirmed that AK-47s and handguns had been used against the



8 Jan. 7/5/99

(56)

PATRICK MTOLO

Tense situation ... Dukuduku forest dwellers gather on the Mtubatuba-St Lucia road where further confrontations with police occurred yesterday.

police, but said no one was injured in the shooting. She said a contingent from the public order policing unit from Mtubatuba had moved deep into the forest to saturate the area, and a light aircraft was to be sent to monitor the situation.

Heavily armed policemen in body armour, Kwazulu Natal Nature Conservation Service rangers and soldiers from the

nearby 121 SA Infantry Battalion were positioned along a stretch of the road about a kilometre or two from St Lucia village yesterday afternoon.

Small groups of forest residents were walking on the side of the road over a distance of a few kilometres. Many of them were carrying sticks and some bush knives and they appeared extremely tense.

Ngubane said although he

was satisfied that the situation was now "under control", it was imperative to find a permanent solution to the long-standing problems at Dukuduku.

Although the recent flare up was initially attributed to a dispute over the harvesting of *ncema* grass, the conflict follows a recent initiative by Asmal to prevent the destruction of the rare Dukuduku indigenous forest, by relocating thou-

sands of forest dwellers to nearby farms at Monzi.

Ngubane broke off a meeting with conservation service officials and senior traditional leaders yesterday morning when fresh reports emerged of violence on the St Lucia road. He then contacted senior provincial police officials, urging them to take decisive action by arresting anyone who attempted to block the road.

St Lucia Tourism Association chief Derick Holman issued a statement declaring that the violence was "an isolated incident" and that appropriate steps were being taken by the authorities.

Although the Mtubatuba-St Lucia road has been reopened, motorists are advised to contact the Provincial Road Traffic Inspectorate in Mtubatuba (035 550-0156) for the latest situation.

Asmal orders study to protect wetland

Dassenberg farm project 'a sensitive issue'

JOHN YELD
ENVIRONMENT WRITER

Water Affairs Minister Kader Asmal has told the developer of Dassenberg farm at Noordhoek to finance an independent environmental impact assessment before any development begins.

This follows the controversial decision by Western Cape Planning Minister Michael Louis to approve a re-zoning for the property to allow development.

Dassenberg farm includes an ecologically important wetland, Loch Venus, which in turn forms part of the major Sun Valley wetland system.

But the developer's choice of the company to do this assessment has raised eyebrows, because of criticism of previous work by one of the partners in a proposed development at Rooi Els, which also involved a wetland.

In his letter to the developer, Bakoor cc of Pietersburg, Professor Asmal said: "I am of the opinion that this wetland is of sufficient importance to be conserved and managed in such a way that any development affecting the ecosystem of the wetland will be controlled and sustainable ...

"Bakoor's proposed housing development is a sensitive issue, which could have a major affect on a sensitive wetland ecosystem."

Professor Asmal asked the developers to involve his department, the national Department of Environmental Affairs and all other interested and affected parties, to ensure that the environmental assessment was accurate and objective.

The developer has appointed Enviro Africa to do the assessment ordered by Professor Asmal.

One of the partners of the company is Jerry Avis, formerly an environmental scientist in the Western Cape government's planning services department.

While in the department in 1996, Mr Avis wrote a report in respect of the proposed development of Erf 324 at Rooi Els. This property includes a significant seepage wetland with associated fynbos, described in an independent report commissioned by ratepayers as having "a very high conservation priority".

In a memorandum headed "Preliminary Environmental Comment", Mr Avis said one of three major environmental issues to be addressed was the effect of development on the lower part of the site, which included the wetland area.

After recommending two options - neither of which was a "no development" option for the full wetland - he wrote: "I don't feel that a site visit will add anything to my analysis above, as the

1:10 000 CSIR colour aerial photograph, orthophoto map and (botanist Professor Charlie) Boucher's thesis and mapping is sufficient for my needs."

His report, which became public only after he had left the department, was strongly criticised by Rooi Els ratepayers and conservationists opposed to the development.

The property was subsequently approved for re-zoning and subdivision for housing development by then Western Cape Planning Minister Kobus Meiring.

But Mr Meiring's decision was challenged in a review application brought in the Cape High Court by the Save Klein Hangklip Association, and he indicated via the state attorney that he would not oppose this application.

Geoff Underwood of the planning firm, The Planning Partnership, which is managing the development application at Dassenberg for the developer, confirmed that Enviro Africa had been appointed to conduct the impact assessment required by Professor Asmal.

He said the company was in the process of clarifying its terms of reference with officials from Professor Asmal's department and the province, as there was "a little bit of confusion".

■ Mr Avis declined to comment.

AGL 11/5/99

Impact study to set EIA guidelines

SHIRLEY JONES

(56)

KWAZULU NATAL EDITOR

Durban - The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) undertaken by Island View Storage, Africa's largest bulk liquid storage operation which listed in October, would smooth the path to both investment and growth in new markets, Greg Brooks, the general manager of the company's Richards Bay installation, said this week.

Brooks said the chief reason for the mass assessment was that environmental legislation worked against businesses such as Island View in that, as noted in the assessment, markets were dynamic and required quick response time. Projects might include short-term issues such as removing chemical cargoes from distressed ships, three-month storage contracts and long-term chemical handling contracts.

Island View was exploring various opportunities for the storage and handling of liquid and gaseous chemicals.

In the lead-up to Island View's maiden results for the six months to March 31 1998, analysts said that despite Island View being the most profitable component in Island View Holdings before the group was restructured, it remained an unknown quantity.

However, the consensus was that Island View was well poised to benefit from the drop in interest rates and expected improved business confidence.

ET (OR) 12/5/99



HALT: An appeal was sent to Pallo Jordan.

Knysna development should be subject to strict controls

MELANIE GOSLING
ENVIRONMENT WRITER

THE Department of Environment Affairs has said that the Knysna Lagoon is under "severe stress" and that all development in the Knysna basin should be subject to stringent environmental controls.

Because of this, the department has told the developers of Thesen's Island, who plan to build a controversial high density marina in the lagoon, that they must submit a formal application in terms of the environmental impact

assessment legislation, before they can build the canal estate.

The department has written to the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), who are conducting the assessment for the R800 million Thesen's Island development, instructing them to advertise the development proposal "to give all interested and affected parties the opportunity of raising their concerns". The advertisement must appear in at least two local newspapers to ensure it reaches "a significant number" of people, the letter said. This comes after local environmental

and residents' organisations in Knysna appealed to Environment Minister Pallo Jordan to halt the development, which many felt was inappropriate for the ecologically sensitive lagoon.

The Knysna Lagoon is part of the protected National Lake Area. The letter stated that at a meeting convened by the department to discuss the Thesen's Island development, "it was re-emphasised that the Knysna Lagoon is currently under severe stress. It is therefore critical to ensure that the granting of authorisation for development rights within the Knysna basin,

especially for a project of this magnitude, should be subject to strict environmental management controls."

The proposal is to carve Thesen's Island into 27 smaller islands, linked with 15 kilometres of canals. The "canal estate" will have more than 600 houses, each with a boat dock, and shops, offices, hotel and conference centre.

One of the developers, Chris Mulder, told the *Cape Times* yesterday that the department's letter had not made it clear which sections of the development he needed to advertise for public comment. "It is open for different interpreta-

tions. It is useless to try to guess what they (the department) want, so we've written to them for clarification," Mulder said.

Ecologist and Knysna resident Brian Allanson, who has spent the past 10 years studying the lagoon, has raised concerns about the carrying capacity of the Knysna basin. This refers to the number of people an ecosystem can support without damaging its natural functioning.

In a local publication Allanson wrote that the lack of understanding of the carrying capacity of the Knysna basin

would continue to "confound all planning and management guidelines".

As an ecologist, he interpreted the public's criticism of the Thesen's Island development "as saying unequivocally to the developers that we are in very real danger of exceeding the carrying capacity of the Knysna basin, its lagoon and its resources. We see a frightening spectre of a decreased quality of life for all our community."

Allanson said already the amount of silt and suspended solids in the lagoon was increasing because of the exponential growth in Knysna's population.

to 'strict controls'

Homeland reserves run wild

(56) MTG 14-20/5/99

Sharon Hammond

Nature reserves in the former KwaNdebele homeland in Mpumalanga have become lawless badlands where gangs of armed youths attack visitors, poaching flourishes and conservation has collapsed.

Animals are treated so badly that lions have lost their manes, crocodiles are kept in dry sandpits and cattle allowed to graze in protected areas.

Gangs have the run of the Nkombo Dam Nature Reserve near Bronkhorstspuit, where last month two anglers were sprayed with gunfire as they slept in the back of their bakkie. A previous attack by thieves on another group of anglers, who were sleeping in their tents and caravans, forced them to flee into the dam before the thieves stripped the campsite.

"Some guys fishing on the dam heard shouts, and when they shone a torch towards the campsite they saw all these [men] coming out the bush throwing bricks and stones,"

explains Eben Dowd, whose friend was caught in the ambush.

Dowd says he had warned the group not to go to the reserve, formerly known as the Renosterkop Dam Nature Reserve, after he had a run-in with aggressive youths who demanded security money from him earlier in the year.

"It's a mafia-like thing," says Dowd. "If you don't pay the guys money to watch your stuff, they'll rob you."

The thieving is symptomatic of alleged maladministration at all four reserves in the former homeland, which are not managed by the Mpumalanga Parks Board (MPB) but by the provincial Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism.

Their exclusion from the MPB was agreed to when the four highly unionised reserves — Nkombo, Mdala, SS Skosana and Mabuza — resisted incorporation into the new parastatal five years ago to prevent the retrenchment of hundreds of superfluous personnel. There are still about 500 unskilled workers who

no longer go to work because of a lack of transport, but are still being paid.

At Nkombo, gate guards who do arrive for work reportedly charge visitors random entrance fees without issuing receipts. Visitors complain that conservation officials also issue permits for fishing and hunting by scribbling on scraps of paper. The permits are invalid, as only the MPB has the authority to issue them.

Although the MPB does not manage the reserves, it has had to intervene twice at the SS Skosana reserve after poor management led to the starvation of big cats. It had to put down a leopard left to starve in a small cage and a group of starving lions whose manes eventually fell out due to stress. The reserve's lionesses were relocated.

The SPCA also stepped in recently when members of the public complained that six crocodiles were kept in dried-up pits at SS Skosana's education centre.

"I had to tell the officials that crocodiles actually need water. They

responded by saying they had a poor water supply, but if that was the case, they would move the reptiles," says the manager of the SPCA's national wildlife unit, Rick Allan.

He says he was shocked to find that schoolchildren visiting the centre on guided tours had been allowed to throw cans at the reptiles. "If the centre continues to mistreat them, the SPCA will press criminal charges."

Police are investigating a syndicate of professional hunters who poach wild game at the Nkombo and Mdala reserves. They say the syndicate may be linked to the poaching of four rhinos and a calf in Nkombo three years ago.

"The hunters bribe staff on the ground with portions of meat, and then sell the poached meat in bulk to butchers or private individuals," explains the investigating officer, Inspector Pierre Badenhorst.

He says poor management at the reserves has made anti-poaching initiatives difficult as damaged or stolen fences are not replaced. The lack of fencing has also enabled communi-

ties to graze more than 1 000 head of cattle at Nkombo, which is home to an extremely rare type of veld.

MPB representative Gary Sutter confirms it has received numerous complaints from the public about the reserves. "But we do not have managerial jurisdiction over the KwaNdebele reserves, so it is a matter for the provincial department to investigate."

Head of department Bandile Mkhize says negotiations are under way with a workers' union to incorporate the reserves into the MPB. "The problem is what to do with excess staff, because some of them have worked on the reserves for 20 years."

The department's co-ordinator of conservation, Danie Brits, says he has not received complaints about gangsterism, bribery and overcharging at the gates, but he will investigate them.

"Visitors to the Nkombo reserve should be warned at the gate, however, not to camp along the dam where it borders villages, because then they will pick up problems," he adds. — African Eye News Service

Just the ticket for Peninsula park

ARG 15/5/99 (56)

WILLEM STEENKAMP

The Cape Peninsula National Park has launched an innovative scheme to generate money for the upkeep of the world-renowned nature area.

The Parks Board has launched a season-ticket sales campaign and is installing swipe-card facilities at the gates to all its nature areas.

Season tickets will be barcoded. To gain entry to a park, visitors will simply swipe the ticket through a slot.

The proceeds of ticket sales will be used to conserve the park and improve and maintain visitor facilities.

The park stretches from Signal Hill in the north to Cape Point in the south

and contains a host of recreational facilities.

A park spokesman said the primary objective of the season-ticket campaign was to increase accessibility to the park to local people. It would be much cheaper for regular visitors to buy season tickets than to pay for day visits. Season tickets will cost R145 for a family of two adults and children aged 17 and younger, R75 for an individual and R37,50 for a pensioner.

Temporary laminated season tickets will be issued and replaced later by permanent barcoded tickets.

The park has introduced a patrol service in an attempt to ensure a safe environment for family recreation.

Whales under new threat

SA asked to vote against 'deeply flawed' Irish plan

JOHN YEED



ENVIRONMENT WRITER

Full-scale commercial whaling could resume if a supposed "compromise" proposal by Ireland to the International Whaling Commission (IWC) is accepted next week, worried marine conservationists have warned.

Ireland says its proposal, which is being put to the 51st whaling commission meeting being held in Granada in the West Indies, aims to stop the escalation of commercial whaling and allow the commission to control whaling operations.

But the conservationists say the Irish plan is "deeply flawed" and that, if accepted, could prove the first step in the resumption of full-scale whale hunting.

They have called on South Africa's representative to the commission, Guillaume "Div" de Villiers of the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, to support moves to maintain the official moratorium on commercial whaling.

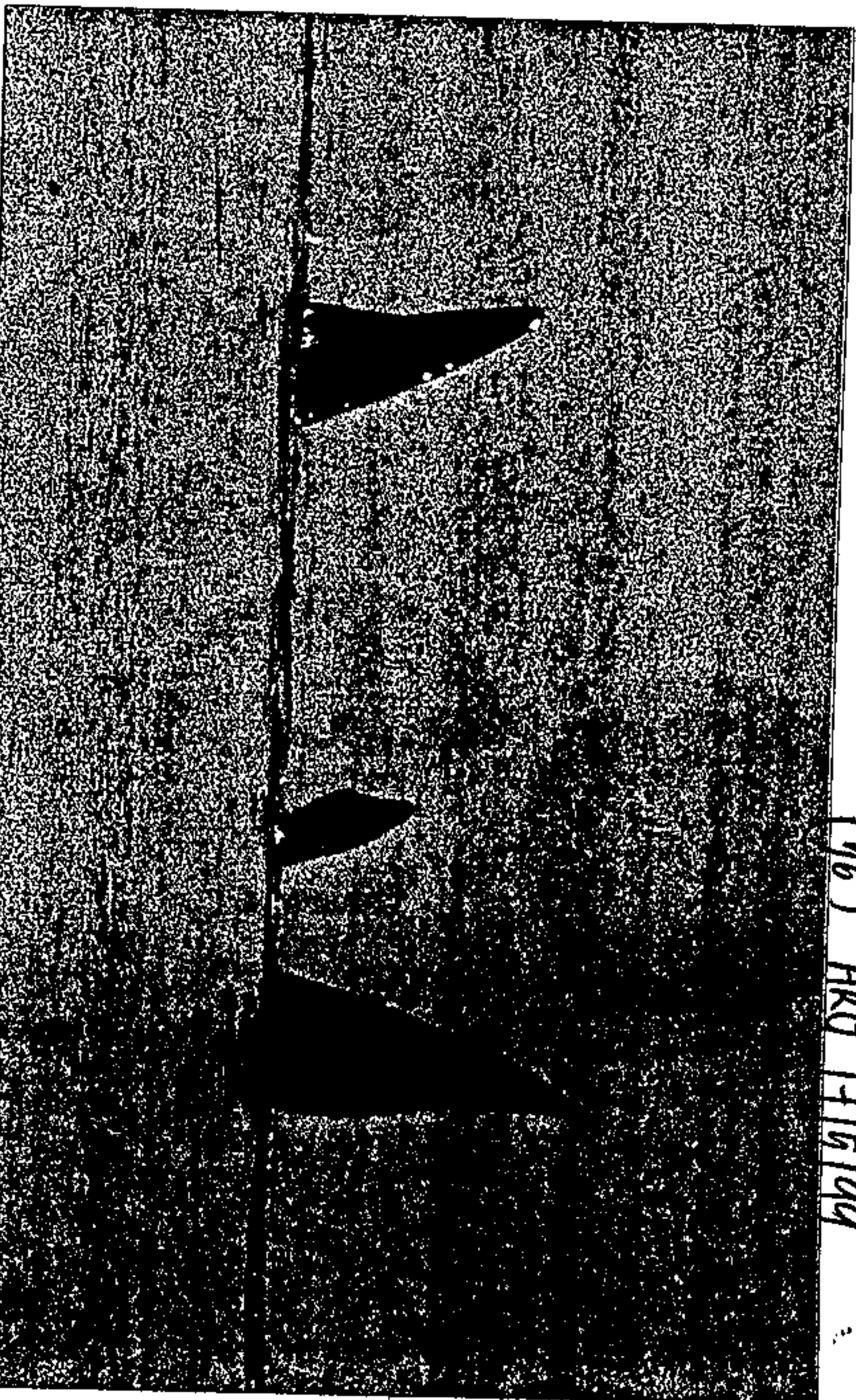
They also want him to vote in favour of any resolutions aimed at stopping Japan's so-called "scientific whaling" in the Southern Ocean whale sanctuary and in the north Pacific, and preventing Norwegian commercial whale hunts in the north Atlantic.

They have asked him to support any proposals for further whale sanctuaries, especially in the south Atlantic.

Mr De Villiers replied by saying he had "taken note" of their comments, but he did not make any commitments on how he would vote.

The Irish proposal was tabled in 1997, and the early draft included these suggestions:

- A global whale sanctuary outside individual exclusive economic zones, which extends 200 nautical miles (about 400km) from the coast.
- A ban on international trade in whale products.
- A "phase-out" of the present scientific whaling.
- Coastal whaling to be allowed for domestic consumption under the commission's revised management scheme.
- The development of the commission



Renewed threats: Southern Right whales bask off Sea Point after arriving early this year. Conservationists warn that commercial whaling could resume

regulations for whale-watching to minimise impacts on cetaceans (the collective term for whales and dolphins).

But international conservation organisations argued that the Irish proposal was deeply flawed.

They said any serious proposal, as a minimum, had to include moves to:

- Maintain the moratorium on commercial whaling.
- Establish a global ocean sanctuary for whales.
- Immediately stop the increase in the number of whales killed annually, and decrease this in future.

■ Close the loophole that allows the commission's regulations to be evaded through "scientific whaling", and ensure that Japan's scientific whaling is phased out rapidly.

- Ensure an effective ban on interna-

tional trade in whale products.

■ Close the loophole that allows whaling countries like Norway to exempt themselves from catch limits by lodging an official objection.

In its reaction, the London-based Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society said Ireland was, to a great extent, beginning from a "false premise".

"Ireland is clearly countenancing a return to commercial whaling in the future," the society charged.

The local Dolphin Action Group (incorporating Save the Whales) said it was "disturbed" by the Irish proposal, which would lead to the moratorium on commercial whaling being overturned.

"The moratorium on commercial whaling was originally agreed in 1982 on the basis of uncertainty about whale numbers and their ability to withstand further deple-

tion through hunting," said the group's secretary, Nan Rice. "Since that time, we've discovered the hole in the ozone layer, witnessed the impact of driftnets and other commercial fisheries, begun to quantify the effects of pollution, and are now increasingly aware of the potentially devastating effects on global climate change on our marine ecosystems."

Whales and dolphins were also facing other problems, such as habitat destruction in inshore areas, noise, and disturbance, said Mrs Rice.

"Also, vessel strikes are taking their toll on some species, not to mention whaling outside the jurisdiction of the commission, which would escalate if commercial whaling recommenced."

"If it is my hope the South African delegation (to the commission) will maintain the stance it adopted over the past few years and endeavour to keep the moratorium on commercial whaling in place."

■ Mr De Villiers, who is in Tanzania and heads for Granada next week, could not be reached for comment.

Vessel strikes are taking their toll ... as is whaling outside the commission's jurisdiction'

AKG 17/5/99

Canned baboon the latest dish to hit Africa's stores?

MTG 21-27/5/99

(56)

Fiona Macleod

A Northern Province business syndicate plans to can baboon meat and market it as a delicacy in an attempt to alleviate the pressure on chimpanzees and gorillas in Central Africa, where "bush meat" is a favoured dish on the tables of the elite.

They also plan to sell baboon hands, nails and teeth in Asian countries as sexual stimulants.

The man behind the scheme is Hector Howard-Fulton, executive director of Tfuene Holdings, a foreign investment company.

His representative said he was uncontactable in another African country this week.

His partners, a group of Afrikaans businessmen who are members of the Warmbaths Development Initiative, aim to start building a 1 800m² abattoir near the town next week.

Ollie Wehmeyer, leader of the group, says the plans are enthusiastically supported by farmers in the area who are plagued by baboons marauding through their crops.

"But it won't be a wild shoot-out. Ten to 15 baboons will be caught in cages, transported live to the abattoir and then killed humanely by electric shock, as happens with pigs."

Howard-Fulton's legal representative, Dave Gericke, predicts questions will be raised about whether the scheme is legal in terms of the Animal Protection Act.

"Certain concessions will have to be granted by the conservation authorities."

It's not illegal to eat baboon meat — provided the Department of Health gives the establishment a clean bill — but conservation authorities have to give permission for the capture and live transport of the primates.

This is perhaps where the most telling objection to the scheme lies.

It is being launched at a time when not only is the wildlife permit system in a state of terminal disarray, but the Northern Province department which would be responsible for regulating and

monitoring the scheme is in a state of collapse.

The provincial Department of Environmental Affairs started falling apart after it was amalgamated with the Department of Agriculture two years ago.

Protests about a conflict of interests fell on deaf ears, and two months ago Greg Knill, chief director of environmental affairs, and most of his senior staff were suspended.

Conservation groups point out that while trying to save chimps in Central Africa may be a marketable objective, baboons in South Africa may be equally endangered.

"Before any such bizarre project should be allowed, a proper census has to be undertaken by people who work with primates and who are able to recognise different baboons," says Gien Elsas of the Centre for Animal Rehabilitation and Education, a Phalaborwa outfit which specialises in primates.

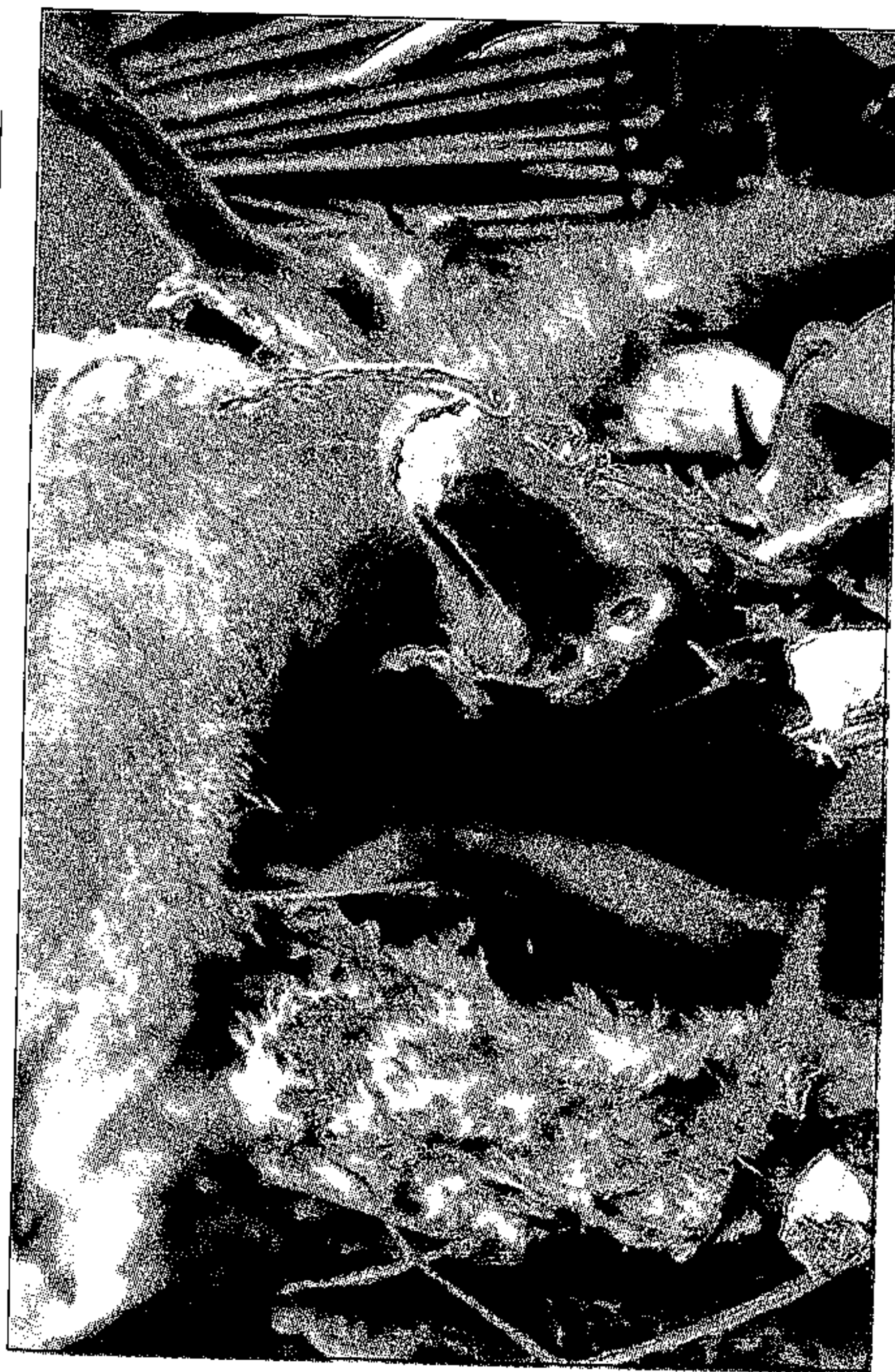
"Baboon populations are declining. Not 20 years ago, the wild dog was considered 'vermin' by farmers. Today it is highly endangered. The same can — and will — happen to the baboon."

Elsas says electrocuting baboons is unlikely to be easy. "Baboons are not like cattle, which are fairly immobile when the slaughter takes place.

"Their canines are larger than those of a leopard or a lion. How do they propose to keep an active baboon in a prone position in order to give it an electric shock?

"Or do they plan to wet the baboons and then electrocute them? This outdated and inhumane method would not be tolerated by animal welfare groups."

Elsas and other conservationists add that a tinned-baboon scandal is hardly likely to do South Africa's conservation and tourism image much good — particularly in the wake of the recent "canned" lion-hunting scandal, which involved hunters shooting drugged lions in fenced-in areas.



Meaty primates: Previously only a target of multi shops, baboons are now set to be exported as canned meat to Central African stores. PHOTO: RUTH MOTAU

Urban living is killing off our children

Star 22/5/99

(56)

By SHAUN SMILLIE

South Africa, with one of the fastest urbanisation rates in the world, is being threatened by chronic overcrowding, poor living conditions, disease and pollution.

"The biggest killers among our children," says Angela Mathee, senior specialist scientist, environmental health, at the Medical Research Council, "are respiratory ailments and diarrhoea. Respiratory illness has replaced diarrhoea as the number one killer."

The increase in respiratory illnesses such as pneumonia and asthma are linked to air pollution.

"Increases in the levels of nitrogen dioxide and ground ozone in South African city centres act as a respiratory irritant which can lead to bronchitis," explains Mathee.

Indoor air pollution from coal fires, poor ventilation and insufficient space also causes respiratory disease.

But not all air pollution causes direct illness. A worry for many health officials is the high level of lead in the blood of children living in inner cities.

"Studies show that children in the inner cities have 80-100% higher lead blood levels than those regarded as safe internationally," says Mathee.

Lead exposure results mainly from

monitors water quality in the rivers around Johannesburg, "I wouldn't drink from the Jukskei because of the number of informal settlements that have sprung up along its banks," says Rimmer.

The river contains bacteria known to cause gastro-intestinal infections.

"We need infrastructure upgrades to handle the extra sewage volumes," says Rimmer.

The Johannesburg council is now trying to stop sewage leaks, particularly into the Jukskei. "Inspectors have recently begun walking the full length of the river to find where sewage is flowing into the river," explains Rimmer.

When it comes to raw effluent finding its way into waterways, a cholera outbreak is a major fear.

"The risk is there," says Mathee. "We have overcrowded conditions and in the inner city we often have a breakdown in sanitation. Highrise buildings sometimes have only a single toilet per floor."

A cholera epidemic in South Africa would most likely be sparked by an immigrant coming across the border from a country where cholera is prevalent. There have been cholera epidemics in Mozambique and Zambia.

"Only about 30% of cholera sufferers shows signs of the disease, so it would be easy for them to cross the border



UNHOLY SMOKE: This is no way to live, but residents in Kliptown, Soweto, have no another choice

Overcrowding, pollution and pests are the main culprits

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without anybody suspecting," says Dr Rajendra Maharaj, deputy director for

linked to air pollution.

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leaded petrol, but in some cases, children ingest lead-based flaking paint in dilapidated buildings.

"Lead has been attributed to lowering of IQ, behavioural problems, inability to concentrate and even aggressive behaviour in children," explains Mathee.

The other major killer - diarrhoea, particularly in children - is caused by a number of factors, including unsafe water, spoilt food and contact with faecal matter.

Rats and cockroaches are another cause of diarrhoea and other diseases. In some South African urban centres, rat and cockroach populations are on the increase.

In a recent survey in which residents of Hillbrow were asked to list the pest they thought was a major problem in their area, 36% stated that rats were a problem and 81% complained about cockroaches. These pests contaminate food through contact with waste matter.

Diarrhoea is on the decline as a result of a better water supply, but informal settlements that often use polluted rivers as their primary source of water are a major concern. Rivers such as the Jukskei in Greater Johannesburg are often contaminated by raw sewage.

"When the sewerage system becomes overloaded or there is a blockage, sewage is released into the rivers," says Russell Rimmer, manager of scientific services for the Greater Johannesburg Metropolitan Council. The council

without anybody suspecting," says Dr Rajendra Maharaj, deputy director for communicable disease control at the Department of Health.

But cholera remains rare in South Africa. This year there was a cholera outbreak in an informal settlement in Cato Manor, near Durban, with 20 reported cases contracted as a result of an infected Mozambican immigrant.

"Our health services are in a constant state of readiness to act against a cholera outbreak and they are constantly educating the public on preventive measures," says Maharaj.

Over the past 18 months, the Johannesburg council has been testing the rivers around the city for cholera and so far nothing has been found. "I think that cholera, even in our neighbouring countries, isn't as common as we think it is," says Rimmer.

Mathee believes that co-operation between various sectors, including housing, waste management and water quality, is necessary to alleviate these health hazards. Communities also need to become more involved.

"In Curitiba, Brazil, sound planning has been successful in addressing a wide range of urbanisation and poverty-related environmental and health concerns. We would do well to learn from the experiences of these and other Latin American, African and Asian cities undergoing rapid urbanisation," she adds.

Robben Island swamped by tide of rubbish

BOBBY JORDAN

(56)

ST (BT) 27/5/99

A "PLASTIC tide" of rubbish and jet-sam at Robben Island has enraged environmental officers who say the national monument is turning into a dustbin.

The mess has prompted a clean-up operation that will include South Africa's 20 islands — from Kozi Bay in the east to Alexander Bay in the west.

The problem stems mainly from the illegal dumping by large ships in Table Bay and run-off from the mainland, including Cape Town's polluted Black and Liesbeek rivers.

Robben Island environmental officer Mario Leshoro said the island was literally "under siege" with rubbish which discouraged tourism.

"We're being left with a nightmare. Whatever is dumped on beaches or from ships generally drifts our way. The whole circumference of the shore is littered with plastic."

Sea Fisheries spokesman John Kieser said about 80 percent of the litter at the island came from Cape Town and was particularly bad at this time of year when the first major rains washed rubbish into the sea. The wind also carried a lot of waste.

"Robben Island is seen as a symbol for a national clean-up. The idea is to collect and sort the rubbish and set aside all that can be recycled."

He said the national clean-up, which will take place in September, was part of an international initiative involving 75 countries and set up by the Centre for Marine Conservation.

South Africa's Plastic Federation spokesman Douw Steyn estimated that more than 1 000 large bags would be needed to clean up Robben Island.

"It's one of the filthiest islands around," Steyn said.

Research figures show the government spends more than R2,4-billion a year on processing waste. The country produces over three billion plastic bags every year. Before the 1995 Rugby World Cup Cape Town spent R6 700 a kilometre clearing the verges of freeways — and found an average of 3 000 bags a kilometre.

Steyn said the plastics industry was committed to promoting re-cycling and had initiated various projects.

Wildlife Society education spokesman Patrick Dowling said consumer habits needed to be changed to combat littering. The Department of Health should also intervene. He called for a policy of making customers pay for plastic bags they used to stop littering.

"It's really a case of which super-market chain is bold enough to take the first step," he said.

'We CAN eradicate Cape Town's street children problem and give these children a chance in life'

- Cape Points, page 17

How poachers imperil our perlemoen

Perlemoen researcher Angus Mackenzie makes a 30mm circle between the tip of his forefinger and his thumb and shakes his head in disgust.

"Now they're poaching animals this size that weigh just 18 grams. That's tiny!" he says.

He and colleague Rob Tarr of Marine and Coastal Management (formerly Sea Fisheries) have been monitoring perlemoen - more correctly, abalone - off the southern Cape coast for 20 years.

And for the past five years, they have been conducting highly structured diving surveys which involve recording the number of perlemoen found at regular intervals along 20 fixed lines in predetermined zones. Called "transect counts", the results are conclusive proof of the devastating nature of perlemoen poaching in the area from Hawston to Hermannus.



JOHN YEID ENVIRONMENT WRITER

This forms Zone C of the commercial perlemoen harvesting area, which turn stretches from Cape Hangklip to Cape Agulhas.

The number of adult perlemoen found every 10m has fallen from five to one. "It's definitely diminished drastically," says Mr Tarr.

And Mr Mackenzie points out that in the heart of Zone C - the Mudge Point area between Hawston and Onrus - poachers have taken a huge proportion of undersized perlemoen and then gone back time and again to remove the last few remaining adults.

"Even at these very low densities, they're still going out and taking the very last adults.

"Now the perlemoen have been cleaned out and there's absolutely nothing there. You just find bare patches," he says. "The official total allowable catch - TAC in the trade - for legal quota-holders in Zone C has crashed from 170 tons in 1990/91 to just 15 tons during the past season.

"Most of that effect has been from poaching," says Mr Tarr. Perlemoen grow slowly, taking about eight years to reach the legal minimum size of 114mm across the breadth of the shell, and they only reach sexual maturity about one year earlier.

Also, perlemoen tend not to move more than a few metres once they have found a suitable area with kelp on which to feed.

So, with the stock of undersized and juvenile perlemoen being

stripped - some confiscated poacher hauls have been found to consist of 99% undersized specimens - the chances of the stock recovering is small.

"There is some potential for larval movement, and theoretically they (larvae) could move tens of kilometres along the coast," says Mr Tarr.

"But we don't actually know, and this is an area for future research."

Because there are now almost no perlemoen left in Zone C, poachers are turning their attention to Zone A further east, between the Buffelags River estuary and Quoin Point further to the east.

"We're quite worried that we'll have a repeat situation here," says Mr Tarr.

Also, poachers are targeting the marine reserve at Betty's Bay, although local residents who take an active role in "Sea Watch" patrols do

make it difficult for them there.

To make matters worse, the perlemoen resource in the western half of its commercial range has also been hard hit in recent years by a surprising, but naturally occurring, phenomenon: an influx of rock lobsters.

These eat huge quantities of sea urchins, whose spines provide natural shelter for tiny perlemoen in their crucial growing phase, when they are at their most vulnerable.

The researchers have been monitoring the association between sea urchins and juvenile perlemoen during diving surveys since 1989. In 1994, they found the numbers

"The perlemoen have been cleaned out and here's absolutely nothing there - just bare patches"

of sea urchins had dropped dramatically at two sites - Betty's Bay and Mudge Point, with a simultaneous decline in juvenile perlemoen.

This decrease coincided with an influx of rock lobster into the kelp beds of these regions. The researchers believe that predation by these rock lobsters caused the once-large population of sea urchins to collapse, this in turn taking a heavy toll of juvenile perlemoen.

They are concerned that if these increased numbers of rock lobsters are around for an extended period, there will almost certainly be a serious additional threat to perlemoen harvests in the region between Betty's Bay and Hermannus.

But anti-poaching measures undertaken by police through Operation Neptune have been having welcome effects in recent months. Also, the introduction of the new Fisheries Act, which has granted exploitation rights to previously excluded groups - including some representing known poachers - is helping. This is because more people now have a vested interest in controlling poaching and having a sustainable perlemoen resource that can be harvested over many years.

"We're hoping that this is the bottom line as far as the effect of poaching is concerned," says Mr Tarr.

"But abalone populations don't recover quickly and, because of the levels of poaching that we've seen, it will be decades before they start showing signs of recovery."

Mr Mackenzie agrees: "Not in my lifetime will they return to what they were."

SA to sell off plant rights

MELANIE GOSLING
ENVIRONMENT WRITER

(76)

RE CT 24/5/99

SOUTH AFRICA plans to sell the patent rights over some of our indigenous plants to a private US company — in exchange for royalties for the next 20 years.

The National Botanical Institute (NBI), which has devised the deal, sees this as a chance for South Africa to make money out of our flowering plants, which are being exploited by horticultural companies overseas who make billions out of our natural heritage.

But some environment groups are vehemently opposed to the proposed patent deal, which they see as selling off the country's crown jewels.

Roger Jaques of the NBI said if the deal comes off, it would be a chance to reverse the pattern of First World exploitation of the Third World's natural resources.

"Our genetic material is leaving the country uncontrolled. We don't get any of the billions of dollars from the sale of our pelargoniums, gladioli, freesias or Barberton daisies, for instance. If the deal comes off it'll be a world first and it'll mean we'll be getting royalties for several decades," Jaques said.

The proposed NBI deal, which still has to be authorised by the Department of Environment Affairs, is with the giant Chicago-based Ball horticultural company, a multinational which has 40% of the US market in bedding plants and pot plants, and 25% of the European market. The agreement would be restricted to 25 plant species, including some fynbos species, which will be identified by the NBI and Ball.

Ball will give the NBI a one-off grant of \$125 000, which will include the cost of building a greenhouse where these plants will be cultivated before being shipped to America.

Ball will own the intellectual property rights to the plants and any products developed from them, and in exchange will pay royalties on sales to the NBI for the next 20 years.

Jaques declined to reveal what percentage of sales will come to the NBI, but sources say it is around 4%.

The proposed patent deal is being met with strong criticism from environmental groups who question the right of the NBI to sell patents on plants which belong to the whole nation.

Environment lawyer Jan Glazewski believes the patent deal may conflict with one of the principles of the new Environment Management Act, which says the environment must be protected as the public's common heritage.

Said Liz McDaid of Earthlife Africa: "One organisation, the NBI, does not own the rights to the country's plants, so how can they sell the rights? The NBI is taking upon itself the right to sell our plants in return for which they will get money for themselves."

David Fig of BioWatch said the World Trade Organisation and the World Intellectual Property Organisation believed anything could be patented, but the Organisation for African Unity was fiercely opposed to the patenting of life forms.

Roger Ellis of the Genetic Resource Centre, part of the Agricultural Research Council, said the proposed patent deal highlights the problem of who has a right to make a profit out of our wild plants.

"The whole problem of whether life forms should be patented is a nightmare, and the debate can turn very ugly," Ellis said.

The NBI says the royalties will go into a trust, managed by the NBI board, and will be used to build capacity in our horticultural industry.

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Gangsters rule nature reserves

(hb) Star 24/5/99
'Mafia-like thing' occurring - angler

AFRICAN EYE NEWS SERVICE
Bronkhorstspuit

Nature reserves in the former KwaNdebele homeland in Mpumalanga have become lawless badlands where gangs of armed youths attack visitors, poaching flourishes and conservation has collapsed.

Conservation officials conceded that gangs had free run in reserves such as the Nkombo Dam nature reserve near Bronkhorstspuit, where recently two anglers were sprayed with gunfire as they slept on the back of their bakkie last month.

A month before, thieves attacked another group of anglers sleeping in their tents and caravans at the Renoster Dam reserve, and forced them to flee

into the dam before stripping the campsite.

"Some guys fishing on the dam heard shouts, and when they shone a torch at the campsite, they saw all these (men) coming out the bush throwing bricks and stones," said angler Eben Dowd, whose friend was caught in the ambush.

Dowd says he had warned the group not to go to the reserve after he had a run-in with aggressive youths who demanded security money from him earlier in the year.

"It's a mafia-like thing down there," explains Dowd. "If you don't pay the guys to watch your stuff, they'll rob you."

The thieving appears to be symptomatic of alleged maladministration at all four reserves in the former homeland.

Objections to baboon abattoir

plan mount

Nov 24/5/99

Opposition to the proposed baboon abattoir outside Warmbaths is growing, with the town's local tourism office and business community rejecting the idea as "an absolute abhorrence".

The Department of Agriculture at the weekend also effectively put the brakes on plans for the abattoir, saying it would withhold the necessary permits to slaughter the animals.

"Warmbaths has always been known as the sunshine town of South Africa, and we wish to state that in our beautiful town there is a place in the sun for everyone, including baboons," said a tourism official.

The town's business community said they were so incensed that they were starting a petition against the proposal.

Peter Mokaba, Deputy Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, said last week an impact assessment would have to be done before any decision could be taken, adding that the department had learnt of the proposed abattoir via the media.

Agriculture Department consultant Dr Hym Ebedes said the abattoir would most probably not be able to get off the ground as it was strongly recommended that the departments not issue the permits.

The developer of the controversial abattoir, American Hector Howard-Fulton, had not obtained approval from either the departments of Agriculture or Nature Conservation.

Ebedes believed the abattoir would also not be able to obtain the necessary import and export permits for products that were intended to be sent to European and Asian countries.

Judy Sole, leader of the Green Party, said the plan would decimate the baboon population.

The Wildlife and Environment Society of SA as well as the Front for Animal Liberation and Conservation of Nature voiced their opposition to the abattoir.

- Staff Reporter and Sapa

Waste campaign in Alex to cut litter, create jobs

By ANNA COX

The Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT) has launched an integrated waste and management campaign in Alexandra to improve conditions in the area.

It is the second to be launched in the province, the first being in Yeoville.

The aim of the campaign is to reduce littering by 70% and create voluntary clean-ups by the community.

The aim of the campaign, which is a national one, is to consolidate inter-governmental

partnerships in waste management; to create at least 3 000 sustainable jobs in each province, and to promote public awareness about environmental issues.

It is hoped that an 80% efficiency in waste removal can be achieved along with the establishment of 20 sustainable recreational facilities in the form of parks in each province, 20 sustainable vegetable food gardens and at least two waste removal systems per province.

An amount of R12-million a year for each province over

three years has been allocated, totalling R108-million.

Said DEAT spokesperson Lucas Mahlangu: "Environmental poverty, insecurity and general degradation are among the most severe and defining legacies of the past injustices.

They constitute the form and content of challenges facing our nation.

"The waste situation in Alexandra and the inner city areas of Johannesburg is unacceptable. We want both these areas to be cleaned up so they can be places that people are proud of," he said.

A task team has now been set up in Alexandra under the Greater Alexandra Development Forum to identify problem areas and to map the way forward.

The project was launched in Yeoville in March and a task team was set up under the auspices of the Yeoville Community Development Forum.

The first step was the identification of empty stands where food gardens could be established.

The upgrading of a sorting plant in Turfontein was also being examined for the recycling of waste from the inner city, said Mahlangu.

It is hoped that 3 000 jobs will be created in Gauteng through recycling, sorting, making and selling of products from recyclable material, food production and the maintenance of recreational parks.

The environment department is being assisted with funding by the departments of education, labour and welfare, the National Government Poverty Relief Fund as well as the fund created by business as a contribution to the Jobs Summit.

Baboon abattoir plan shot down

~~MEAT~~
(56)

By Khathu Mamaila

THE Northern Province government has shot down plans to construct a multimillion rand baboon abattoir in Warmbaths, saying that the matter is sensitive and all stakeholders had not been consulted on the issue.

Premier Ngoako Ramathodi said the planned abattoir could not proceed before thorough consultations with all the people had taken place.

Last week a group of white farmers announced that they were planning to build a baboon abattoir in Warmbaths. The abattoir was expected to process baboon meat, polony and canned meat. Baboon nails and teeth were to be exported to the Asian markets to be used as sex stimulants.

Ramathodi's spokesman, Mr Kenny Mathivha, said yesterday that the announcement had been met with mixed reaction. He said some people

who believed that if people wanted to eat baboon meat, they should be allowed to.

"However, there are others, such as the animal rights groups, who are totally opposed to the plan. They have described the plan as outrageous."

He said no licence had been granted for such an abattoir to be erected.

The Department of Agriculture, Land and Environment has also condemned the plan.

Department spokesman Mr Thembi Makhuvhevele said the slaughtering of baboons for export was an appalling idea.

Makhuvhevele said although baboons were classified as problem animals in certain areas of the province, that did not mean that they should be exterminated.

He said the abattoir would have a huge impact on the population of baboons in the area.

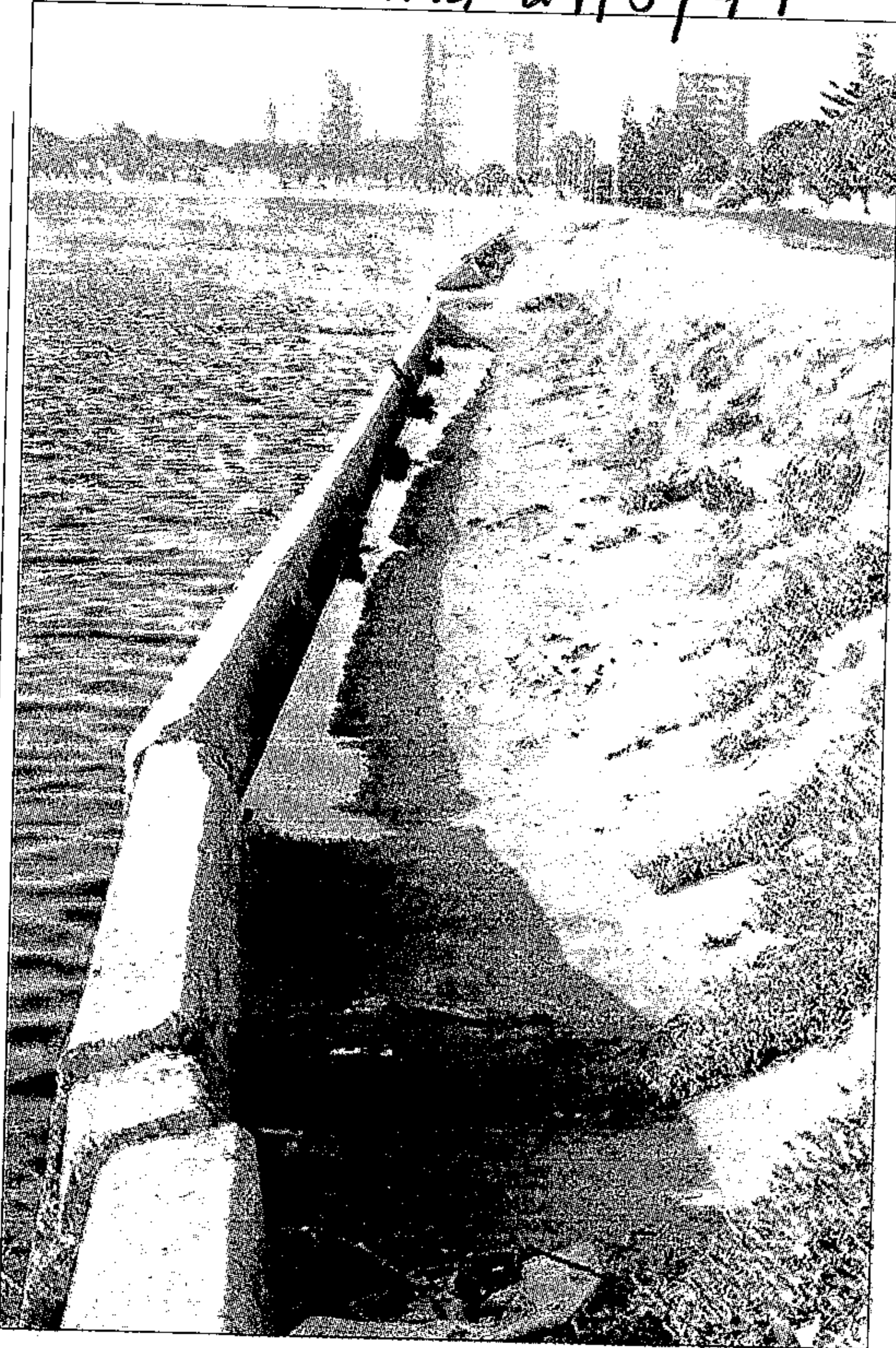
penetration

Oil spill threat to Milnerton lagoon

ARG 27/5/99

(56)

NORMAN JOSEPH
METRO REPORTER



HANNES THIART

Collapsing: the 60-year-old retaining wall alongside Esplanade Road in Milnerton

The Cape Metropolitan Council has allocated R1,5-million to the Blaauwberg municipality to help avert a potential oil pollution disaster in Milnerton.

The Metro Council is helping to pay for the repair of a 140m section of a retaining wall that runs next to three fuel pipelines near Milnerton Lagoon.

Dave Brook, Blaauwberg's executive director of engineering, said the wall, about 60 years old, was on the brink of collapse, and it would cost more than R2-million to repair.

Should it collapse, it could damage the three pipelines that carry crude oil from tankers from Table Bay to the Caltex refinery, and petrol and diesel from the refinery, causing an ecological disaster.

The metro council had asked Caltex to provide R600 000 to help fund the wall's repair, but Caltex had not yet agreed to this.

Mr Brook said Blaauwberg would provide the R600 000 because Caltex had not budgeted for the amount. "We will carry that until they have sorted out their budget."

The Blaauwberg municipality became aware of the wall's condition about 12 months ago, but did not at that time realise how serious it was, officials said.

The municipality was now reacting quickly, had already appointed consultants and called for tenders for the repairs.

Water and waste committee chairman Dave Erleigh said the metro council was extremely anxious to prevent an environmental and economic disaster.

Kruger upbeat about its lions

M+G 28/5-3/6/99

(56)

Evidence wa ka Ngobeni

The director of the Kruger National Park, David Mabunda, announced this week that the lions in the park are still in good shape, despite the impact of the deadly bovine tuberculosis.

Tourists taking part in an innovative programme to track the effects of the disease reported sightings of 783 lions up to May 10. Only 16% were reported to be thin, while 2,5% had visible injuries, such as a limp.

"We are delighted with the response. We are receiving up to 40 entries a day, many with letters of support, and we are particularly heartened by the fact that 98% of entrants want to become ambassadors of the Lion Watch awareness programme," Mabunda said.

In March the Kruger called on tourists to help back up its contention that there are still plenty of healthy lions in the park despite reports that TB is wiping out the cats.

One of the objectives is to provide additional information to the Kruger's own census

of an estimated 1 500 to 2 000 lions in the park.

The initiative aims to find answers to the real causes of the spate of lion deaths in the park, and to increase public awareness through active monitoring of the lions.

Bovine TB is believed to have entered the park's southern border when buffalo herds crossed the Crocodile River into farming areas during the late 1950s. The likely source was infected cattle. Since then buffalo have been the main host of the disease, while some spillover to other large animal species has also occurred.

According to the park's research, the disease has now been identified in lions and in very low numbers of baboons, cheetahs, kudu and leopard.

A total of 32 out of 33 Kruger lions in the southern part of the park recently tested positive for TB. Studies show there has been a reduction in lion numbers in a small part of the southern part of the park in recent years, but the cause is unknown.

Scientists and wildlife managers are evaluating ways to deal with the disease.

Toxic smoke engulfs Cape Town's squatter camps as people on the breadline try to earn a few cents. **Ellen**

Tyres turn into fun

As aircraft approach Cape Town International Airport, toxic smoke from mounds of burning tyres rises under them, cutting the pilots' visibility.

It's not some political protest but a regular economic activity. Informal recyclers in shack settlements burn the tyres for the few cents' worth of scrap metal from the wire re-enforcing.

Two scrap-metal recyclers move in to recover the wire from the steel-belted radials burnt earlier in the week.

A 46-year-old man is sitting on the railway line nearby. He won't give his name but explains that when the tyres are burning, "it becomes like a smog, thick and dense, and the breathing becomes difficult".

People living on the breadline in the squatter camps light piles of dumped tyres to reclaim wire that brings in 40c to 60c a tyre.

Now environmentalists want to end the deadly practice without depriving the salvors of their meagre livelihood.

Trymilda Solomons, 16, lives within a few hundred metres of the choking smoke. "It is not right to burn the tyres but some people cannot find work," says Trymilda, who is in Grade 11 at Oaklands High School.

At times, the toxic smoke becomes so thick that it stops traffic on the N2. Smog from tyre-burning was believed to be a factor in the pea-soup fog that caused the pile-up that killed 12 people two years ago.

The haze has occasionally forced pilots to use landing lights or make instrument landings in broad daylight.

The smoke itself is deadly and can cause cancer.

"Tyre-burning releases very toxic chemicals that are known to be carcinogenic," said Angela Andrews, of the Legal Resources Centre in Cape Town.

Ms Andrews cites a 1997 United States Environmental Protection Agency summary, which reports that the chemicals released by tyre-burning were more likely to cause cancer than those produced by burning oil, wood or coal. The agency reports that burning tyres release chemicals 13 000 times more toxic than those given off by a well-managed coal plant.

Birth defects and miscarriages can result.

"These emissions are really a horror story," said Eugene Cairncross, senior lecturer in chemical engineering at the Peninsula Technikon. Exposure to the fumes can cause serious cancer and respiratory damage, even in small doses, he said.

According to Ardiel Soeker, the project coordinator for the Western Cape Environmental Justice Networking Forum, tyres are not the only scrap burnt. Mattresses and cable wire are also burnt. But the tyre burning is more visible and the most deadly.



BREATHKING: Trymilda Solomons at the spot where people burn tyres. She says the smoke makes breathing difficult

"It is all centred on the metal-scrap dealers and they are situated within communities," said Mr Soeker.

People who produced tyres had a huge responsibility, he said.

For Philipp's scrap dealer Janson Andrew steel wire represents a tiny portion of his business.

"I can't help the burning. I see smoke in the bush and then they bring in the wire."

Mr Andrew pays 10c a kilogram for the wire. One tyre yields roughly 4kg to 6kg. Mr Andrew sells the scrap to South Africa Metals in

Epping.

Jonathan Biderman-Pam, director of South Africa Metals, said reclaiming the metal any other way was not economically viable. "People who have got no alternative in life are doing this very horrific thing, creating a lot of pollution, for a negligible return," he said.

Sulaiman Moosa, a family doctor in Mitchell's Plain, said the health hazards of burning tyres were well-known. He recommended a public campaign warning people of the dangers. Tyre-burning "needs to

be obliterated. The city council should do their duty in stamping it out", he said.

Hans Linde, of the Cape Metropolitan Council's air pollution division, said the council was considering disposing of the tyres in a more environmentally friendly way.

"It is a livelihood, one has to appreciate that."

Mr Linde suggested the burning could be stopped by offering a better price for whole tyres.

"We are promoting a cradle-to-grave concept for tyres." Such a system would build a disposal

mechanism into the purchase of a new tyre.

Working out a plan to collect nine million tyres discarded in South Africa each year is the South Africa Tyre Recycling Project in Johannesburg. A committee of tyre dealers, recyclers and cementers has submitted a plan for recycling to the Department of Environmental Affairs.

Etienne Human, project manager for the committee, sponsored by Dunlop, Goodyear, Bridgestone and Continental, said two

engulfs Cape Town's squatter camps
try to earn a few cents. **Ellen Spear** reports

into funeral pyre

AR 5/6/99

(76)



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Picture: Monde Dlakvu

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Etienne Human, project leader for the committee, sponsored by Dunlop, Goodyear, Bridgestone and Continental, said two strate-

gies had been proposed. One would add a surcharge on each tyre, paid by dealers and retreaders; the other would increase the fuel levy.

"We want to create a system whereby some money will change hands (between the individual recycler and the manufacturer).

"We will stop the burning and smog and people will earn some money," he added.

The proposal would create a non-profit company that would hand out contracts for tyre collection. Mr Human said the exact amount of the per-tyre rebate was the subject

of delicate negotiation.

Since the recommendations involve a levy, the committee does not expect to hear from the Department of Environment Affairs before Parliament reconvenes.

The proposal "would be better than the present system", said Mr Cairncross. But he is concerned that plans to burn the used tyres as fuel for cement kilns would concentrate toxins in particular areas.

Even though cement kilns burn hotter and more efficiently than the bush fires, they concentrate the toxic chemicals in certain areas.

Green issues get official attention

World Environment Day sees local government pledging greater care of Earth's resources

JOHN YEID

Environmental concerns will soon play a much greater part in the Cape Metropolitan Council's decisions, and all its policies and projects will have to be environment-friendly.

This commitment by the CMC was announced this week on the eve of World Environment Day today.

It follows the preparation by consultants of a working document for the CMC which sets out guidelines for integrated environmental management procedures to be applied to all the council's activities.

Brian Watkyns, chairman of the CMC's planning, environment and housing committee, said the guidelines would help to focus attention on the possible negative impacts of

development.

"In future we will have to keep a constant eye on environmental aspects of development. The days when development was encouraged without regard to environmental impacts are over."

Pierre Uys, chairman of the CMC's executive committee, said the recent Cape Metropolitan Festival of the Environment, which the council hosted and funded, had played an important role in raising public awareness about environmental issues. "As the overall planning authority in local government, we have a responsibility to ensure that all development within the Cape Metropolitan Area is carried out in an environmentally responsible manner."

In another development, a formal

Review Panel is being established to help the CMC introduce, and then monitor, its Integrated Metropolitan Environmental Policy.

Mr Uys said the Review Panel's role would be to generate debate, comments, suggestions and feedback on the various documents, reports and activities intrinsic to the policy, and that it would include a widespread public participation process.

"We believe that the Integrated Metropolitan Environmental Policy process is critical for the future wellbeing of the urban and rural environment in the Cape Metropolitan Area, and that all representative stakeholder groups should be part of the consultative and monitoring process," he said.

"Therefore the establishment of a

Review Panel is a logical step in the final product."

Non-hatted members of the panel include representatives from each of the metropolitan local councils, the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, Cape Nature Conservation, SA National Parks, National Monuments Council, several non-government organisations, Cape Chamber of Commerce and Industries, Wesgro, and the SA Municipal Workers' Union.

In its World Environment Day message, the Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa said the international theme for the day was: "Our Earth, Our future. Just save it!"

"We too can save the planet for our future by thinking globally and acting locally," said the society's Western Cape manager, Andy Gubb.

He said strengths at the disposal of local environmentalists included an array of new legislation and policy documents such as the Constitution, the National Environmental Management Act, a new Water Act, the Living Marine Resources Act, a coastal management policy, and improved environmental impact assessment regulations.

"These, among many others, have strengthened the environmental ethic and the path towards environmental justice.

"And our new national education curriculum acknowledges the significance of environmental awareness and the role youth can play in saving the planet for our future."

But weaknesses impacting on the environmental movement included the scale and complexity of some issues such as Spatial Development Initiatives at Saldanha Bay and Coega near Port Elizabeth, and the constant lack of funds for legal defence.

"There's also the pervasive idea that money, delegated authority and persuasive expertise, know better than ordinary citizens about their own local circumstances," Mr Gubb said.

"And some of the threats are more dramatic. These include unsustainable development for the rich, while using the name of the poor, being seen as justification for degrading and destroying ecosystems.

"Then there is also the greed and tenacity of developers, flawed environmental impact assessment processes, and official documents that are not easily available or not very readable to the majority of our people."

Mr Gubb also pointed out that continuing bad or unsustainable practices relating particularly to over-consumption, such as over-fishing and the proliferation of private cars, were leading to irreversible impacts such as global warming and ozone depletion.

However, there were also many opportunities for making a difference beyond simple acts like recycling waste, he added.

"We can now bring pressure to bear on elected politicians and councillors to curtail environmentally damaging decisions nationally, provincially and locally, and to start restorative projects like the 'Working for Water' scheme."



BLOOMING LOVELY: Wetlands expert Ania Groeicki with children from the Philippi settlement at the 1,5ha pond she wants to turn into a field of arum lilies Pictu

Lilies and lucre from dirty ponds

TOM HOOD

(56) ST(cm) 6/6/99
 POLLUTED ponds on the Cape Flats could soon become lucrative flower nurseries, providing jobs for poor people living in nearby shacks.

A pilot project for growing and exporting arum lilies is being investigated by chemical engineer Ania Groeicki, an expert in upgrading wetlands and treating industrial effluent.

She has the support of officials at Cape Town municipality and at Wesgro, the development agency.

A large pond fed by stormwater at Browns Farm, Philippi, and a natural wetland at Khayelitsha have been identified. The Browns Farm ponds cost the city thousands of rands to maintain. Reeds, silt and rubbish have to be bulldozed every year.

Instead, Groeicki reckons, it could be cleared of weeds and grow about 60 000 arum lily plants a year in furrows. Each plant produces between three and eight flowers which could be exported to the Dutch flower market, the biggest in the world.

The nursery would provide about 60 seasonal jobs, mainly for women, in late harvest and spring and all sorts of spin-offs, she says. The site could become a park with benches and trees and a playground.

Councillor Mteto Ntlanganiso and his community have offered to help with security.

"Hopefully, the product will pay for the maintenance of the area and security," says Groeicki.

Botanists believe they could also harvest medicinal plants, loofah plants and reeds for craftwork.

Green alliance tees

off golf course battle

Twin challenge to Paradyskloof estate plan

ALJ 7/6/99 (56)

An alliance of conservationists has mounted a vigorous, twin-pronged assault on the proposed Paradyskloof golf course estate and hotel on the south-eastern slopes of Stellenbosch mountain.

Their first tactic involved filing a formal appeal against Cape Nature Conservation's decision to authorise the controversial R200-million-plus development.

It is one of the most substantial appeals of its kind since Cape Nature Conservation assumed a statutory obligation for environmental impact assessments, in terms of the amended Environment Conservation Act.

The alliance also argues there is "a range of procedural and substantive flaws" in the process which led to Western Cape Planning Minister Michael Louis approving a rezoning application for the development.

Its second line of attack has been to instruct its attorneys to investigate legal options to remedy these "flaws", and this is now being done.

The appeal, sent to the Western Cape director of the environment, Jocelyne Kane-Berman, last month, was lodged by the Stellenbosch Save the Mountain Alliance.

The alliance consists of three conservation groups - the Wildlife Society, Brandwacht Action Group and



JOHN YELD ENVIRONMENT WRITER

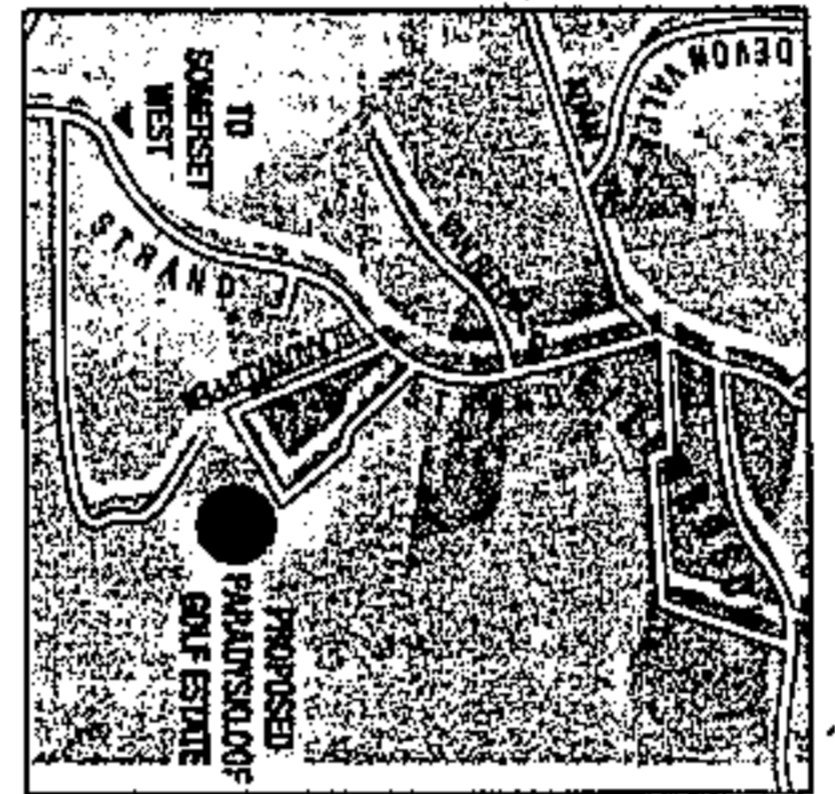
the Stellenbosch Interest Group - and two individuals, Stephen Finmore and Marie-Louise Radziwill.

Mr Finmore is a Jonkershoek resident and an office-bearer in the Wildlife Society, and Ms Radziwill is a sculptor living in the Stellenbosch suburb of Brandwacht. She organised a 1 600-signature petition against the proposed development on a farm on the slopes of Stellenbosch mountain just outside the town on the Somerset West Road.

The development includes 547 houses and a 200-room hotel, and a 450 000m² storage dam on the Paradyskloof River to irrigate the golf course, among other uses.

Key environmental concerns include the impact of the dam on the river and the visual impact of the proposed development, which will be substantially above the mountain's 240m contour line.

In their 25-page notice of appeal, the alliance's attorneys set out



11 specific grounds of appeal. These include:

- That Cape Nature Conservation erred, or failed to apply its mind, when authorising the development without complying with procedures stipulated under the environmental impact assessment regulations of the Environment Conservation Act.

- That Cape Nature Conservation failed to deal properly with relevant and substantial issues raised by the alliance.

- That Cape Nature Conservation failed to ensure a proper public participation process regarding the proposed development, as required by the environmental impact assessment regulations.

A Cape Nature Conservation spokeswoman confirmed that two appeals against the proposed development had been received.

"We are inviting legal advice at the moment," she said.

The Paradyskloof golf estate proposal has been mired in controversy from the start.

The farm was owned by the Stellenbosch municipality and was originally earmarked to generate funds for the Reconstruction and Development Programme.

The municipality awarded a tender for the development on the farm to Swedish developer Nordic Trust in 1997, despite being presented with a 700-signature petition from local residents who were unhappy with the proposal.

The petition never found its way on to the council agenda, however.

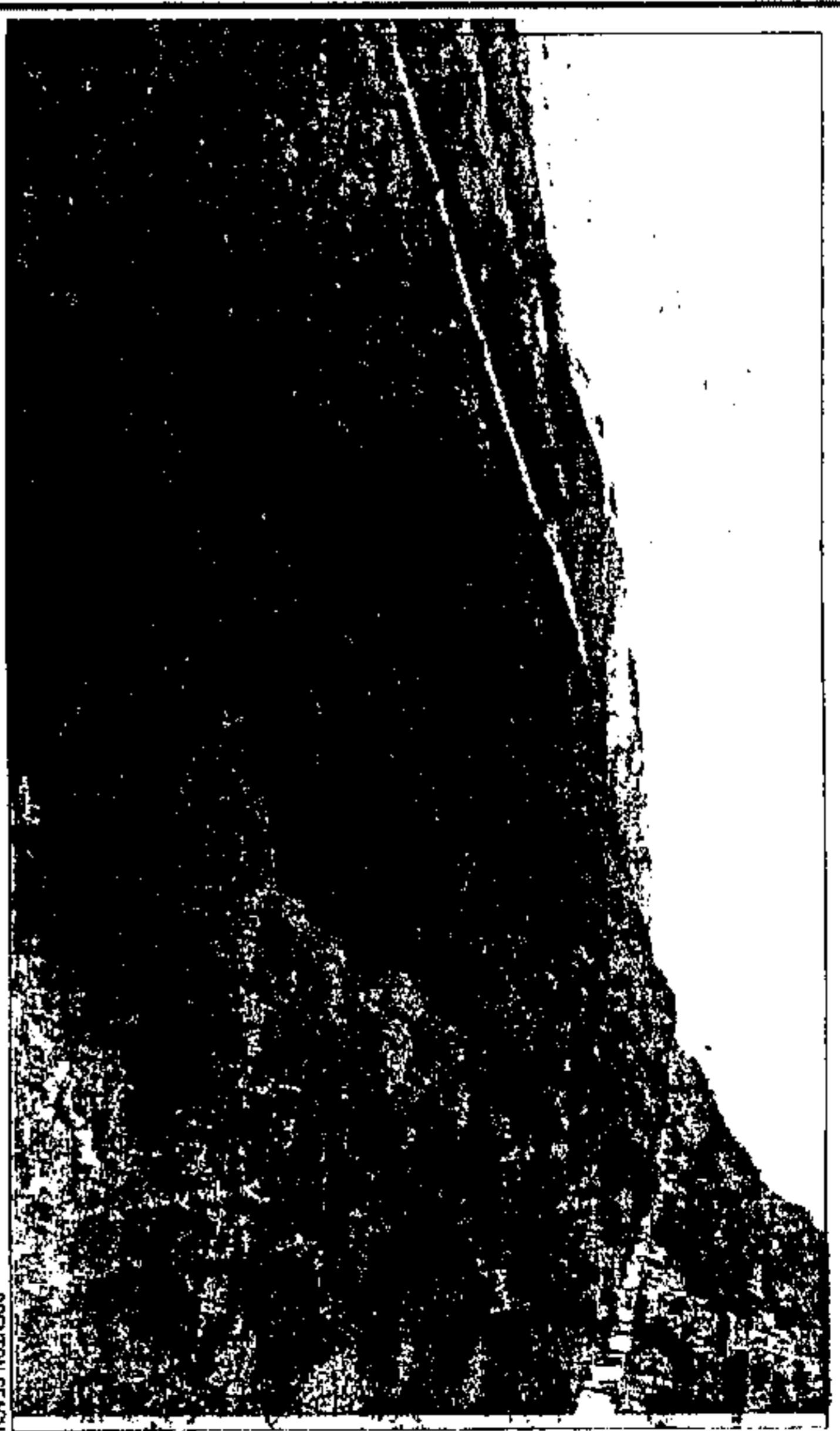
The municipality's director of town planning, Deon Carstens, and two councillors were taken on a week-long tour of golf courses in Europe at the developer's expense in November 1997.

A letter allegedly sent by Mr Carstens to the developer a month later was leaked to the media. It stated: "As you also know, my in-laws are running a very successful estate agency in Stellenbosch. My wife recently became one of the directors and I would strongly recommend that you use their company as your principal or sole agent."

The letter was obtained by African National Congress councillors from developer Johan Zetterberg in Sweden.

Democratic Party councillor Pieter Viljoen forced a special council meeting to discuss the issue, and Mr Carstens was subsequently reprimanded at a disciplinary hearing.

Natural facelift



Beauty restored: the spectacular scenic drive between Kommetjie and Scarborough - one of the most popular tourist routes in the Peninsula, pictured above - is much cleaner this week, thanks to the efforts of the Kommetjie Environmental Awareness Group (KEAG). The group sponsored nine unemployed people to collect litter and garbage, pictured below, which had been dumped along the drive as part of its World Environment Day contribution. In 10 days, the workers collected more than 30 five-ton truckloads of garbage from the area



KEAG

Eyesore 'pepperpot towers' set to be cut down to size

PRISCILLA SINGH

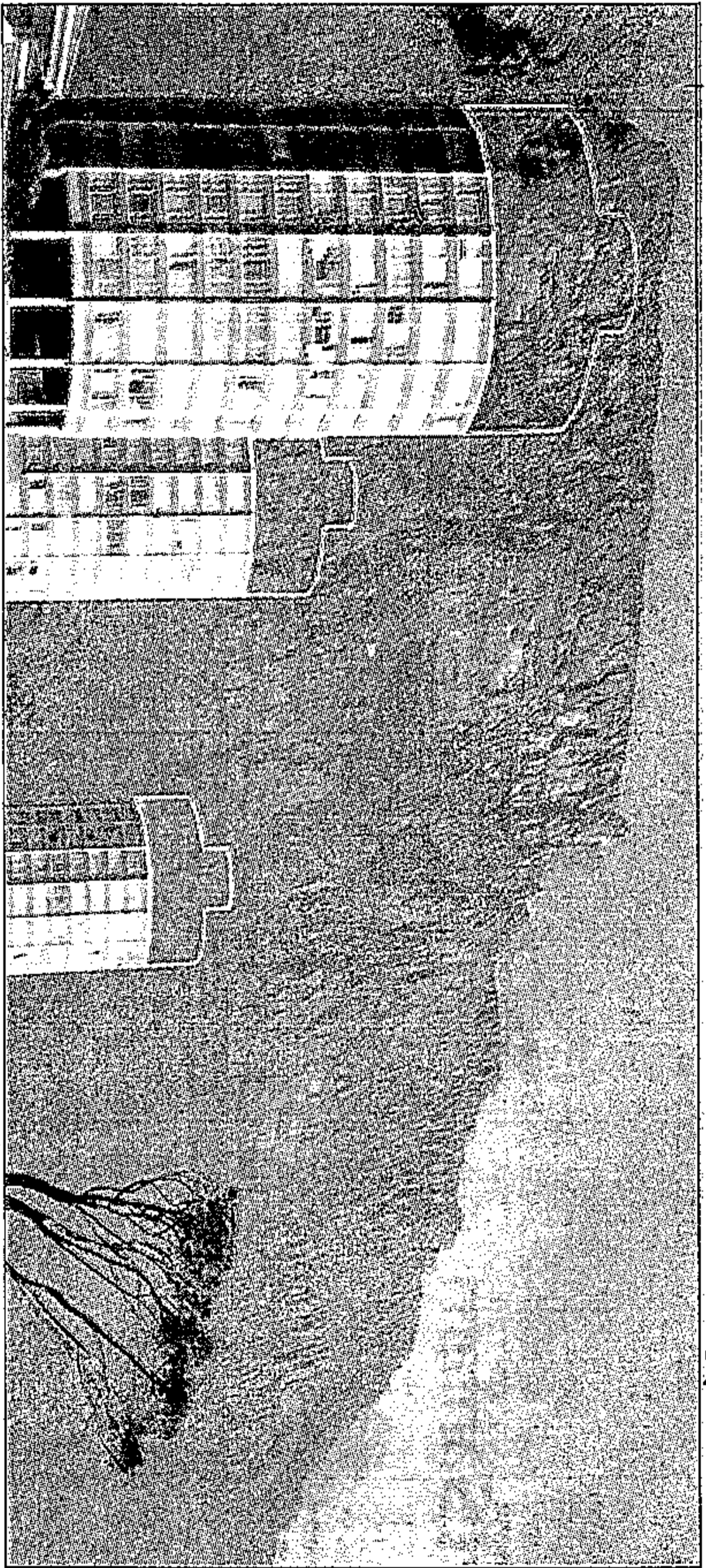
THEY have often been referred to by crude names — the "pepperpots", the "salt and pepper" towers, the "tampon towers" and the "toilet rolls".

Now the controversial Disa Park flats complex in Vredehoek at the foot of Table Mountain, which caused an outcry when it was built decades ago, is in the news again, but this time it's good news.

A proposal by the board of trustees to reduce the height of the towers as part of its redevelopment plans has been given the thumbs-up by the body corporate, and Capetonians could soon see three storeys knocked off the top of each tower.

It all started when Disa Park's board of trustees wanted to renovate the towers. City of Cape Town's executive director of planning and economic development David Daniels said yesterday the council had not supported the board of trustees' original proposal to renovate the towers. After a further consideration, the board returned to the council with the suggestion of reducing the height of the towers and making up the lost space on available land on the side, Daniels said yesterday.

"I haven't seen any details or drawings yet, but the principle of making the towers more acceptable environmentally, is appealing. It will have a major impact on the landscape and we have to do proper



DOWNSIZING: Most Capetonians agree that they're an eyesore. Now the controversial Disa Park "pepperpots" might each have three top storeys lopped off in proposed renovations.

visual and environment assessments with public participation necessary to the whole process," Daniels said.

The R2 million Disa Park project was first mooted in May, 1965 for the development of three 14-storey blocks of flats surrounded by eight acres of parkland on the slopes of the mountain. Amid strong coun-

cil opposition, the plans were eventually approved by the Administrator of the Cape, Nico Malan, in 1966.

What we see today is an ugly blemish against the backdrop of Table Mountain, 17 storeys high. Suggestions ranging from painting the towers green, khaki and brown to blend in with the mountain to

placing huge advertising signs atop the buildings have been forthcoming over the years.

The blueprint in 1965 said the flats would provide homes for 250 families and include a swimming pool, two bowling greens, two tennis courts, a creche, a children's playground and clubhouse.

PICTURE: MAZEEM ISRAEL

The flats were to be built on the modern tower block design resting on a large podium set into the slope of the mountain. The proposals were submitted to the City Council by Vredehoek Estates (Pty) Ltd. The directors were a G Dale-Kuys, a city accountant, and H de G Laurie, managing director of African Homes Trust Insurance Company.

They said in a memorandum to the council that it would be difficult to find a property of this size and position anywhere in South Africa.

"There was a view of the mountain which would not be obstructed, and a sweeping panorama of Table Bay — all in proximity to the central city." First plans were for a township comprising 32 small plots, but it was felt that this would not "harmonise" with the area. The council said all it was prepared to allow was a height of three storeys.

City engineer S S Morris added: "A correct decision was of great importance to Cape Town. A wrong decision may well mar the landscape of the city for decades to come."

Now, more than 30 years later, Disa Park is still a sore point among Capetonians. Feasibility studies have shown it was technically possible to knock off some of the upper storeys, but it has not yet been decided how many. Work is only expected to begin in about 12 months' time.

ET 8/6/99

(56)

Suburbs in oil smoke scare

Nausea as Milnerton refinery belches fumes after power

JOHN YELD
ENVIRONMENT REPORTER

Huge clouds of noxious black smoke blotted the sky over northern Milnerton and the adjoining suburbs about today after a power failure caused the Caltex oil refinery to shut down operations.

People working in neighbouring Montagu Gardens started complaining of

headaches and of feeling nauseous soon afterwards, and criticised the immediate response from the refinery.

Residents in Table View and Bothasig have been involved in a years-long battle with Caltex on the issue of air pollution.

There have been allegations that their properties are damaged by the fall-out from the refinery, and that the health of their children is being undermined because of the proximity of the plant to their homes.

Two years ago Caltex reneged on a 1994 promise to reduce sulphur dioxide emissions by 80% this year, citing financial constraints.

Gordon Povey, the refinery's environmental health and safety manager, confirmed today there had been a "total" power failure.

"We're still trying to figure out exactly what went wrong and we're trying to get hold of Eskom," he said soon after the first

complaints started streaming in.

Mr Povey confirmed that the shut-down had caused big quantities of black smoke to be released, but said this had been unavoidable in the circumstances.

Coral Norton, a secretary at the Montagu Gardens premises of an international company, said she had phoned the refinery to complain that the smoke was making her feel extremely nauseous.

The response had been that "the smoke

is just a nuisance factor and it won't kill you", she said.

The general manager of her company, Simon van Zuydam, said the alarm bells at the refinery had started ringing and soon afterwards there had been a strong gas smell.

"It came sweeping across here, and we've already had a few reports of headaches and of people feeling nauseous," he said about 11.20am.

1995
MILNERTON
(5)

'Chop more than three floors off the pepperpots'

NORMAN JOSEPH
METRO REPORTER

More than three floors should be sliced off the top of Disa Park, the "pepperpots" on Devil's Peak, to weaken their impact on the mountain.

That's the view of senior City of Cape Town official Steve Townsend, who is in charge of land-use in the city.

The board of trustees at Disa Park in Vredehoek want to upgrade the complex, and improve the site's facade, and have proposed removing the top three storeys of the three 17-storey towers.

The council says it will not consider plans to redevelop the complex until the height is reduced.

This was discussed at a meeting yesterday between the council's land-use officials

and architect Ben Kotlowitz, acting on behalf of the trustees.

Proposed development on the 3,6ha site includes town houses, single flats and other dwellings of various sizes.

City officials and the architect agreed that all tenants, flat owners, ratepayers' associations and neighbouring property owners should be consulted.

Mr Townsend said Disa Park had been

an eyesore for 30 years, and not only the top three floors should go.

"Three floors will not make a meaningful difference. More will have to go," he said.

Mr Townsend said the trustees accepted the idea of the towers' height reduction and would "explore the possibilities".

Chief trustees Werner Angheben said those whose flats were demolished would get first choice in the new development.

ARG 9/6/99

(56)

Runaway mountain fire 'blessing in disguise'

ART 11/6/99

JOHN YELD

ENVIRONMENT WRITER

(56)

The "controlled" fire in the Silvermine Valley which burned out of control over the mountain on Wednesday was a blessing in disguise by reducing a major fire threat to the area.

This is the assessment of Howard Langley, environmental manager of the Cape Peninsula National Park. He was speaking in the wake of criticism from residents in Clovelly and the Boyes Drive area of Kalk Bay and St James.

They hit out at the park's managers for allowing the burn to get out of control and threaten their homes.

But Mr Langley said that although the fire had appeared dramatic, the firefighters had not considered any occupied homes to be seriously threatened at any stage.

He confirmed that the ceilings of one house off Boyes Drive had been slightly damaged by fire when sparks were sucked through the eaves. However, this fire had been quickly put out with a garden hose.

Mr Langley said the park's environmental management staff had been planning a controlled burn at Silvermine for the past month as an essential part of their veld management strategy and to reduce the high fuel load in the valley, but that they'd been waiting for optimum conditions.

A controlled burn had been started last Thursday, but had been put out when the wind changed and it threatened to run out of control.

"Based on a number of factors, including long-range weather forecasts, a controlled burn was started at Silvermine on Monday. This fire was successful and was extinguished the same day. A second successful controlled burn was undertaken on Tuesday.

"These fires had both been designed to burn the outside perimeter of the area to be burned, creating a fire-break around a central unburnt area."

The controlled burn in this central area had been started under optimum conditions on Wednesday.

"Ordinarily, it would have presented no threat. However, a strong north-westerly wind unexpectedly arose and the fire jumped the fire-break in two places, on either side of a mountain slope burned three months ago."

One fire had burned across the mountain towards Kalk Bay, while the other had gone through the valley to the mountainside above Clovelly. Staff from the national park and local authorities, volunteer firefighters and two SA Defence Force helicopters had been deployed to protect the urban edge along Clovelly Road and Boyes Drive, said Mr Langley.

"Although the fire appeared dramatic, with high flames and much smoke, at no stage were houses considered to be seriously under threat.

"And although some relatively young fynbos veld was burnt, much of the area above Clovelly and Boyes Drive was in excess of 25 years old and well overdue for a burn.

"Many local firefighters and conservation officials believe this fire was a blessing in disguise, having reduced a very serious fire hazard under conditions of relative safety."

Cableway company wins enviro award

Environmental watchdogs taken aback

(56) ARLT 12/6/99

TWEET GAINSBOROUGH-WAING

The Table Mountain Aerial Cableway Company has received an environmental award, much to the surprise of some of Cape Town's environmental watchdogs.

Chairman John Harrison this week received the prestigious Environmental Planning Professions Interdisciplinary Committee's 1999 National Premium Award for integrated environmental management, awarded by engineering and scientific bodies.

The award was for the environmentally sensitive manner in which the new cable-

way was built and is operated.

But Louis de Villiers, chairman of the Peninsula Mountain Fund, said: "An award of this nature is premature as there are still unresolved problems with the upgrade."

He said the protruding lookout platforms were still a bone of contention and complaints about the brightness of the lights of the upper cable station overlooking Camps Bay had not been addressed. Cecilia Assad, of the Save Table Mountain Campaign, said there were still problems with sewage disposal.

Mr Harrison said: "We took the high road and it was all worth it. The mountain

had to come first but now we have a world-class facility that complements the beauty of the mountain, which is a tribute to all who worked on it."

He said his company had been ahead of its time. It had insisted on putting in place environmental controls long before they became law.

Rick Taylor, head of tourism at the Cape Metropolitan Council, said the award was a great boost for the local tourism industry.

"Table Mountain is setting a standard that must be carried throughout the tourism industry if we are to realise our tourist potential," he said.



MAN AT THE TOP: chairman John Harrison with the trophy for environmental management

Picture: JACK LESTRADE

Cultural safeguards for park

BABALWA SHOTA ST

(cm) 13/6/99

(56)

NATURE-LOVERS believe the veldskoенblaar flower should be left to bloom in the veld, but for traditional healers the bulb is a valuable resource in treating diseases that can not be cured by modern medicine.

Now the Cape Peninsula National Park is trying to bridge the gap between conservation and cultural heritage by linking the two through workshops it is holding in various

Environmental education co-ordinator of the Peninsula park's social ecology department, said the workshops were aimed at establishing "linkages towards cultural and natural heritage management".

"There are people who have lived on natural resources a long time and the new conservation approach recognises their indigenous knowledge systems in promoting conservation ethic."

Nangu added that the park management sought to integrate culture and nature.

The first workshop was held in Philippi. Most of those who attended were women and young people.

"We found that people had limited knowledge about the concept of the park, so one of the aims is to promote awareness of its existence," Nangu said.

"People need to be aware of

the difference between the national park and the recreational parks found in their neighbourhoods."

According to Nangu, the park — which covers the Cape Peninsula mountain chain from Signal Hill to Cape Point — also has cultural, religious and economic value.

"We are identifying numerous interesting sites such as kramats

(Muslim burial sites), graves, shipwrecks and military sites. We urge the community to help us preserve oral history and design cultural interpretation programmes.

"For example, there is an interesting slave pathway below Platteklip Gorge unknown to many. There are also springs and forests at Kirstenbosch which certain communities believe

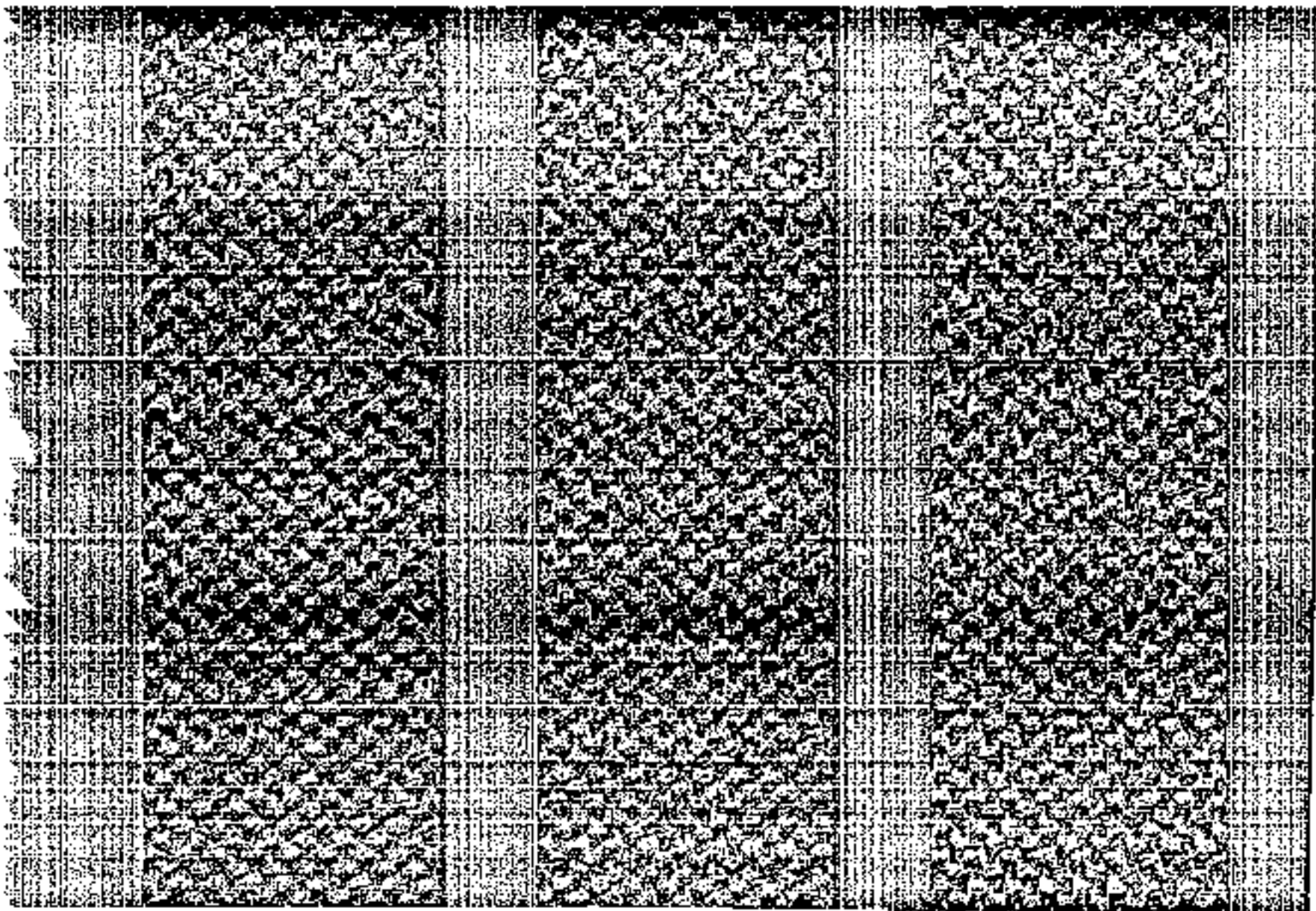
have religious and spiritual significance.

"The CPNP wants to reinforce the idea that the park belongs to the people and we wish to include all the values that different communities attach to the mountain and its surrounds."

The areas in which the CPNP's workshops are being held include Khayelitsha, Mitchell's Plain and Constantia.



NATURE MEETS CULTURE: Environmental education co-ordinator Mvusi Nangu visits a kramat — a Muslim burial site — on Signal Hill
Picture: KIM LUDBROOK





JOHN YELD

Island guardian: Anton Wolfaardt, Cape Nature Conservation's manager of the proclaimed Dassen Island nature reserve

Penguins stand up to be counted ...

But at courtship time they get skittish

ARG 14/6/99 (hb)

**JOHN
YELD**



ENVIRONMENTWRITER

Back in 1927, then lighthouse engineer H C Lee Cooper wrote a stern entry in the logbook of the Dassen Island light after arriving by tug for an inspection.

"More care and less speed in driving the lorry to and from the landing beach is required. If I see any more dead penguins I shall have to stop the use of the lorry," he warned.





ENVIRONMENT WRITER

Back in 1927, then lighthouse engineer H C Lee Cooper wrote a stern entry in the logbook of the Dassen Island light after arriving by tug for an inspection.

"More care and less speed in driving the lorry to and from the landing beach is required. If I see any more dead penguins I shall have to stop the use of the lorry," he warned.

His comments are a telling indictment on the casual, even callous, attitude of island staff in earlier times – and are at least part of the explanation for the ecological disaster which saw the African penguin population on our coast plummet from an estimated 1,5 million adult birds at the turn of the century to just 160 000 now.

Another reason for the population crash was egg collecting: in just one season, an estimated 700 000 penguin eggs were removed from the island and offered for sale.

But times have changed, and Dassen Island's African (formerly jackass) penguins – and all the other species on the island as well, like the Cape, black and white-breasted cormorants, black oystercatchers, pelicans, swift terns and even angulate tortoises – are now fully protected by the watchful eye of Cape Nature Conservation.

The island is a proclaimed nature reserve, and the person responsible for its ecological health is manager Anton Wolfaardt. He shares one of the conservation organisation's cottages on the shores of a bay on the northern end of the island with his wife Leigh-Anne, an artist by training who helps him with field work.

Also helping out at present is Wilna Wilkinson, a nature conservation student at Saasveld in George – a branch of the Port Elizabeth Technikon – who is doing six months' practical work on the island.

She is researching the aftermath of the 1994 Apollo Sea oil spill in the area, when some 7 000 penguins were saved from certain death during a major co-operative rescue mission.

They were ringed during their rehabilitation at the Rietvlei headquarters of Sancob (SA National Foundation for the Conservation of Coastal Birds), and part of Ms Wilkinson's work involves comparative studies on burrow occupancy and breeding success on Dassen Island between ringed and non-ringed birds.

"I love it – I could live here for the rest of my life, although I'm also planning to go to Marion Island for a year," she said.

Mr Wolfaardt, who *has* spent a year on Marion Island – it's where he acquired his particular affinity for seabirds – spent 1996 on Dassen doing contract work for Cape Nature Conservation in the wake of the Apollo Sea oil spill.

Then, after a year on the mainland, he returned to the island as manager in March last year.

Last week he was preparing for the island's annual census of the penguin popu-



JOHN YELD

West Coast wonder: beautiful Dassen Island, which lies 11km off the coast near Yzerfontein



JOHN YELD

Wild at heart: some of Dassen Island's African penguins, which are shy in the presence of humans

lation, assisted by two Marine and Coastal Management (formerly Sea Fisheries) researchers and three honorary nature conservation officers.

The census is part of a bigger programme to monitor the now threatened African penguin population and to see whether it has started recovering from the earlier decimation.

Last year there were just over 10 000 breeding pairs on Dassen Island.

"I have a gut feeling that there are a few more than that now – there's a lot of activity at the moment," said Mr Wolfaardt.

Penguins can breed all year round, although many of them are breeding at present. There are about eight dense breeding colonies on the island, as well as many scattered nests.

Researchers have to be very careful not to disturb the birds while doing their census. Unlike their cousins at the Boulders breeding colony near Simon's Town, which seem impervious to close human presence, the penguins on Dassen are still wild and are clearly disturbed if people approach too closely.

Normally, much of the island is out of

bounds to visitors – and even to the researchers.

"Recording and monitoring definitely causes some disturbance," said Mr Wolfaardt.

"During breeding there is a lot of courting and display and the birds are quite skittish. So any disruption to the courtship could impact on the breeding attempt – and in the long-term that disturbance could definitely result in lower breeding success."

This is one of the reasons why there is still a strict "no tourism" policy for the island, although Cape Nature Conservation is about to decide whether to launch a formal investigation into whether some form of tourism would be acceptable.

"My personal opinion is that if we do decide to investigate, we would need to go the full environmental impact assessment route, like the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism did for Marion Island," said Mr Wolfaardt.

Fortunately for the African penguins, it's all a far cry from those unhappy days when the Dassen Island lorry drivers took whatever route they fancied – and killed whatever birds happened to be in the way.

Conservation efforts recognised with top environmental awards

(76)

ARG 14/6/99

ENVIRONMENT WRITER

Simply the best! That's the verdict on several local conservationists for winning top environmental awards recently.

On World Environment Day last week, two local conservation groups – Oude Molen Farm Village in Observatory and the Red Hill Conservation Group – won categories in the inaugural Mail & Guardian Green Trust Awards.

These awards are the amalgamation of the earlier WWF GreenTrust Environment Awards and the Mail & Guardian Greening the Future Awards.

Oude Molen Farm Village, started by environmentalist Gary Glass three years ago on part of the Valkenberg psychiatric hospital estate, won the Urban Renewal award.

The judges said that the village offered "an impressive community outreach programme and a holistic approach to urban living" through its efforts which include recycling, growing organic vegetables and environmental education.

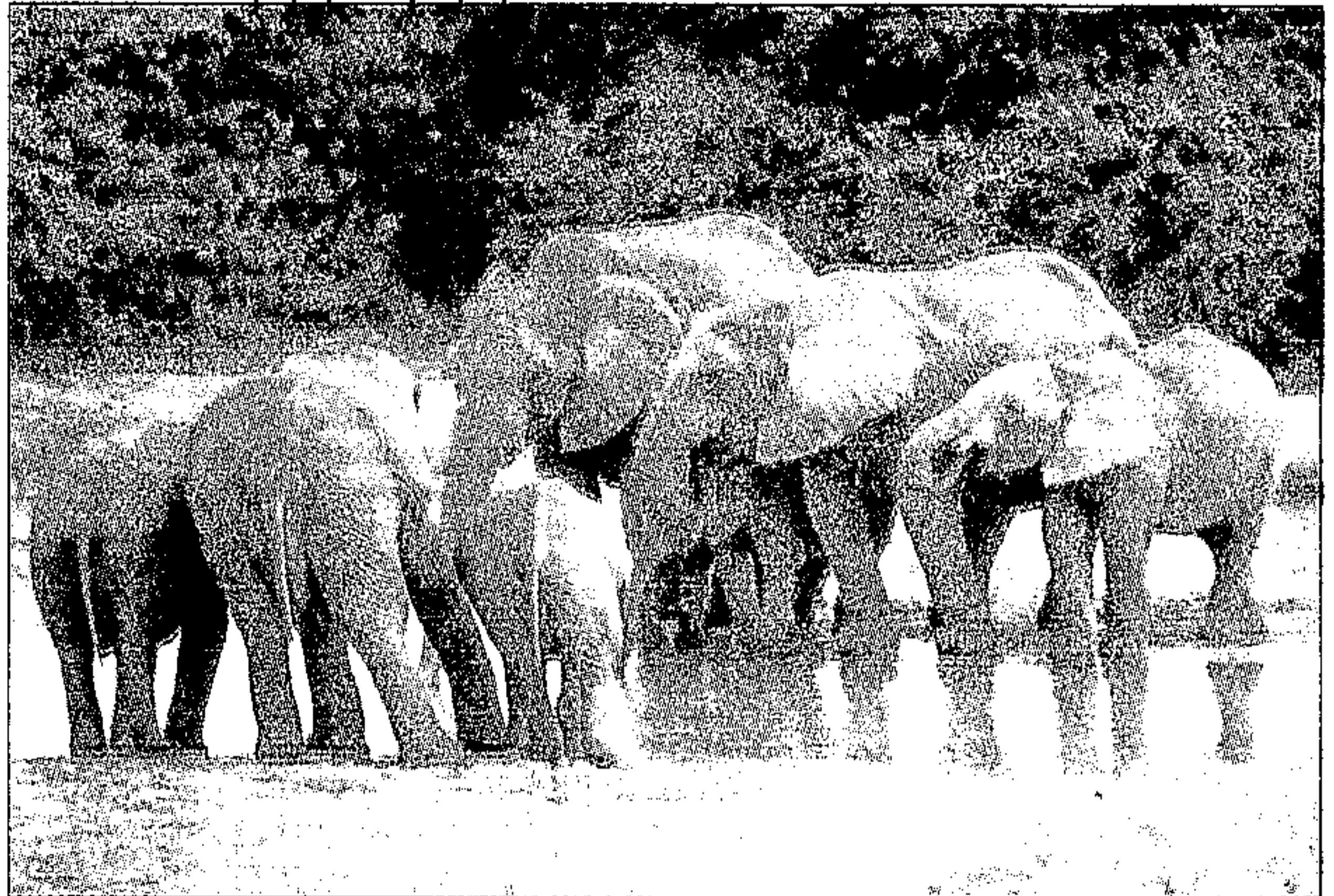
The Red Hill Conservation Group at Simon's Town, which consists of 14 private landowners who work jointly to eradicate invasive alien vegetation from their botanically rich area, won the Natural Resources category.

The judges said the group had successfully removed alien vegetation from at least 1 500ha of fynbos, using workers from the local community.

"Its activities have expanded to include a wider range of community and educational projects," they said.

The overall winner in the Emerging Conservation category was the "Proposal for a Greater Addo Elephant Park in the Eastern Cape" by the Terrestrial Ecology Resource Unit at the University of Port Elizabeth. The proposal involves expanding the existing Addo national park to an area of 398 000ha, making it the third largest conservation area in the country and spanning six different biomes (natural systems) – including a marine component – with enormous potential for the development of tourism and job-creation in the Eastern Cape.

The overall winner in the Established



JOHN YELD

Broad horizons: these Addo elephants could be enjoying new pastures soon if award-winning proposals for a Greater Addo Elephant Park are accepted

Conservation category was Juenesse Park, founder of Trees for Africa which promotes conservation in urban townships.

The judges said: "Jeunesse has dedicated a decade to tackling one of the most difficult aspects of environmental conservation: promoting conservation among the millions of South Africans living in sprawling urban townships, often under appalling conditions."

Two prominent South African conservationists – Anton Rupert and Ian Player – were presented with Green Trust Awards for Lifetime Achievement in Environmental Conservation.

Dr Rupert, one the country's leading businessmen, is also a prominent conservationist who founded the South African branch of the World Wide Fund For Nature (WWF-SA) in 1968. He still serves as president. Recently he also helped establish the Peace Parks Foundation to promote trans-frontier conservation initiatives.

Dr Player is known for many achievements. As a Natal Parks Board ranger for

22 years, he was instrumental in saving the white rhino from extinction. He also established an extensive anti-poaching network in the province, introduced wilderness trails and founded the Wilderness Leadership School.

After leaving the NPB in 1974 Dr Player founded the International Wilderness Foundation in the United States and the Wilderness Foundation in the United Kingdom, and established the World Wilderness Congress.

■ The Table Mountain Cableway Company has been awarded the prestigious 1999 National Premium Award for integrated environmental management, presented by the Environmental Planning Professions Interdisciplinary Committee (EPPIC), for its recent multi-million rand upgrade.

EPPIC is an umbrella organisation for a number of professional bodies, including the SA Institute of Ecologists and Environmental Scientists, SA Planning Institute, SA Institution of Consulting Engineers and the SA Institution of Civil Engineering.

Spotlight on women's role in saving arid land

'Desertification' a danger

Today is World Desertification Day, and environmentalists all over the globe are highlighting growing problems associated with arid and semi-arid lands like the Karoo, Namaqualand and the Kalahari.

They are also focusing on the role of women in preventing further land degradation in such areas, because the theme for this year's celebration is "Strengthening the role of women in the decision-making process of the Convention to Combat Desertification".

The convention was a product of the Earth Summit, held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, and South Africa became a signatory in 1995.

The Government is taking its responsibilities under the convention seriously, and the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism recently established a new chief directorate to manage this and two other conventions which deal with bio-diversity and climate change.

Department spokeswoman Wilma Lutsch explained that "desertification" did not mean the spread of sanddunes over previously fertile lands, as was commonly thought.

"Rather, it refers to the degradation of arid or semi-arid lands to the point where they can no longer sustain crops or other vegetation, and it's not necessarily a dramatic



JEANETTE KOOPMAN
ENVIRONMENT WRITER

change from fertile land to sandy desert," she said.

The process of desertification occurred mostly on what were known as "marginal lands" where the climate was often prone to long periods of drought.

"These dry lands are being placed under increasing pressure from humans because of expanding populations and other socio-economic processes.

"And because they are in areas of low rainfall, they become degraded very easily, to the extent that they become barren and useless."

Desertification was a serious problem worldwide, and in South Africa there were large semi-arid areas prone to desertification, she added.

"In fact, these areas are being degraded at an alarming rate.

"Such desertification has a tremendously negative impact on society, the environment and the economy.



ROY WHEAT

Restoration: the Convention to Combat Desertification aims to empower people like Jeanette Koopman, a domestic worker on a farm in the Hartam Karoo, to care for their environment.

"When productive dry lands are degraded, the people who live there are no longer able to support them-

selves and slide into increased poverty, with all the accompanying social problems.

"Often people have to migrate to other areas and become refugees dependent on food aid to survive."

The theme of this year's World Desertification Day was relevant because there were more women

than men in rural areas, and they were highly dependent on natural resources such as water, soil and firewood, Ms Lutsch said.

"Women also take care of these resources in a number of ways, so their input at the level of decision-making is therefore imperative.

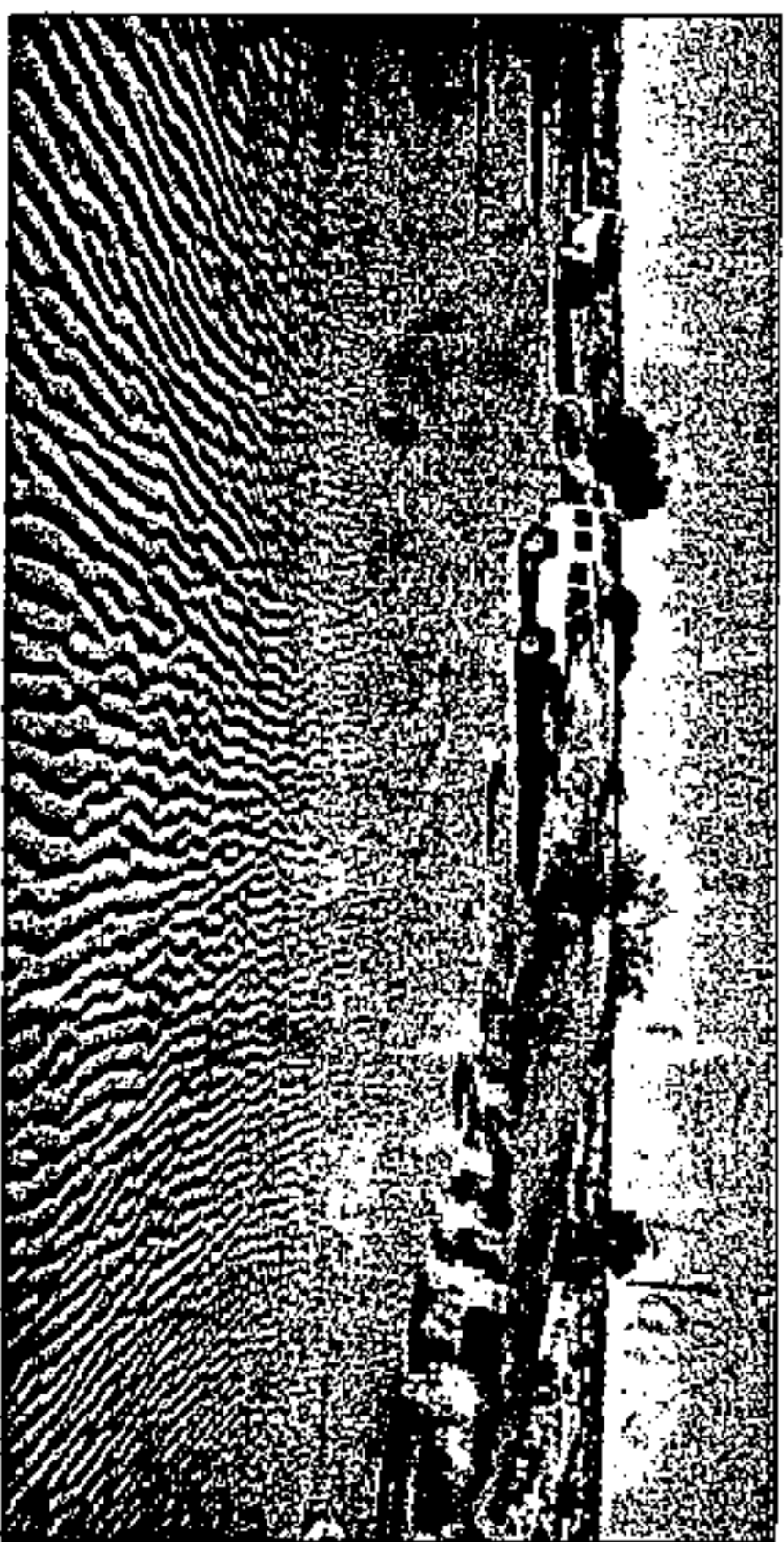
"In the past, men took most of the management decisions in rural areas and in our government.

"In a democratic society, all the people should share responsibility for managing natural resources, and an enabling environment is therefore needed to enhance the role of women in decision-making about land management issues that affect them."

The desertification convention stresses the need for affected countries to prepare and implement action programmes to prevent land degradation of arid and semi-arid areas.

In South Africa, the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism has launched a National Action Programme, in association with the Environmental Monitoring Group (EMG), a non-governmental organisation.

Ms Lutsch said today's World Desertification Day activities were organised in association with the national departments of land affairs, agriculture, and water affairs and forestry, with support from the United Nations Development Programme, EMG and the Environmental Development Agency.



ANDREW NEGAM

Fragile land: the arid Kalahari, where over-stocking has caused desertification in some areas.



ROY WHEAT

At risk: the lovely Knersvlakte near Vanrhynsdorp is a typical area vulnerable to desertification.

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Peninsula developers stir troubled waters

Hartbeespoort Dam residents insist the water affairs department enforce the law against construction group, writes Xolani Xundu

9D 18/6/99

(76)

THE developers of an upmarket golfing estate at Hartbeespoort Dam may face legal action from the water affairs department, which says a new peninsula being built on the dam could impede water flow.

Residents at the nearby upmarket townships of Cosmos and Eagle's Landing are up in arms over the development of the R500m Pecanwood Golfing and Housing Estate, which they say will reduce the carrying capacity of the dam and create an environment conducive to poisonous algae.

The algae may develop along the banks because of the disturbance to the environment.

Although the department does not own the land, it has servitude rights to manage it in terms of the Water Act of 1998.

Pecanwood Holdings, a joint venture between SA group Maccon and Malaysian company Country Heights, is alleged to have transgressed Section 21 of the act by building a peninsula at the dam.

The group has already built a R12m golf course, designed by golfing legend Jack Nicklaus, and 720 housing units at the site.

Sources say that the company is planning to build about 20 up-market houses on the peninsula, which will carry price tags of about R1.5m each.

However, residents of Cosmos and Eagle's Landing say the developers are raping the environment.

According to chief infrastructure officer of the Hartbeespoort local council, Black Aller, the council has written letters to Pecanwood Estate, asking it to stop the construction following complaints from the public.

However, construction of the controversial peninsula was in full swing when Business Day visited the area last Friday.

Aller said the land on the side of the dam from which Pecanwood

was building the peninsula was part of a farm.

"The council has no powers to stop them. In other words, they can do as they wish. The soil underneath the water forms part of their property," he said.

Following a public outcry, there were meetings between the council and Pecanwood Estate.

The council had since backed out and was awaiting the outcome of the meeting between the water affairs department and Pecanwood, Aller said.

The chairman of Eagle's Landing's body corporate, Clive Timson, said he had no problem with the construction of a golf course but objected to the peninsula.

"The development is interfering with nature and they do not care about that. There needs to be a balance between development and preserving the environment," Timson said. "When a man sees a dollar sign he is unable to control himself. That is pure greed."

He said the building of the peninsula was motivated by a high demand for waterside properties.

Cosmos Residents and Ratepayers' Association president Gary Mackay said the association was concerned about the precedent being set by Pecanwood.

People living on the dam have direct water rights and could use it for sport purposes.

"If people are allowed to build whatever they like on the dam, we can have similar developments around it where people just build peninsulas," Mackay said.

"That will affect the capacity of the dam and creates an environmental hazard where the poisonous algae can breed. We are trying to preserve an ecosystem that is very fragile."

Mackay accused Pecanwood of disregarding government legislation. "We have a company that is

bigger than the department of water affairs; a company that thinks money can buy silence.

"They (the department) actually indicated that they might not have the money to face these people in court," he said.

Water affairs spokesman Thembu Khumalo said the department was investigating the issue.

"We are receiving reports on a continuous basis and we will issue a statement in due course," he said. Patrick Fitzgerald, the director-general of the environmental affairs and tourism department, said he had no knowledge of the Pecanwood issue.

He said the department took up environmental issues through the environmental-impact assessment system, which was being managed at provincial level.

"Maybe that particular issue was not reported to us directly," Fitzgerald said.

Pecanwood Estate CEO Rod Clare said the estate was willing to settle the issue with the water affairs department amicably and frankly but had a problem in setting up a meeting.

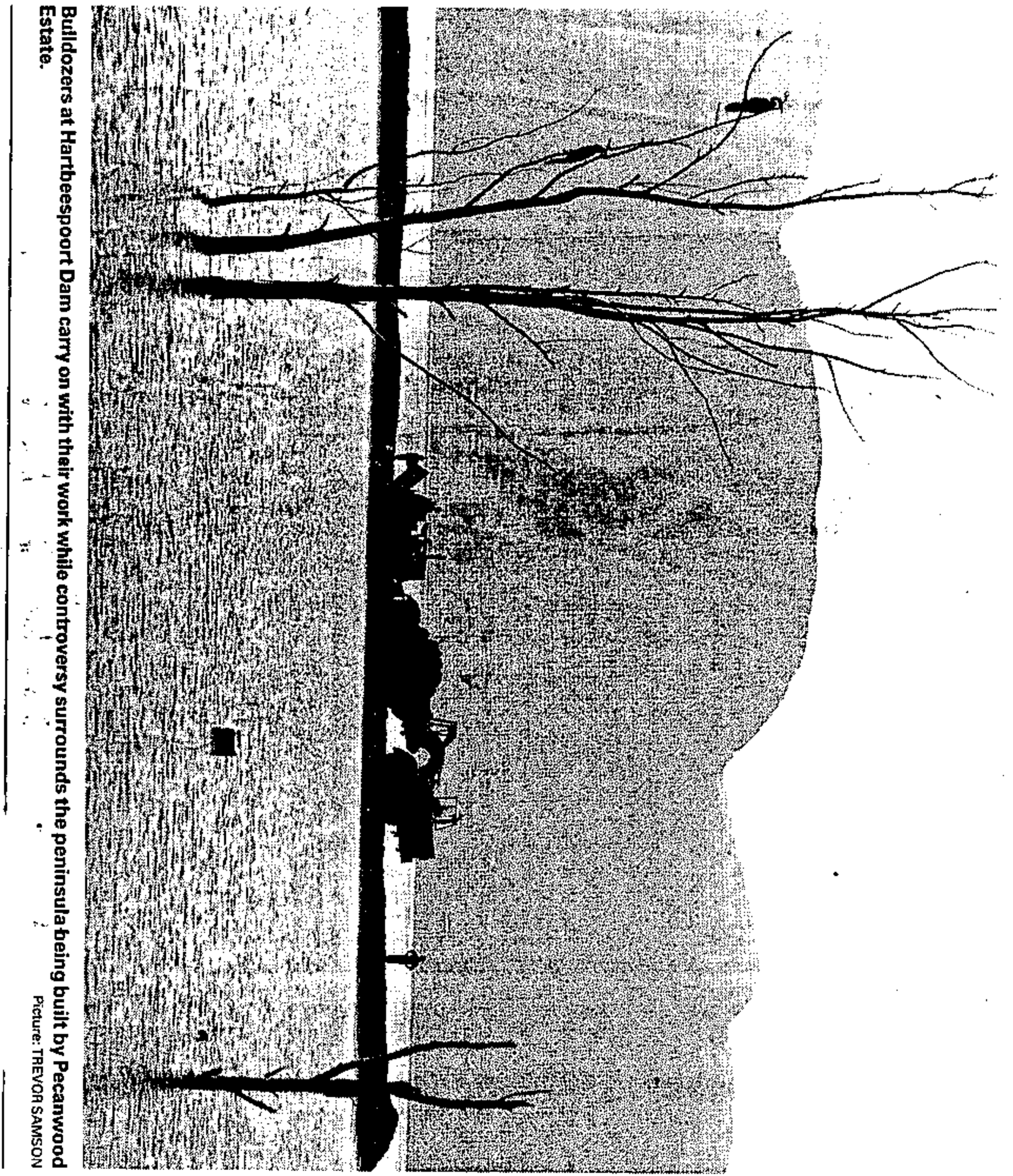
"Water affairs wrote us letters requesting us to stop the construction. In those letters they did not come up with the grounds on why we must stop," Clare said.

The construction was halted for two to three weeks, costing the company R50 000 a day.

"We believe that what we are doing is lawful. We have built three other peninsulas and we got approval from various authorities," Clare said.

"We find it difficult that a policy that has been supported in the past is now considered harmful."

He said the complaints were subjective and said that if people were having problems with the peninsula, they should follow the legal route.



Bulldozers at Hartbeespoort Dam carry on with their work while controversy surrounds the peninsula being built by Pecanwood Estate.

Picture: TREVOR SAMSON

By Russel Molefe
Environment Reporter

BOVINE tuberculosis, an animal disease first detected in cattle in the 1950s, has presented Kruger National Park authorities with one of the biggest challenges in the history of the world-acclaimed park.

The disease, which so far has no known cure or vaccination, was first detected in wildlife species such as buffalo and baboons in the park in 1990.

When it was detected in the lion population, the authorities were alarmed because of the potentially disastrous consequences for the park.

Lions are the largest carnivores in Africa and are one of the most sought after animals by both local and international visitors to the Kruger National Park as well as other parks throughout the continent.

Kruger Park experts monitor TB in lions

Any park or game reserve that does not boast lions within its boundaries is at a distinct disadvantage. Without lions the park or game reserve lacks an essential element of the African bush.

The dwindling lion population may also be detrimental to the aspirations of the communities bordering the Kruger Park, most notably Makuleke.

Favourable conditions have been cre-

ated for Makuleke to reap maximum economic benefits from tourism.

The Makuleke community was recently given back its land within the Kruger National Park and plans are afoot to build tourist lodges on the land. The money generated will be channelled into development projects to improve the quality of life on the barren land on which they were resettled after forced removals in 1969.

Kruger Park authorities are all too aware of the all-round crisis situation and this explains why they are faced with the great challenge of how to prevent the spread of the incurable disease.

However, Park director Mr David Mabunda reassured the local and international tourists that "no species face potential extinction".

"We have the situation well in hand and there is no need to panic.

"There is not a single disease in the recorded history of mankind which has wiped out any species. Our scientists and wildlife managers are actively researching the disease and evaluating control strategies to deal with bovine tuberculosis. Our children will be able to visit Kruger Park and see lions and buffalo in abundance in decades to come."

Conceding that the disease may be killing lions, Mabunda said there was evidence of a reduction in lion numbers in two prides in a small part of the park but the cause was unknown.

Tracing the origin

Tracing the origin and spread of bovine in the Kruger Park, specialist scientist Dr Gus Mills said the disease probably entered the park through the southern border when buffalo herds crossed into adjacent farming area in the 1950s.

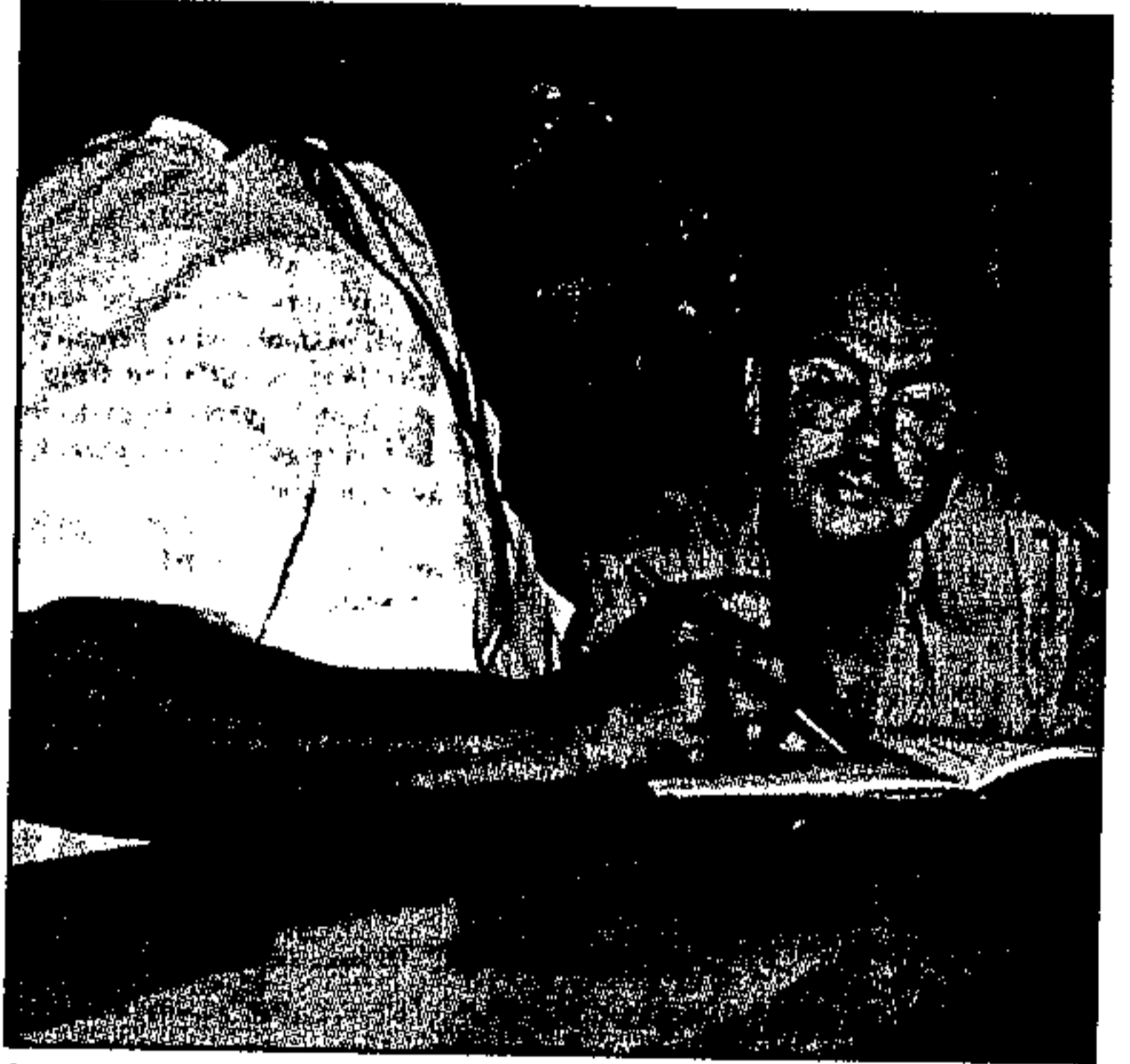
The likely source has infected cattle in the neighbouring farming areas of Komatipoort and Malelane, south of the Crocodile River.

The disease was first detected in the Kruger Park in July 1990 in an emaciated buffalo bull in the south-western region and the species has since become a maintenance host.

Because buffaloes also form part of most carnivores' diets, especially in the dry seasons, it is assumed - but not proven - that lions contracted the disease from infected buffaloes, Mills explained.

"It's true that 32 out of 33 lions tested positive for the disease. Also, over a three year period since 1995, 30 emaciated lions have been killed and found to be infected with bovine tuberculosis.

"However, it is unclear if these lions were compromised through poor condition, old age or injury and then adversely affected by the infec-



Kruger National Park director David Mabunda discussing BTB with a wildlife scientist.



Any park or game reserve that does not boast lions on its species list is at a distinct disadvantage.

tion or whether they lost the ability to compete and then become emaciated," Mills said.

The Lion Watch Awareness Programme was launched to allay fears that the Kruger Park lions face an uncertain future.

Their latest analysis shows that only 16 percent of the 783 lions spotted and photographed by visitors were reported to be thin and 2,5 percent had visible disabilities, such as a noticeable limp.

Tourists participated in this programme by taking photographs and recording details of any lion they saw.

This data is expected to provide additional information for the Kruger Park's own census of the lions.

Most of the sightings by visitors were recorded north of Lower Sabie, south and south-west of Tshokwane, north of Skukuza, around Crocodile Bridge, south of Mopani, Satara and west of Shingwedzi.

Modipane may be in for the high jump

Kevin O'Grady

MPUMALANGA finance MEC Jacques Modipane faces renewed disciplinary action from the African National Congress (ANC) after revelations that he lied about his involvement in the province's promissory note scandal.

ANC spokesman Smuts Ngonyama said yesterday there was "no doubt that if he lied to the ANC executive drastic action will be taken against him".

ANC secretary-general Kgalema Motlanthe was also investigating Mpumalanga premier Ndaweni Mahlangu's statement that lying was not sufficient grounds to prevent a politician from holding public office.

Mahlangu was defending his re-appointment of Modipane, who was forced to resign last year over the scandal in which promissory notes worth R340m were issued to a foreign firm, with R1,3bn of parks board assets as collateral. Modipane claimed at the time, and again yesterday, that his signature on the notes was forged. A tri-

bunal of the Heath special investigating unit invalidated the notes yesterday.

At the same time as his resignation, Modipane was suspended from the ANC pending an investigation into whether he lied to the party and the public about his role in the affair. He was reinstated in January when the ANC decided there was insufficient evidence for his continued suspension.

Mahlangu tried to backtrack yesterday, insisting he was using Modipane as an example by saying that "if" he had lied about his role in the scandal, this should not exclude him from senior government posts. However, in an interview after the news briefing at which he made the comments initially, Mahlangu repeated them, saying that Modipane lied before the elections and the ANC's victory in Mpumalanga justified his inclusion in the provincial cabinet.

Ngonyama said Mahlangu had "apologised profusely" for his remarks which the ANC saw as "inappropriate and unacceptable. It should be the hallmark of any leader to be honest and truthful."

Anger at Mahlangu's comments mounted yesterday, and elicited calls for President Thabo Mbeki to repudiate them. Democratic Party leader Tony Leon said Mahlangu's apology was "not good enough", and called for Modipane's dismissal.

Religious groups also rounded on Mahlangu. The National Religious Leaders' Forum said it was "a sad state of affairs when high-ranking officials believe that lying is permissible".

It reminded government that it was a signatory to a code of conduct formulated at a "morals summit" held by the forum last year, and "as such, the premier should be severely reprimanded".

Sapa reports that parliamentary speaker Frene Ginwala said neither the ANC nor Parliament believed it was acceptable for politicians to lie. "The ANC made promises to the public. We certainly cannot accept that we were telling lies to the public, and that it would be okay to do that."

Comment: Page 17

BD 24/6/99

(76)

Average wage settlements on the decline

Reneé Grawitzky

WAGE increases for the first half of the year rose 1% above inflation to 8,1%, but were 1,1% lower than the settlements achieved for the corresponding period last year, an Andrew Levy & Associates survey said yesterday.

Average wage settlements declined as employers continued to react to the economic slowdown, declining profit margins and international competition.

Business responded to profits in the previous financial year while unions tended to focus on current issues such as inflation levels, research consultant Jackie Kelly said. The survey found that settlements ranged from 5% in the pa-

per/printing sector to 14,4% in mining. The average minimum wage was R1 953 a month compared with R1 884 for the period ending June last year.

Kelly said tough bargaining was expected as most negotiations got under way during the third quarter.

Major negotiations are still under way on gold, coal and platinum mines while an agreement is expected in the metal industry next week. The metal industry agreement, covering 250 000 workers, will range from 7,5% for artisans to 8,75% for lower-paid workers.

An agreement of 8% has been reached in the industrial chemical sector, while negotiations are continuing in the five subsectors of the chemical

sector, such as petroleum.

An agreement of 7,9% was reached in the clothing industry, while a dispute continues in the footwear and leather sectors. The public service wage dispute continues with threats of industrial action if government fails to indicate whether additional funds will be made available by July 1.

A number of unions plans to march on Parliament tomorrow. The march has received support from the Democratic Party as police have not received wage increases this year. The DP said if government and Safety and Security Minister Steve Tshwete were committed to curbing crime, they had to ensure money was available.

BD 24/6/99

(76)

Litter-pickers set to make coast clear

ARG 24/6/99

(56)

NAOMI LARKIN
STAFF REPORTER

Polluted beaches like Three Anchor Bay which yesterday was choked with plastic bags, bottles and rubbish will be the target of the Western Cape's second coastal clean-up later this year.

The clean-up, first held last September, is part of an international effort to beat coastal pollution. The campaign began in the United States in 1986 and has spread to 78 countries around the globe.

John Kieser, the environmental educator for Marine and Coastal Management (formerly Sea Fisheries), said last year's clean-up involved more than 5 700 people, including

school children, parents, environmental and business groups. In the Western Cape alone, they picked up more than 30 tons of rubbish – including metal, plastics, glass and several sets of false teeth.

"The pollution at places like Robben Island is depressing. There is plastic everywhere and we can't blame the fishing boats for that – it has Cape Town written all over it," said Mr Kieser.

He urged people to spread the word about this year's clean-up – also to be held in September – to ensure its success.

"Coastal clean-ups bring people together. By taking part in this project, you will help towards making the coast and oceans cleaner, healthier and safer places."

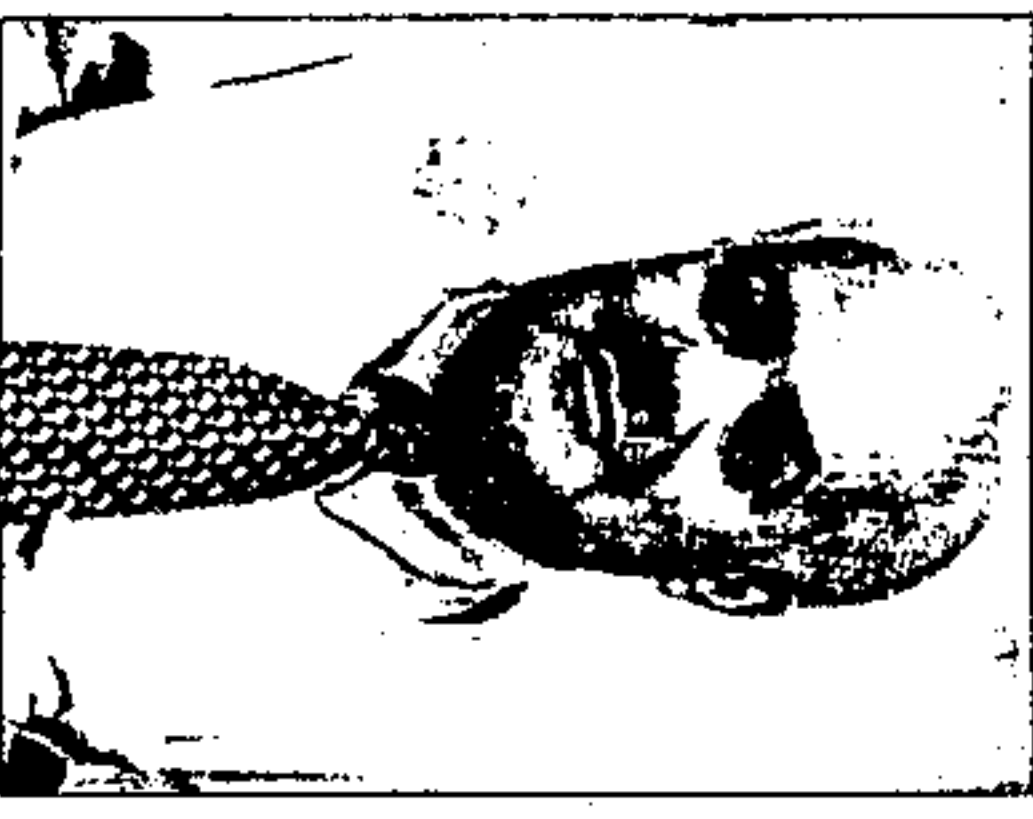


ROY WIGLEY

Choked: plastic bottles, bags and rubbish pollute Three Anchor Bay beach

New environment MEC squares up to bulldozers

Glen Adams is ready for 'a few fights' with developers and planners as he pledges to draw the green line



Clean green: Glen Adams

Glen Adams, the Western Cape's new Minister of Environmental and Cultural Affairs, has been in office only a few days and he's already antipating "a few fights" with planners and developers.

Some of the first proposals to land on his desk - such as a would-be development on the mountain slopes at Helderberg and a fly-over in the Noordhoek valley - have set the warning bells ringing.

"I'm going to be quite firm about this. I won't simply allow developers and planners to bulldoze things through," said Mr Adams.

"I'm not saying we're going to be fighting all the time, but I'm certainly going to be looking at the approval of plans a lot more carefully now as

JOHN YEID

ENVIRONMENT WRITER



an environmentalist than I probably would have done as a developer.

"And, environmental impact assessments are going to be a very important as far as our recommendations regarding the approval of new plans are concerned."

In fact, the Democratic Party minister said, one of his first actions would be to ask for a joint cabinet committee to be set up with his New National Party cabinet colleague,

Leon Markovitz, who holds the development planning portfolio which has proved so controversial in recent years.

The 52-year-old started his formal political life in the "opposition", joining the African National Congress in 1980 and chairing its Heathfield South branch before moving to the DP in 1994.

He grew up in the Warwick Street area of Claremont before his family was forced out by the Group Areas Act.

"It was a very cosmopolitan area, I had a very pleasant childhood there," he recalled.

His political awakening came in the mid-1960s, when he was arrested for walking through a "whites-only" subway in Lansdowne while on his

way to work one morning.

Married with three children, all in their 20s, Mr Adams was a businessman with interests in retail clothing and stationery before entering full-time politics.

At one point he was "quite involved" in helping the Kalk Bay fishing community obtain quotas.

Environmentalists will be hoping that his appointment brings some stability to the important environmental portfolio, which has seen six changes of political leadership in just three years.

It's Mr Adams's first experience of the Western Cape legislature, and he had some doubts at first about his posting. "The only reason I'm involved in politics at all is because I want to make a contribution to the

upliftment of the community.

"And I must admit when I first heard I'd got environment and culture, I didn't immediately see it as a delivery portfolio.

"Now, after three days, I've got some of my teeth into it, and I see it's most definitely a delivery portfolio, especially in terms of the environment: a sustained environment is so important to the future of our people. So, I'm approaching it from that point of view."

He also confirmed he was on a steep learning curve - at least as far as the more technical aspects of his portfolio were concerned.

"But the environment affects everybody, and I learnt that when I was involved at a civic level," he said. "There were lots of environ-

mental issues affecting our ratepayers' association - the area where I stay, Princess Vlei, is very sensitive environmentally. So... I've had that kind of experience.

"And then I've also had experience and the perspective from the other side, as a developer - we developed at Kalk Bay harbour for the community a few years ago."

Mr Adams said he was committed to effective public participation in environmental issues, but this was not always easy to achieve.

"Funding is always a problem, and I'm going to be insisting on more funding for the environment and culture because I feel it's absolutely necessary. In the long term, human existence is dependent on a sustained environment."

(51) ART 28/6/99

People v apes: a conservation issue

Baboons under threat - research

Zoologist Ruth Kansky watches the big male baboon nonchalantly shepherd his small troop through Misty Cliffs near Scarborough, keeping them just ahead of a harried pair of "baboon chasers" who are trying to drive the animals out of the village and back up the mountain.

"That's Eric," says Ms Kansky, with equal nonchalance.

It's a familiarity earned during many months of close observation of both Eric's troop and the other nine surviving troops which constitute the remnants of the Peninsula's once thriving Chacma baboon population.

At the latest count, Ms Kansky found there were just 364 baboons in the entire Peninsula, of which only 21 were adult males - a totally skewed sex ratio in a population which is no longer subject to any natural predators like leopards.

Only 140 of the baboons are effectively protected as they live entirely within the borders of the former Cape of Good Hope nature reserve at Cape Point (now part of the new Cape Peninsula National Park).

Of the others, 77 are partially protected, as they range both inside and outside the reserve, while 147 are not protected at all. The low numbers mean that some of the existing troops are currently unsustainable, and could disappear soon.

Concerns about the declining baboon numbers - they probably play an important role in the Peninsula's fynbos ecosystem, although this has never been formally studied - and the need to reduce the



JOHN VEID
ENVIRONMENT WRITER

continuing conflict between baboons and householders, recently led various authorities to fund studies to get proper information.

Ms Kansky and her partner Dave Gaynor, also a zoologist, happened to be in the right place at the right time.

"They met at Rhodes University while studying for their respective BSc (Hons) degrees, and subsequently both did post-graduate work on behavioural ecology of baboon troops of Mkuzi game reserve in KwaZulu Natal, through Durban University's psychology department.

"Then we were planning to cycle up through Africa, but we got an offer to study meerkats in the Kalahari Gemsbok National Park - and that's where we spent the next two-and-a-half years," said Dr Gaynor.

They moved to Scarborough in December 1986 and, while they were still writing up and analysing their data on the Kalahari meerkats, had their first interactions with the local baboon population.

They also made contact with well-known Kommeljie environmentalist Wally Petersen, who has been closely involved in Peninsula baboon conservation efforts.

They went with him to a public meeting in Simon's Town, called by

local councillor Nicki Holderness to discuss the escalating conflict between baboons and households in places like Da Gama Park, Kommeljie and Scarborough.

"After that I proposed a study in order to get a better idea of the issue," said Ms Kansky.

The South Peninsula Municipality then agreed to fund Ms Kansky for a four-month study concentrating specifically on the people-baboon conflict.

Dr Gaynor, who is busy with post-doctoral studies on baboons, acted as a consultant.

Ms Kansky started in February 1988, and within a month was making recommendations on how to start addressing the conflict.

These included the recommendation, which was quickly accepted, to establish a Baboon Task Team, whose members would include representatives of the various Government and conservation authorities and who would accept joint management responsibility for the baboons.

"Until then the baboon problem had just been a political football which everyone was kicking around," said Dr Gaynor.

Ms Kansky's initial study confirmed both the extent of the conflict with humans and the threat to the baboon population.

"It was quite a serious problem - for example, I found that the baboons were spending 90% of their days in the residential area, and that the mortality rate was so high that the troops would become extinct if that rate continued. People hadn't realised that," she said.

"I was able to delineate the extent



Protecting primates: zoologists Ruth Kansky and Dave Gaynor of Scarborough are committed to saving the baboons and ensuring man and beast can live in peace

BRANTON BEACH

576
AR 5 28/6/99



JOHN VELD

Under threat one of the Peninsula's remaining baboons forages at Misty Cliffs. Troops outside Cape Point are facing extinction

of the problem, and I also looked at people's attitudes to the baboons.

"I found that about 80% of residents either had no strong feelings about the baboons or that they were in favour of them. Those people who were shouting the loudest were only a handful and were doing most of the damage, killing and injuring baboons."

One of her most significant recommendations, which was also accepted, was to see whether "baboon-chasers" could be effective in keeping the animals out of the residential areas where they were being killed - like Scarborough, Misty Cliffs, Kommetjie and Da Gama Park.

"Some people thought that the baboons would simply become used to the chasers and that these would therefore be ineffective, but our experience has proved exactly the opposite," said Ms Kinsky.

But it's not an easy job. Baboons are extremely agile and alert, and every roof in an urban area is a refuge.

The first attempt at appointing a baboon-chaser wasn't too successful, because there was funding for only one person - who wasn't always available, Ms Kinsky said.

"There was some deterrent effect when he was around, but it was only about 5% to 10%. So, although

people saw something being done, it didn't really reduce the conflict."

Since then, further funding was provided by SA National Parks and five chasers were appointed to work seven days a week.

"Baboons are now spending only 30% of their time in the urban areas - down from 90%," said Ms Kinsky.

"And when they do get into these areas, they're only spending a quarter as much time there as they did previously, before the chasers get them out."

"And just as important, from the point of view of the baboons, is that their mortality rate is down to just one third of what it was. Previously, not all the infants survived - but since the chasers were appointed, every infant is still alive so far."

Unfortunately funding for the chasers will run out at the end of next month, and Ms Kinsky and Dr Gaynor are helping prepare an application for a further year's funding from the Table Mountain Fund, administered by the World Wide Fund for Nature - South Africa (WWF-SA).

'Baboons are now spending only 30% of their time in urban areas - down from 90%'

"The chasers are actually helping to protect the baboons - for example, one of their tasks is to try to slow cars when the baboons are around, because they regularly get knocked over," said Dr Gaynor.

"This is a conservation issue, and it should be seen as such by the conservation authorities."

Ms Kinsky, who has also secured funding from the WWF-SA to continue her research until January, is now looking at aspects such as baboons' diets.

"One of the big questions is whether they are raiding urban areas because there is not enough natural food for them in the mountains," she said.

"These and other research topics will all help in the drawing up of a suitable baboon management plan for the whole Peninsula, and ensure their continued presence in this area."

Ms Kinsky and Dr Gaynor are totally committed to the objects of their research - even to the extent of taking into their Scarborough home a particularly unfortunate young female baboon.

Named "Jane", this two-year-old

was severely shocked on an electricity pylon at Da Gama Park, and the zoologists kept her for two weeks while she recuperated sufficiently to be released back to her troop.

But not long after that the same animal was knocked down by a car at Misty Cliffs and suffered a severe compound fracture of a leg.

Thanks to free services of Sun Valley veterinarian Dr Hernan Azorin during a three-hour operation and post-operative care at Scarborough, Jane is once again reunited with her troop - this time sporting steel pins in her limb.

For Ms Kinsky and Dr Gaynor, there's no question that the effort was worthwhile.

"The population outside the reserve is now so small it's not going to be able to reproduce itself without some kind of intervention, and there's no way we can afford to glibly put down a single animal," said Dr Gaynor.

Happily, they're seeing a change in attitude from some, if not all, human residents.

"There's definitely a better understanding of the problem, and the majority of residents are much better informed about the issues."

"Local people never realised previously that the baboon population was threatened. Now they appreciate it's a conservation issue."

X

Year 2000 mountain laser row

JOHN YELD

Environment Writer

Would you "sell" Table Mountain for R72-million?

That was the question as a proposal to project a millennium countdown clock on to the face of the mountain was being debated today.

Members of the Cape Peninsula National Park committee are being asked to

approve a test for the proposed millennium countdown that could be watched by as many as 6 billion television viewers and generate at least R72-million in direct sponsorship fees.

Proponents of the laser scheme say it will provide unprecedented - and otherwise unaffordable - publicity for the city and boost tourism significantly, creating big economic spin-offs.

But opponents say advertising impairs

the dignity of the mountain, and allowing the millennium display in the face of an earlier policy decision to ban all laser projections on the mountain is inconsistent and will set an unfortunate precedent.

Earlier this year, the park committee vetoed a request by Ratanaga Junction for a laser show projected on the mountain as part of millennium celebrations.

Rod Young, the City of Cape Town's director of economic development, asked

the committee at its meeting last week for permission for a laser test on the mountain before July 11. But a decision was postponed until the meeting resumed today.

Mr Young said the laser project would link Cape Town's millennium celebrations directly to three international television consortia, which are planning 24-hour, non-stop millennium countdown coverage.

This involved an hour-long focus and countdown in each of the world's 24 time

zones, with an "anchor city" being guaranteed 20 minutes' coverage during the final hour's countdown for the millennium in that particular time zone, Mr Young said.

Cape Town's main competitor for this role in their shared time zone. The worldwide television audience would be an estimated 6 billion viewers. The Table Mountain laser proposal involves a

(288) 2916199 To page 3

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Should Cape Town show a millennium laser show on Table Mountain? Call tonight between 9am and 9pm and tell us what you think... 488 4311

Millennium 'clock' row

From page 1

(56)(288)

ARG 2916199

steady green beam being projected for three hours on December 31 this year on to two areas of the mountain's front face: just below the cableway station and east of Plattekliip Gorge.

The cableway station laser will be a millennium clock, ticking over each second to 2000, and the second laser will project six or seven sponsors' logos, for which their owners will pay R12-million each.

Park committee member Brian Watkyns, who also heads the Cape

Metropolitan Council's planning, environment and housing committee, said the committee could not afford to ignore its previous decision not to allow any laser projections on the mountain.

"This will be setting a very unfortunate precedent and sending out the wrong kind of message," he said.

Park committee member Revel Fox, a city councillor, argued for the postponement.

"The integrity and character of the mountain may be an issue here, and we weren't in a position to take a decision," he said.

World body set to rule on Cape heritage site bid

Application in Paris for decision

JOHN YELD
ENVIRONMENT WRITER

South Africa's application to have the Cape Peninsula National Park declared a World Heritage Site arrived in Paris today after being couriered overnight to meet the end-of-month deadline.

The application was signed yesterday by Environmental Affairs and Tourism Minister Valli Moosa during a ceremony at Kirstenbosch, where the park's new logo was unveiled.

The application will be evaluated between now and April 1 next year by a team from the World Conservation Union on behalf of the United Nations' Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (Unesco), which administers the World Heritage Convention.

A final decision on the application – which, if successful, would significantly boost tourism to the park and to Cape Town – will only be made in December next year.

Mr Moosa said it was "absolutely vital" to achieve World Heritage Site status for various conservation sites, such as Robben Island, the Sterkfontein hominid caves complex, Lake St Lucia – about which decisions will be made in December – and the Drakensberg.

"The gold price is going down. We will have to build the tourist industry as much as possible, without in any way sacrificing the natural heritage we want to hand over to future generations," he said.

(56)
ARG 30/6/99
Unveiling the new logo, the chief executive of SA National Parks, Mavuso Msimang, said the Cape Peninsula National Park was one of very few major conservation areas in the world which were entirely surrounded by a metropolitan area. It was also proportionately the world's richest area for the number of plant species occurring there.

"So this is a very, very special place," he said.

The new logo, which depicts both Table Mountain and fynbos, was part of a marketing exercise to ensure that the park generated the right kind of tourism – locally, nationally and internationally.

Because the major demands on the South African fiscus were for social needs, sufficient funds for conserving the country's heritage would not be forthcoming from the Government, Mr Msimang said.

"So we are looking very carefully at putting together the kinds of income-generating activities that will not impact negatively on the environment. That is the only way we will be able to sustain our environment," he said.

■ Some members of the Cape Peninsula National Park committee, appointed by former environmental affairs minister Pallo Jordan to help guide the management of the park, are unhappy at not having been consulted about the logo.

They expressed their concern at a committee meeting last week. Chairman Ziggy Roux confirmed the discussion but said no formal resolution had been taken.

Table Mt tops heritage list

MELANIE GOSLING
ENVIRONMENT WRITER

CT 30/6/99

(46)
SOUTH AFRICA'S application to have Table Mountain declared a World Heritage Site will arrive in Paris this morning, after being couriered to France last night to meet the deadline.

Environment Minister Mohammed Valli Moosa signed the application document at a ceremony at Kirstenbosch yesterday in one of his first public appearances since he took over the portfolio.

"This is the last of five nominations we have made to have declared World Heritage Sites in South Africa — last because it has been rather complicated," he said.

The other sites nominated are Robben Island, St Lucia Wetlands, the Sterkfontein Caves and the Drakensberg.

At the ceremony, the logo for the new Cape Peninsula National Park was unveiled by the head of SA National Parks, Mavuso Msimang, depicting Table Mountain nestling in a protea.

Valli Moosa said he familiarised himself with Table Mountain during his previous parliamentary term.

"When talking to David Daitz (head of the Cape Peninsula National Park), I dis-



Cape Peninsula National Park

covered that I had done more routes up the mountain than he had. I was part of a group which climbed regularly and even guided MPs up the mountain."

He added that it was vital to have World Heritage Sites in South Africa, to attract tourism.

"With the gold price going down we have to build our tourist industry as much as possible, but we must not take short cuts and run down our diversity for the sake of short-term gains."

Msimang said the Cape Peninsula National Park was one of the few in the world which was surrounded by metropolitan areas.

Environment will come first, vows Markovitz

Western Cape's new planning minister says he aims to put development third on his list of priorities

ARLT 6/7/99 (76)

The Western Cape's new planning MEC, former Cape Town mayor Leon Markovitz, says his order of priority is "environment first, environment second, and development third".

The 62-year-old New National Party member, who is also finance and gambling MEC, has inherited a political "hot potato" with the planning portfolio.

His predecessor, Michael Louis of the African Christian Democratic Party, incurred the wrath of environmentalists, residents, local authorities and opposition politicians alike with several controversial decisions which favoured developers - such as the Dassenberg housing development on the mountain above Sun Valley - and overrode objections.

But Mr Markovitz says he will give the environment top billing.

"Twenty years ago, my 'top three' order of play in this portfolio would have been 'development, develop-



ENVIRONMENT WRITER

will certainly interact with them immediately if I consider anything is not 100%.

"So any fears of developers being favoured in that regard are, I believe, totally groundless."

Mr Markovitz said he did not agree with a suggestion by his colleague, environmental affairs MEC Glen Adams of the Democratic Party, that they establish a joint cabinet committee to thrash out planning and environmental issues.

"I've indicated that I'm not happy with that idea," he said.

The reason for his opposition was that Premier Gerald Morkei had deliberately decided to split the portfolios of planning and environment.

"Now I've a great concern that by introducing this cabinet committee, we're in fact half-bringing those cabinet portfolios together again. I believe that the minister of the environment has to exercise his mind independently from the planning minister, and vice versa.

"Add therefore what I've suggested to him is that we should deal with matters on an ad hoc basis, and that is the way I intend to go, especially on highly sensitive matters like Dassenberg.

"I believe those matters need to be discussed, but I don't believe there's a necessity at this stage for a cabinet committee."

Referring to the controversial Dassenberg development, Mr Markovitz said the chairman of the South Peninsula Municipality's urban and environmental services committee, Neville Riley, had already asked for an interview on the subject.

A recommendation by Mr Riley's committee that the Dassenberg proposal be rejected was accepted by the municipality, but its decision was subsequently overturned by Mr Louis on appeal by the developer.

Mr Markovitz said he had told Mr Riley that he would discuss the issue with him soon, once he had had a

chance to research it properly and get a full understanding of what was involved.

Speaking just before leaving for a holiday this week at the Plettenberg Bay holiday home owned by his wife, designer Anthula Markovitz, he said: "There are quite a number of very thick files (on Dassenberg), as you can imagine. I have read some of them - I'm about 50% of the way through, and I may be taking some of them away with me."

Mr Markovitz said another highly controversial development proposal - Erf 3477 high on the mountain above Hout Bay harbour and within the proclaimed Cape Peninsula Protected Natural Environment - had not yet reached him for a decision, nor had he been briefed on any of its details.

But he emphasised that any ad hoc decisions relating to developments on the "urban edge" of metropolitan Cape Town had to be taken with great care.

A meeting had been scheduled later this month with the Cape Metropolitan Council to discuss finalising draft studies to delineate the urban edge in a number of areas, Mr Markovitz said.

"Again, I've only been in this particular portfolio for a relatively short time and so I haven't been able to fully grasp the background of the urban edge problem. But I think urban edge creep is something that should be of concern to this province, and the principle of guarding against that is one which I believe should be protected."

Mr Markovitz, who has high-profile investments in the Cape's hotel industry, said he was no longer involved in the day-to-day running of his business interests. These were being managed by his son Neil.

"In another (earlier) life I was very involved in the tourism industry, so I'm very aware of the beauty of the Western Cape," Mr Markovitz said.

Asked if he was aware of allegations by environmental organisations that provincial planners had been biased in favour of developers for the past few years, Mr Markovitz said it was easy to make an "omnibus" criticism against officials.

"I believe if there are allegations, they should be specific allegations regarding a particular development.

"Without in any way attacking my officials - I think they're a fine bunch who are doing a good job - I

will certainly interact with them immediately if I consider anything is not 100%.

"So any fears of developers being favoured in that regard are, I believe, totally groundless."

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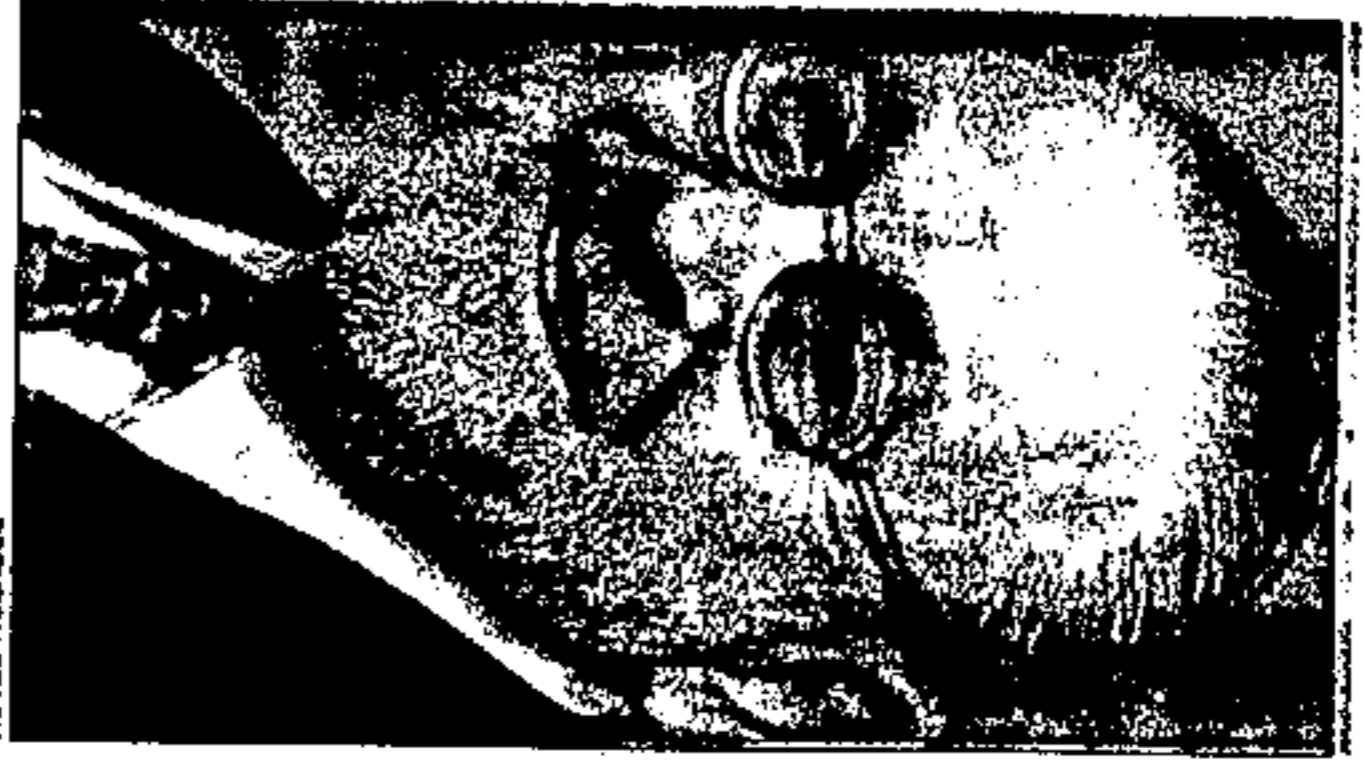
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Top billing: Leon Markovitz

RENTON GEAR

Knysna row over 'hordes'

MELANIE GOSLING
ENVIRONMENT WRITER

CT 7/7/99

THE chairman of the Thesen's Island Environmental Management Committee, Alan Heydorn, said the controversial marina development in the ecologically sensitive Knysna Lagoon must go ahead — or the island would be "swamped by black hordes".

A member of the committee, Toni Tonin, has written to Environment Minister Mohammed Valli Moosa in protest, saying that in the light of this remark Heydorn could not be regarded as competent to assess the desirability of the proposed development.

Tonin wrote: "It is deeply distressing to me that an ecologist of senior standing can apply judgment so clouded by his own racial prejudice to an issue of such great environmental significance."

Tonin also said in the letter that there were serious shortcomings in the environmental impact report on the Thesen's Island development done by the CSIR. In spite of this, the provincial authorities approved the rezoning of the island to allow the development.

He wrote: "Your department has identified the future of Thesen's Island as one of national significance, because of the Knysna ecosystem, to South Africa. Therefore it is vital I express my concerns regarding the proposed development to your office directly."

He said he did so both as the director of an oyster farm in the Knysna lagoon and a committed environmentalist who chairs the Knysna Environment Forum.

Tonin wrote that oyster farming was an ecologically and economically sustainable industry and important in Knysna's tourism.

"Substantially, evidence points to the likelihood that the proposed development would have detrimental effects on the estuarine ecosystem and therefore on the future viability of the oyster industry in Knysna. There are already signs of development and boat-related damage in our oyster population in the lagoon.

"Developments such as this, which maximise the numbers of individuals and boats using the lagoon recreationally, at a high environmentally and economic cost, must not be allowed," he wrote.

Thesen's Island, which now has a sawmill on it, soon to be relocated, is owned by Barlows. Once the sawmill has moved, developers plan to cut the island into 27 smaller sections and build a marina with 600 houses, canals, boat apartments, shops, offices and hotel.

The high-density luxury development has come under attack from several quarters as being unsuitable for a National Lakes Area and the picturesque Garden Route town. Because of the outcry, the Department of Environmental Affairs has said the developers must re-advertise the marina for public comment. The deadline for objections is this Friday.

Yesterday Heydorn, who used to head the CSIR's Coastal and Estuarine Unit, told the *Cape Times* that he was "not mad about marinas" but that Knysna municipality desperately needed income from such developments.

He said there had been an influx of poor people into Knysna over the past years, who were squatting in the hills.

"These are people for whom one feels sorry, but they are swamping the streets, adding pressures like littering, which is slowly affecting the tourist industry.

"If the timber industry moves out and there is no alternative plan in place for Thesen's Island, it is inevitable that hungry people from the hills will move onto the island and the salt marshes," Heydorn said.

The environmental management committee was set up under instruction from the provincial authorities.

Top honour for SA sites

ET 9/7/99

(56)

PARIS: South Africa overcame the most important hurdle here to have three sites accepted as World Heritage Sites. **LIESL LOUW** of the Independent Foreign Service reports.

THE acceptance of Robben Island as a World Heritage Site was greeted with emotion yesterday at a meeting of the UN Education Science and Cultural Organisation (Unesco).

Delegates from around the world congratulated South Africa's ambassador to France, Thuthukile Skweyiya, and officials from the Department of Tourism and Environmental Affairs after the bureau of the World Heritage Committee accepted the application of Robben Island to be added to the World Heritage List.

"This is a gift to South Africa for the 21st century," Skweyiya told the meeting.

The bureau's decision still has to be rubber-stamped by the 21-member World Heritage Committee at a meeting in Morocco in December, but officials say the

most important hurdle has now been overcome.

Experts from the World Heritage Committee earlier this year visited the place where former president Nelson Mandela was imprisoned and recommended it as "a symbol of the triumph of the human spirit, of freedom and of democracy over oppression".

"The symbolic significance of Robben Island is comparable to that of the Auschwitz concentration camp in Poland or Gorée Island in Senegal," the experts said.

Two other sites, the St Lucia wetlands park in KwaZulu-Natal and the Sterkfontein hominid fossil sites in Gauteng, were also accepted at the bureau meeting. These will be listed alongside the world's prestigious sites of "universal value" such as the Egyptian pyramids, Pompeii in Italy, the Taj

Mahal in India, the Statue of Liberty and rare natural reserves such as Yellowstone Park in the US, the Galapagos Islands, and the Great Barrier Reef in Australia.

In sub-Saharan Africa, the Zimbabwe ruins, the ancient mosques in Timbuktu and the forts and castles in Ghana are also World Heritage sites. South Africa only joined the World Heritage Convention in June 1997 and therefore these three places will be the first South African sites on the list.

According to Makgolo Makgolo of the Department of Tourism and Environmental Affairs, the listing of South Africa's sites will have immediate spin-offs for tourism and will give researchers and officials access to international expertise. The World Heritage Fund will give South Africa initial financial aid.

"It will also now be much easier to go to other international institutions and governments to ask for funds for our World Heritage sites," said Makgolo.

Protecting the sites will still essentially be the task of the government. If a site listed by the World Heritage Committee is not looked after, it can be placed on the In Danger list.

The decision by South Africa to ban sand mining at St Lucia was one of the reasons it was granted a World Heritage Site listing.

The bureau commended the South African government on the "democratic process it went through that led to the cabinet decision to ban sand mining in the area".

After the acceptance of these three sites, the Department of Tourism and Environmental Affairs will continue to apply for other sites to be declared World Heritages.

An application for the Cape Floristic region, which includes Table Mountain, as well as the Drakensberg Park in KwaZulu-Natal, has already been handed in and will be considered next year.

Dongola reserve comes 'back to life'

BD 9/7/99 (56)

DE BEERS and SA National Parks yesterday signed an agreement to include parts of the company's Venetia Limpopo Nature reserve in the proposed Vhembe-Dongola National Park under SA National Parks' management.

At the signing in Johannesburg, De

Beers chairman Nicky Oppenheimer said: "I am delighted that De Beers and SANP are co-operating to bring the concept of Dongola reserve back to life."

The 36 000ha Venetia Limpopo Reserve is in the Northern Province near the confluence of the Limpopo and Shashe rivers.

"The creation of the Vhembe-Dongola National Park has been an objective for many years, based on the biodiversity of the area, its scenic beauty and the cultural importance of the archaeological treasures of Mapungubwe," SANP CE Mavuso Msimang said. — Sapa.

Kirstenbosch restaurant study: too little too late?

But at least the controversial development will be properly managed, say the pragmatists

ARL 12/17/99
(56)

The environmental impact assessment of the new restaurant complex at Kirstenbosch, which started in earnest last week, is a case of closing the stable door after the horse has bolted, critics say.

Others are more pragmatic, suggesting the assessment is a constructive way of ensuring the controversial restaurant will be properly managed and that the Liesbeeck River, just metres away, will not be adversely affected.

In theory, Cape Nature Conservation can still pull the plug on the R7,5-million development, which is nearing completion, by refusing to



JOHN YELD
ENVIRONMENT WRITER

Issue a permit. Kirstenbosch falls within the proclaimed Cape Peninsula Protected Natural Environment. Any change in land-use - such as building a restaurant - requires a permit signed by the provincial environ-

ment minister on recommendation from the conservation body.

A refusal is extremely unlikely, and a permit will probably be issued when Cape Nature Conservation is satisfied that an effective environmental management plan for the day-to-day running of the new restaurant has been compiled.

The plan will include measures to restrict to a minimum any ecological damage to the Liesbeeck River, to repair damage already inflicted on four of the famous Moreton Bay fig trees that form part of Kirstenbosch's Ficus Avenue and to prevent further damage to the avenue. Last Thursday, 24 people - includ-

ing some of the development's harshest critics - attended the first "open day" organised by consultants who are conducting a scoping study and compiling an environmental management plan for the restaurant complex.

A scoping study usually identifies the potential environmental impacts of a proposed project, assesses their significance and guides decisions on which impacts require further specialist assessment before any development takes place.

But, because the new restaurant is already so close to completion, the consultants say they are conducting

a "modified" scoping study.

They were appointed by the National Botanical Institute, which manages Kirstenbosch, following criticism from environmental organisations and individuals.

The restaurant complex, which is expected to be open by September, is being built on the mountain side of Ficus Avenue, between the main stream of the Liesbeeck River and a water channel running from Bird's Bath.

It includes a 250-seat restaurant, a self-service restaurant for 150, outdoor seating on terraces and timber decks, and pathways, bridges and a stormwater retention pond.

Critics have objected to:

- The NBI's alleged lack of adherence to environmental legislation and not allowing effective public participation in the planning.

- The possible adverse effect of the complex on the Liesbeeck, Bird's Channel and the wetland area between them.

- Damage to Ficus Avenue.
- An increase in the volume, and a decrease in the quality, of water flowing into the Liesbeeck.

- The threat of raised water levels in the river during flood periods.
- Possible problems with visitor management and proper environmental protection during the day-to-

day running of the complex.

The consultants say they will address these and other issues during their investigation, and that specialist studies will be undertaken of the ecology of area, the condition of the fig trees and of stormwater flows.

Susan van der Merwe, of Cape Nature Conservation, said the body required a scoping report that included public participation and a management plan before it would issue a permit.

Draft reports will be available for public comment by July 23. Cape Nature Conservation is expected to announce its decision on August 13.

CLASH OVER GENE-ALTERED PRODUCTS

Govt tardiness botches controls over new foods

CT 13/7/99

(76)

ENVIRONMENTAL GROUP Biowatch says ecological and health issues associated with genetically modified foods remain to be resolved, but the body which will enforce the new laws has yet to get down to work. Consumer Writer **GUSTAV THIEL** reports.

LEGISLATION adopted to control the introduction and use of genetically engineered food in South Africa has been rendered useless by the government's failure to set up the proper structures.

The assistant director for genetic control in the Department of Agriculture, Rachel Lekoate, says problems in establishing an advisory committee on genetically engineered food are hampering the implementation of the Genetically Modified Organisms Act of 1997.

This act was preceded by the Pests Control Act, which was deemed inadequate to deal with issues arising from the worldwide proliferation of genetically engineered foods.

Genetically modified crops are already a billion-dollar industry in the United States. In Europe their development has been stunted by a reaction from consumer groups who cite findings on potential problems associated with the genetic modification of foods.

Several big food companies in Britain have banned the use of genetically modified ingredients.

In South Africa, the debate is in its infancy, with scientists and environmental groups vying for government approval of their standpoints.

While the debate gains momentum, government officials concede that bureaucratic hiccups are seriously hampering the implementation of the

Genetically Modified Organisms Act.

The act called for the establishment of an executive council. Lekoate says this is already in place and includes representatives of the departments of Agriculture and Land Affairs, Environment Affairs, Labour, Trade and Industry, Health and Arts and Culture.

"As things stand we are unable to implement the act because of the problems with the establishment of the advisory committee," Lekoate said.

"The problem is complicated by our having worked to implement the act with the previous Minister of Agriculture and Land Affairs, who had a different way of dealing with the matter."

Although Lekoate is not specific about the differences in approach between the previous minister, Derek Hanekom, and his successor, Thoko Didiza, the environmental watchdog group, Biowatch, says Hanekom was more inclined to question certain aspects of genetic engineering.

Jennifer Thomson, a microbiologist at the University of Cape Town, says she considers Didiza and Lekoate to be "competent in dealing with issues surrounding genetic engineering".

According to Thomson, the use and release of genetically-engineered foods is regulated by the South African Genetic Experimentation Committee, which is not controlled by government. Compliance with this committee's decisions is

voluntary. It was decided that the new governmental advisory committee should set up structures that made membership compulsory.

Lekoate says the council has not met since it was established last year, mainly because Hanekom said he did not have the time to convene it.

It is now up to Didiza to convene the council's first meeting. Didiza will meet representatives of all departments represented on it next week to discuss the council's affairs.

Lekoate is uncertain when the advisory committee on genetic engineering will be in place, although she acknowledges it is important to achieve this "as soon as possible".

A Biowatch spokesperson says she is not convinced that the government's position takes into account all of the concerns of environmental groups.

"There are ecological, health and ethical issues that we feel have not been adequately addressed," the spokesperson says.

Thomson, however, says most of these concerns are "false" because genetic engineering has been around for some time. "I believe the advantages of genetic engineering are far greater than possible concerns. Naturally we are looking at areas of concern, but we are treating potential problems case by case."

Biowatch says Thomson does not have an adequate grasp of politics and that her approach is "reactionary". It notes that, contrary to her method of tackling problems as they arise, the National Environment Management Act stipulates that issues should be managed in a precautionary fashion.

Limpopo deal boosts park plan

JOHN YELD

ENVIRONMENT WRITER

ARL 13/7/99

Moves to re-establish one of South Africa's premier conservation areas along the banks of the Limpopo River in the Northern Province have been given a huge boost with the signing of an agreement between SA National Parks and diamond giant De Beers.

The agreement will also promote initiatives to create the sub-continent's second trans-frontier "peace park" between South Africa, Zimbabwe and Botswana.

The first such park, the 38 000 sq km Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park in the Kalahari area between Botswana and South Africa, was proclaimed earlier this year.

Nicky Oppenheimer, chairman of De Beers, and Mavuso Msimang, chief executive of SA National Parks, signed a "heads of agreement" document in Johannesburg yesterday which will see the inclusion of parts of the De Beers-owned Venetia Limpopo Nature Reserve into the proposed Vhembe-Dongola National Park along South Africa's northern border.

The 36 000ha Venetia reserve is next to De Beers' Venetia diamond mine and near the confluence of the Limpopo and Shashe rivers in the Northern Province. The Shashe River forms part of the border between Zimbabwe and Botswana.

SA National Parks (formerly National

Parks Board) will manage this area contractually as part of the broader national park now being established. The then Dongola Game Sanctuary in this area was deproclaimed by the National Party government in one of its first acts after coming to power in 1948, to conservationists' disgust.

Mr Oppenheimer described the signing as a testimony to his company's commitment to conservation and the environment, pointing out that during the past decade it had spent nearly R30-million in buying farms and establishing the Venetia reserve.

"I'm delighted that De Beers and SA National Parks are co-operating to bring the concept of the Dongola Reserve back to life. This is specially pleasing to me on a personal basis as my grandfather, Sir Ernest Oppenheimer, was one of the trustees of the original reserve," he said.

Mr Msimang said the mission of SA National Parks was to acquire and manage a system of parks that represented the indigenous wildlife, vegetation, landscapes and associated cultural assets of South Africa, for the joy and benefit of the nation.

"The creation of the Vhembe-Dongola National Park has been one of our objectives for many years because of the rich biodiversity of the area, its great scenic beauty and the cultural importance of the archeological treasures of Mapungubwe," he said.

The gold artefacts found at Mapungub-

we - an excavated site dating from the 14th century - ranked among the most important pieces of ancient art yet found in sub-Saharan Africa and documented the rise of the Zimbabwean culture, Mr Msimang said.

"The significance of the Vhembe-Dongola National Park further lies in its potential role as a sanctuary for viable populations of the black and white rhinoceros, the African elephant and the wild dog which are considered to be some of the most threatened large mammals on earth."

The Vhembe-Dongola National Park will form a key part of the proposed trans-frontier conservation area - more commonly called a peace park - with Botswana and Zimbabwe. This is the planned 4 870 sq km Dongola/Limpopo Valley Peace Park.

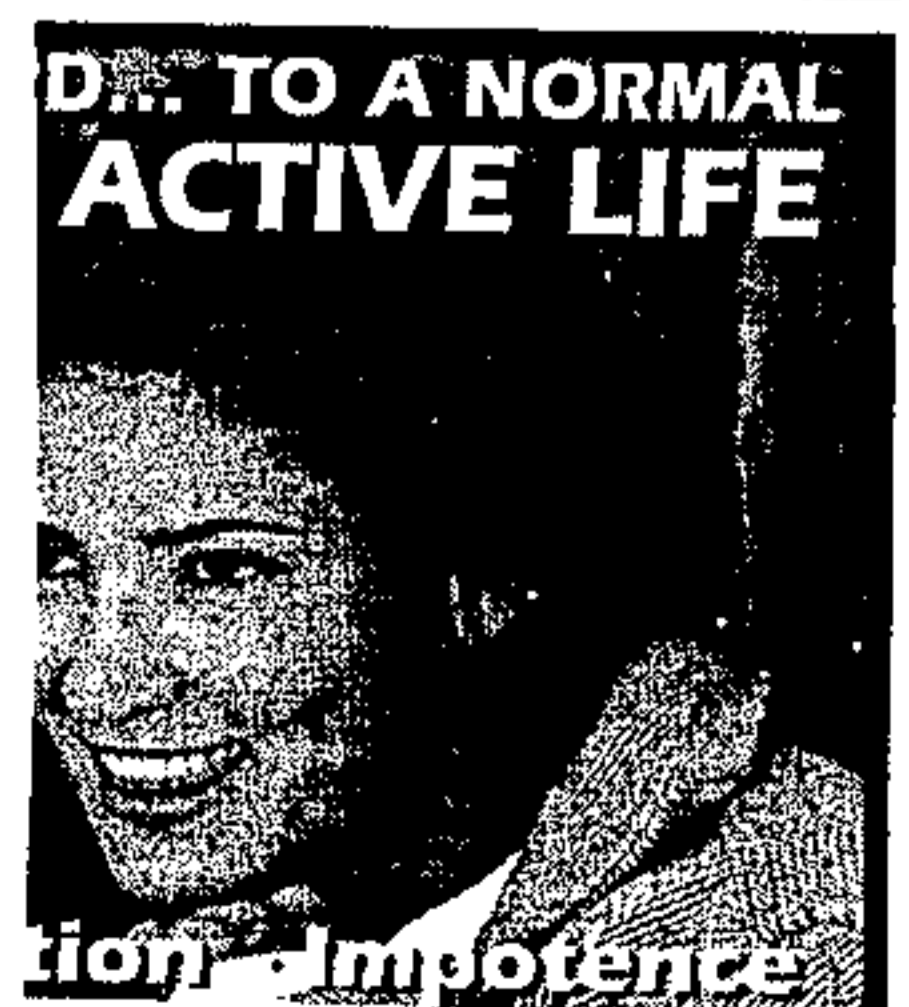
In its recent annual report, the Somerset West-based Peace Parks Foundation, set up to facilitate the creation of such parks throughout sub-Saharan Africa, said it had bought the farm Rhodesdrift as part of a land consolidation process on the South African side of the border.

The consolidation, which involved a small number of agricultural properties, was required to form a natural corridor between the Tuli game reserve in Botswana and the formally proclaimed conservation areas like Venetia in South Africa.

up by 2,47 million

a's population has grown by 2,47 million per 1996 till now, according to Statistics SA.

That the current total stood at 40,58 million three years ago. Statistics SA said that the economically active population had risen from 14,9 million to 17,37 million in the same period. Statistics SA said the data was based on the 1996 census and the 1997 mortality rates. - Sapa



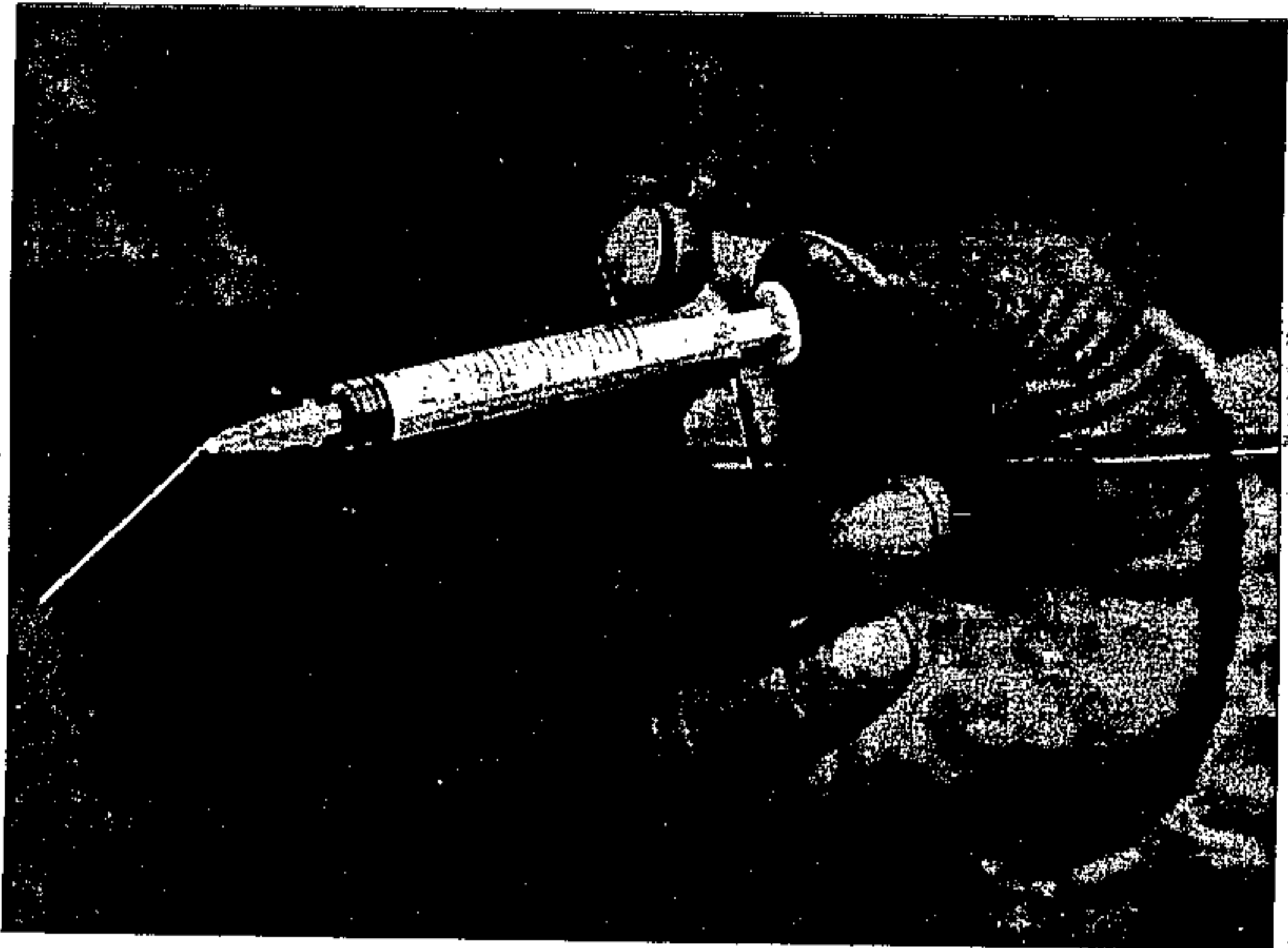
Medical waste dumped on playground

Boy stabbed with syringe after children find cache near city shopping centre

OPEN VAN KRAKENBURG
SWIFT REPORTER

(56)

ARL 15 | 7 | 1999



Point taken: a syringe found among medical waste dumped on a Manenberg field

Medical waste has been found dumped again - this time on a Manenberg field next to the Nyanga Junction shopping centre - and at least one child was allegedly stabbed with a syringe.

Last year, and earlier this year, there was a spate of medical waste dumpings on the Cape Flats. The waste came from private doctors in the area.

Yesterday, children from The Downs found empty medicine boxes, empty syringe packages, and used syringes on a field where they were playing soccer.

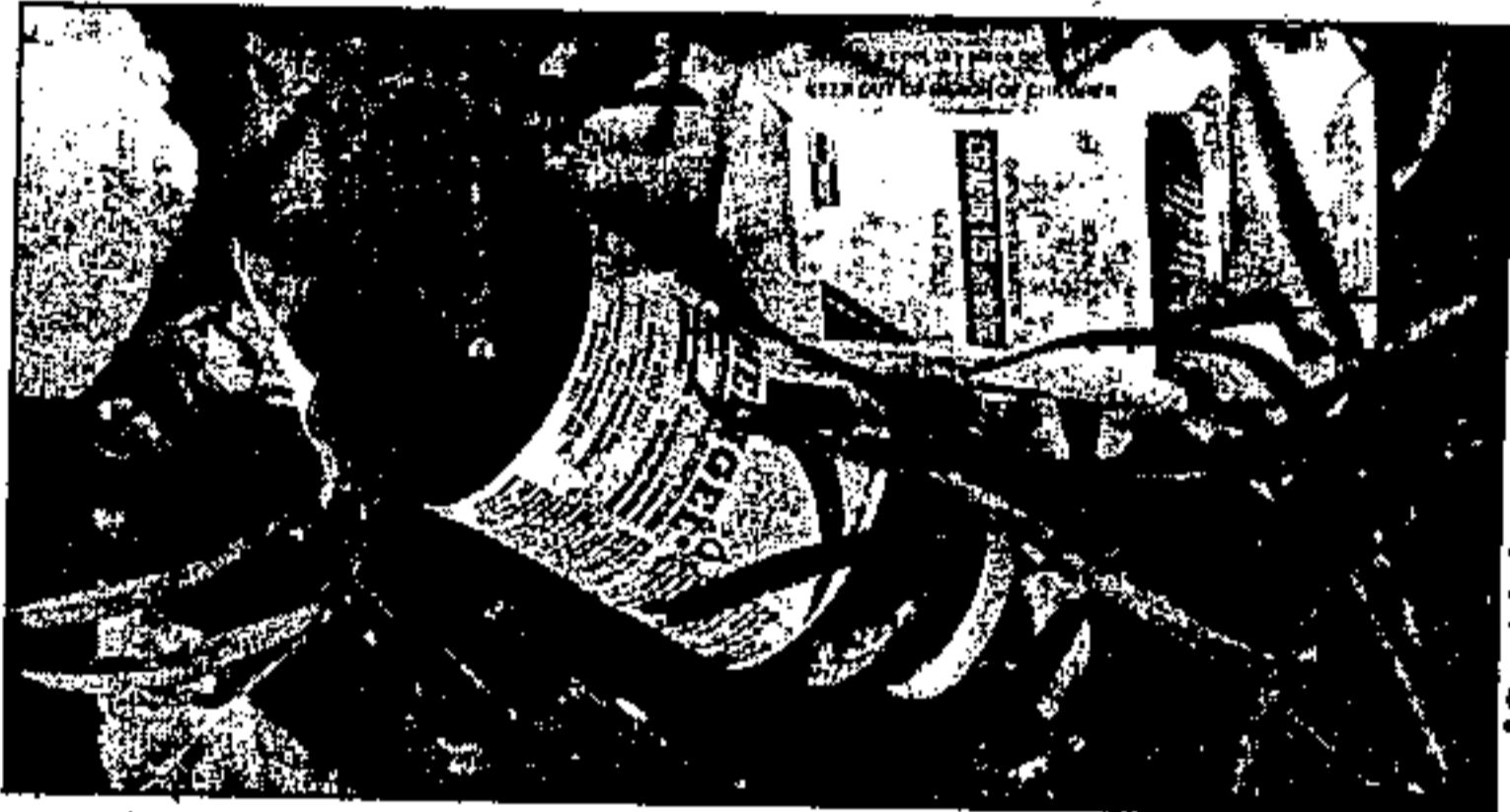
Among the medicine packages were a bottle of Medigal suspension and an anti-acid containing chloroform, alcohol and preservatives.

When the Cape Argus visited the scene, a team found an empty tablet sachet with the name of two doctors printed on it.

Jaffa Adams, who lives next to the field where the medical waste was found, said 23 children had found the syringes in the morning while playing soccer. She said one of the youths picked up a syringe and stabbed Zhaun Cooper, 11.

Marlene Cooper, Zhaun's mother, rushed home as soon as she heard her son had been hurt.

"Lots of children play there all the time. How can someone be so irresponsible and dump syringes there?" asked an upset Mrs Cooper. "I got the message at work and



Scare: a dumped medicine box and bottle

Immediately feared the worst.

"You can't blame those kids for playing with the syringes. They don't know any better."

"But you can blame the people that dumped the waste. They know the dangers."

Zhaun's grandmother, Audrey Cooper, said that the nearby J.F. Jooste Hospital had referred him for an AIDS test.



Durriz Zairuddin Lacey, who lives nearby, when medical waste found on a Manenberg field

Saving our wild dogs from extinction

(56) Southern 16/7/99

By Russel Molefe
Environment Reporter

THE eight Tswana tribal chiefs gathered in a large room at the Sun City Resort in North West recently may well have been discussing the affairs of their tribes. However, the chiefs were there at the invitation of North West Parks and Tourism Board to discuss the introduction of the most endangered predator on earth, the African wild dog, to the Pilanesberg National Park.

The park, named after the great-grandfather of Chief Nyalala Pihane, who was one of the tribal leaders gathered at the resort, is surrounded by several villages whose residents rely mainly on livestock farming.

The future survival of the wild dogs in the area largely depend on the endorsement of the tribal leaders because their introduction into the park is bound to have negative implications for the people in the region.

While the wild dogs will be confined to the borders of the park, the possibility exists that they may find their way out of the enclosure and feed on the villagers' livestock.

The tribal leaders endorsed the introduction of the wild dog into the Pilanesberg National Park. Their introduction early this month marked a milestone in the survival of these predators.

The endorsement by traditional leaders also indicated that it may finally have dawned on people that wild dogs aren't so bad after all. Once a common sight in sub-

Saharan Africa, humans have vilified and persecuted them into virtual extinction. But they still cling to survival in a few isolated areas, with a total population now estimated at less than 5 000.

Farmers still kill them because wild dogs are capable of killing and eating human beings, and subject their prey to a lingering, brutal death.

When they hunt, a pack chases an animal relentlessly, tearing away chunks of flesh until the terrified prey collapses in pain. The pack then continues to bite out pieces of the living animal.

However, Dr Gus van Dyk, field ecologist at the 55 000 hectare Pilanesberg National Park, believes conservation authorities have an obligation to offer the wild dogs a safe haven.

"The knowledge gained by this exercise will be a great contribution to the global pool of insight required for the preservation and conservation of the wild dog," he said.

"It is critical to create islands of isolated wild dog populations across their former range to protect populations from major disease epidemics and persecution, while increasing their numbers and genetic diversity."

As some wild dogs were bred in captivity, Van Dyk said: "The process is highly sensitive and we have not promised that all the animals will survive - it's a savage business, but success will mean another step in preserving this decimated species."

"Without exercises such as these, African wild dogs will surely become extinct and we are obliged to assist with



African wild dogs jump out of a pool at the Pilanesberg Game Reserve. Africa's wild dogs, saddled with the unenviable - some would say undeserved - reputation as the continent's most savage predator have been hounded to the brink of extinction by human hunters and habitat loss. Now, thanks to the efforts of dedicated conservationists, these animals are making a comeback.

PICTURE: REUTERS

the meta-population of these animals."

The Kruger National Park, whose 300 wild dogs make up the only viable population of the species left in South Africa, has now embarked on a new census being conducted under the auspices of the Endangered Wildlife Trust's Carnivore Group.

The aim is to document the distribution and population dynamics of the wild dogs, and trace the movements of some of the wild dogs that have "disappeared" in the two-million hectare park.

When the World Conservation Union's Canid Specialist Group met in

Pretoria in 1997, it recommended that a South African wild dog conservation group be established.

This led to the creation of the Wild Dog Action Group chaired by Dr Gus Mills. He believes that establishing a second viable population of wild dogs will depend on the will and dedication of landowners, wildlife managers and the members of the public at large.

The Okavango Delta in Botswana is one of the last places in Africa large enough to accommodate wild dogs in a habitat that allows them the freedom to which they are accustomed. But environmental analysts believe

cattle ranching in the Okavango, subsidised by the European Union, poses a threat to the wild dogs.

The EU opened its beef markets in 1972 on condition that the imported cattle comes from areas that are free of foot-and-mouth disease.

The Botswana authorities then erected a network of veterinary control fences to limit the disease. But these fences became problematic because they cut off ancient animal migration routes.

About 50 000 wildebeest subsequently died along the fences as these barriers prevented them from reaching traditional watering holes.

TRI-NATIONAL CONSERVATION MOVE

Plan for new reserves

(56) ST 16/7/99

DURBAN: Swaziland, Mozambique and South Africa have agreed on a plan to establish four trans-border conservation areas to protect the environment and boost tourism, TONY GARNIE reports.

SENIOR ministers from South Africa, Mozambique and Swaziland have approved draft plans which pave the way for a chain of international conservation areas linking the three countries.

If the proposals are ratified over the next few months, they will result in four new conservation areas no longer separated by man-made borders created in colonial times.

And for the first time in more than a century, the border fences separating the people and animals of the region may gradually be removed.

The three countries would also sign a treaty, to be lodged at UN headquarters in New York, committing the parties to

joint environmental, social and economic issues under the auspices of a new inter-government commission on trans-frontier conservation and resource areas. In the east, a giant marine reserve would stretch from Lake St Lucia to the Marchangulo Peninsula near Maputo.

Kwazulu-Natal's Ndumo and Tembe Reserves would be joined with the Maputo Elephant Reserve via the Futi River, while on the Swaziland border the Pongola Biosphere Reserve could be joined with the Nsibane area of southern Swaziland.

The fourth proposal is to link conservation land in eastern Swaziland with Mozambique's Goba district.

The plan, which is part of the Lubombo Spatial Development Initiative, aims at creating tourism destinations which bring wealth to the poor but also protect the environmental wealth which make these areas so attractive to visitors. Draft proposals state that the needs and aspirations of local communities would be ensured by their direct participation in conservation programmes and by providing encouragement and empowerment wherever possible. However, rare, threatened or endangered species should be protected and the environmental effects of human activities should be monitored closely.

The three countries would also "investigate options for the facilitation of cross-border movement, the removal of fences and the creation of visa-free areas or reserves". The countries would appoint three representatives each to serve on the Trans-Frontier Conservation and Resource Area Commission.

Looking after wider interests is best for the shareholders

(56) 80. 16/7/99

ENVIRONMENTAL, ethical and social reporting is still in its controversial infancy. Yet it is acquiring impetus.

This comes not only from stakeholders who believe management should balance the interests of customers, employees, investors, suppliers and the wider community. There is a growing consensus in business that long-term shareholder value cannot be achieved without acknowledging responsibility to wider stakeholder groups.

The result is that there is pressure from both sides of the corporate ideological divide for more innovative reporting.

A growth industry has thus been born. Will it produce meaningful information that is of value to shareholders and stakeholders alike? Or will it turn into the ultimate good news machine — a public relations weapon in the hands of self-interested management?

The risk that bland verbiage will triumph is real because of the softness of the data and the absence of any clear reporting framework, but experiments are multiplying.

At international level there is the ambitious Global Reporting Initiative, launched by the Coalition for Environmentally Responsible Economies with help from companies and other interested groups.

This aims to create standardised global guidelines for reporting on sustainability that would match standards of financial reporting in terms of the standard and rigour with which data is compiled and audited and form a basis for comparisons between companies.

A draft was issued for comment by the coalition's Boston-based secretariat in March.

Governmental and intergovernmental initiatives abound, while in the private sector the big accounting firms are developing new reporting and auditing techniques. The scene is particularly lively in the UK, where consultancies are advising leading companies and providing audit services.

Inevitably much of the activity — and much of the cynicism — concerns the oil industry.

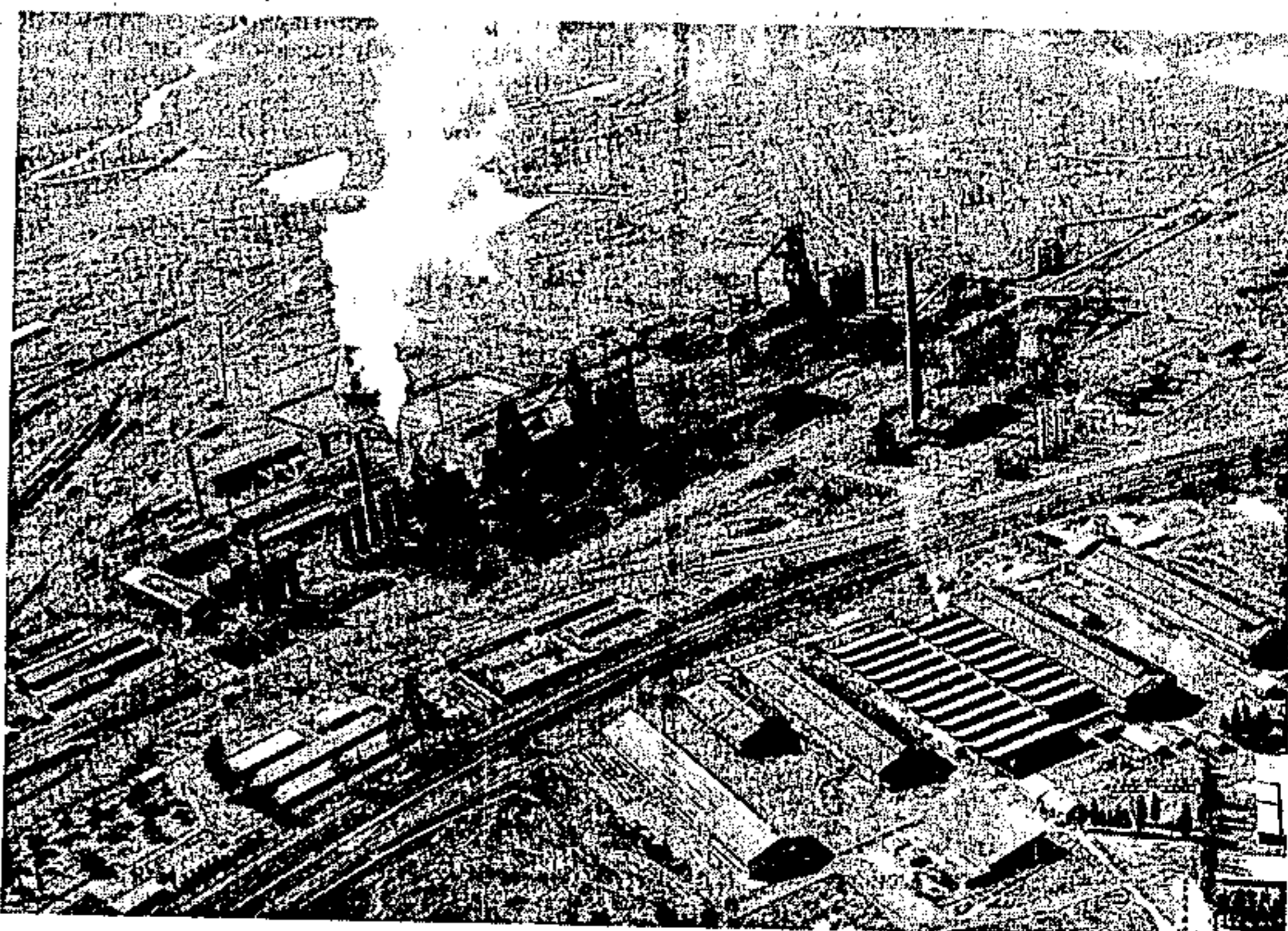
The geographical distribution of hydrocarbons around the world could not have been better designed to deliver maximum political embarrassment to the major oil companies. They are, moreover, a powerful and accident-prone lot.

A mere handful of these companies has a profound effect on the global climate. The industry's embrace of environmental and social reporting is in part a defensive response to successive disasters like the Exxon Valdez tanker oil spill in Alaska, the Piper Alpha platform accident and environmental and human rights tragedies in Nigeria.

According to a senior oil industry executive, multinationals now live in a "prove it" world where investors and society no longer trust a company's word.

So information on the environment and society needs not only to

Will social reporting produce meaningful information or will it be just another public relations weapon in the hands of self-interested managements, asks John Plender of the Financial Times



Environmental and social reporting needs to be consistent, reliable and measurable against benchmarks, not just a response to disasters.

be consistent, reliable and measurable against benchmarks. It has to be independently verified.

In an area characterised largely by self-regulation, how credible are the early reporting efforts?

The answer is better than might be expected, even in social reporting, which is a newer discipline than environmental reporting.

British Telecommunications this week produced its first social report. Not all of it is favourable to the company. A survey of employee satisfaction shows that only 39% were happy with the firm's leadership, a figure that compares unfavourably with a benchmark of comparable companies.

The report is a serious, if tentative attempt to provide quantitative, independently compiled data on the firm's relationships with shareholders, customers, employees and the community; a methodology is still being tested to monitor relations with suppliers.

Independent verification was provided which gave a broadly favourable verdict while suggesting areas for improvement.

Sir Iain Vallance, British Telecommunications chairman, says in the preface that the prime purpose of the business is to create value for shareholders while looking after all other important constituen-

cles. A statement of the company's values then reveals the company puts its customers first.

This contradiction encapsulates a point Sir Iain himself makes: "There is no escape, even if you believe in the primacy of shareholders, from balancing the interests of varying constituencies."

The company is not alone in publishing unflattering data. Railtrack of the UK reported recently on the basis of a staff survey: "We were concerned to discover performance in continuous learning and development was down on the previous survey (conducted before listing). In particular, it was discouraging that half of the respondents ... felt we were doing a poor job at getting the best out of people or showing we value them."

This news might not come as a surprise to Britain's long-suffering rail users, but the fact of its voluntary revelation probably would.

In due course governments will no doubt seek to strengthen the reporting framework. Will this do anything more than promote meaningless statements?

In the case of costly disasters, such as Bhopal in India or the Exxon Valdez spillage there is a powerful political incentive to ensure meaningful disclosure.

Yet primary responsibility for

reporting lies with the directors of a company. So the quality of environmental and social reporting will depend on whether they believe stakeholder relationships are important for competitive advantage.

It will also depend on whether analysts and institutional investors apply pressure directly or through the capital markets for such disclosure.

The financial community is already aware of the importance of environmental liabilities. Yet it still tends to define shareholder value in very narrow financial terms.

There is a growing recognition that competitive advantage derives increasingly from human capital and from stakeholder relationships. The lack of adequate information in company accounts on such intangibles means that much share-dealing and takeover activity is taking place on the basis of inadequate or misleading data.

If business is convinced that competitive success and the maintenance of public confidence depends on deepening relationships between employees, customers, suppliers, investors and the community, then financial people will ultimately broaden their focus.

That would be the best guarantee against a relentlessly cheerful good news machine.

Kagiso set to win mine dumps war

By Russel Molefe (56)
Environment Reporter

RESIDENTS of Kagiso, Krugersdorp, are on a final assault in a battle to force a mining company to rehabilitate mine dumps which have for many years compromised the health of the people in the area.

Consolidated African Mines (CAM), which earlier vowed to defend against the legal action brought by the residents, has now opted for an out of court settlement. A settlement plan has already been drafted and is expected to be discussed with the residents next week.

CAM spokesman Mr Hennie Buitendag confirmed that the company had come up with a settlement plan, the contents of which would be implemented once it was approved by the residents. He refused to divulge its contents.

But *Sowetan* understands that the company suggests in the plan covering the dumps by planting grass and turning them into recreational facilities in future.

Buitendag denied that the company

initially intended to defend the court action on the basis that it was not its responsibility to rehabilitate the mines.

"We only bought this company last year and we did not know what the problem was. We never intended to defend the action in court," Buitendag said.

Kagiso is the first known community to have invoked the new Environmental Management Act which gives the public the power to protect their environmental rights.

The Act also contains provisions that transgressors, including the state, may be held responsible and legally liable for costs arising from harm to the environment because of their action or failure to take action.

Secretary for the local South African National Civics Organisation Mr Uhuru Moilola welcomed the move by the mining company yesterday, saying: "The battle was about to be won.

"There is now light at the end of the tunnel and there is no doubt that the long-standing problem of dust pollution in the area is going to be finally solved," Moilola said.

56/17/91
Sowetan

Plastic bags become 'scourge of the city'

Shops have no plans to can 'convenient' carriers

TWEET GAINSBOROUGH-WARING

They adorn our fences and are more prolific than spring flowers in our fields - they are the multicoloured plastic bags used by shops to pack customers' purchases.

While a concerted effort has begun in the Eastern Cape to reduce the number of plastic shopping bags littering the environment, the Western Cape is lagging far behind.

Several Port Elizabeth bottle stores have stopped issuing the bags, but their Western Cape counterparts have no plans to follow suit and supermarkets are determined to continue dish-ing out plastic bags.

Kendall Kaveney, Cape Town's

director of water and waste, says he would like to see a major campaign against plastic bags inside and outside the city.

Mr Kaveney said the situation was bad enough to warrant legislation to stop people littering, but that would have to come from the Department of Environmental Affairs.

He said plastic bags were the scourge of Cape Town. "Our biggest problem in the city is the small bags that are used mostly for food."

Mr Kaveney said although well-meaning people put the bags in bins, the notorious south-easter often blew them out. Major supermarkets admit that plastic bags cause pollution, but cite customer convenience as the reason for continuing to supply them.

But a quick survey by Saturday Argus of consumer attitudes at till points in Cape Town showed that shoppers were open to the idea of supplying their own bags.

Aubrey Clarke of Lotus River said paper bags would be more convenient and would have no problem with supplying his own.

In the windy city of Port Elizabeth, an aggressive anti-plastic campaign was launched last year and gained momentum in June when liquor stores stopped supplying plastic bags.

Customers bring their own bags or can buy large re-usable, bio-degradable carrier bags for between R4 and R6,50 each. These bags are produced by members of the Association for the Physically Disabled.

But, in Cape Town, liquor store operators say they know nothing about the move by their Port Elizabeth counterparts and the supermarkets have no plans to eradicate plastic bags.

Shoprite Checkers said the option of selling bags to customers was not viable as it put an unfair burden on households whose budgets were already stretched to the limit.

Pick 'n Pay's Ray Murray said plastic bags were easier to carry and were waterproof. He said that was appreciated by consumers who did not have cars and who had to carry their purchases over long distances or in taxis, buses and trains.

Plastic plague, see page 22

ARH 17/7/99

(56)

Toxic-waste ship heads for Cape

BONNY SCHOONAKKER in London and JANET HEARD in Cape Town

provoking a storm of protest. The vessel sparked further outrage when it breached an undertaking not to come within 200 nautical miles of South Africa.

Environment Minister Mohamed Valli Moosa knew nothing of the planned shipment, but said he would investigate immediately.

A spokesman for British Nuclear Fuels, John Barber, confirmed that two vessels were being prepared to ship nuclear fuel from Europe to Japan. He said he would not release more details until the ships were actually under way, but added that no countries along the route had been consulted.

In Europe, Greenpeace said the shipments contained "enough fissile material to construct 60 nuclear bombs, more than the entire Indian and Pakistani nuclear arsenals".

Although there were three possible routes the ships could follow, the one round the Cape was the

most likely, Greenpeace said.

In South Africa, Earthlife Africa's Davin Chown said: "It's outrageous and unacceptable. We're planning protests and pickets tomorrow."

A spokesman for the Global Environmental Action Group said safety measures were inadequate as the ships were not going to be accompanied by naval escorts.

Environmental groups said any spillage would have devastating consequences for South Africa's coastline. Seeping toxins could infect seafood, which, if consumed by humans, could lead to leukaemia, other cancers and birth defects.

Greenpeace said the cargo was mixed-oxide fuel, a reprocessed mixture of uranium and plutonium destined for Japanese nuclear reactors. In the event of a spill, inhaling a single microgram would be fatal.

Former Koeberg Alert secretary Mike Kanteley, who was involved in protests against the Pacific Teal's

passage in 1997, said there was no guarantee the ships would not break the 200-mile restriction again.

Kanteley said: "Although the odds of a ship going down are small, the consequences would be catastrophic. If one of those ships goes down in a back-breaking storm, it will be difficult to salvage."

He said that if there was spillage, the toxins would concentrate in crustaceans. "Anyone eating crayfish could be affected by the plutonium, which will be ingested through the digestive system, leading ultimately to conditions such as leukaemia, spontaneous abortions and birth defects."

The full consignment of 446kg is being loaded onto one ship in Barrow, England, and the other in Cherbourg, France. Barber said approval for the shipment had been obtained from the International Atomic Energy Agency and the International Maritime Organisation.

TWO huge shipments of highly radioactive nuclear fuel are set to pass the Cape of Good Hope within weeks, sparking outrage from environmentalists who warn that spillage could spell disaster.

Green groups planning to hold protests in Cape Town tomorrow said the possibility of sea contamination through leakage or accident could not be ruled out because of the Cape's treacherous seas, particularly at this time of year.

Greenpeace has identified the two ships as the Pacific Pintail and the Pacific Teal, both of which are owned and operated by Pacific Nuclear Transport, a subsidiary of British Nuclear Fuels.

The Pacific Teal passed through South African waters two years ago,

ST 18/7/99

(56)

Open season for wild profits

Money is the name of the game in the SA wildlife industry — and it can be a cruel world

ROWAN PHILIP

RICCARDO Ghiazza, who owns the Tull elephants at the centre of an animal-cruelty scandal, is part of a R500-million-a-year legal trade in wildlife in South Africa.

In this industry, wild animals — described by insiders as nothing but "valuable commodities" — are moved from parks and game farms through holding facilities to private game ranches, zoos and trophy rooms around the world.

It is believed that the industry employs some 200 000 people, while the estimated turnover of R350-million — for live game sales, hunting and venison export — excludes revenues from weapons sales, taxidermy and auctions.

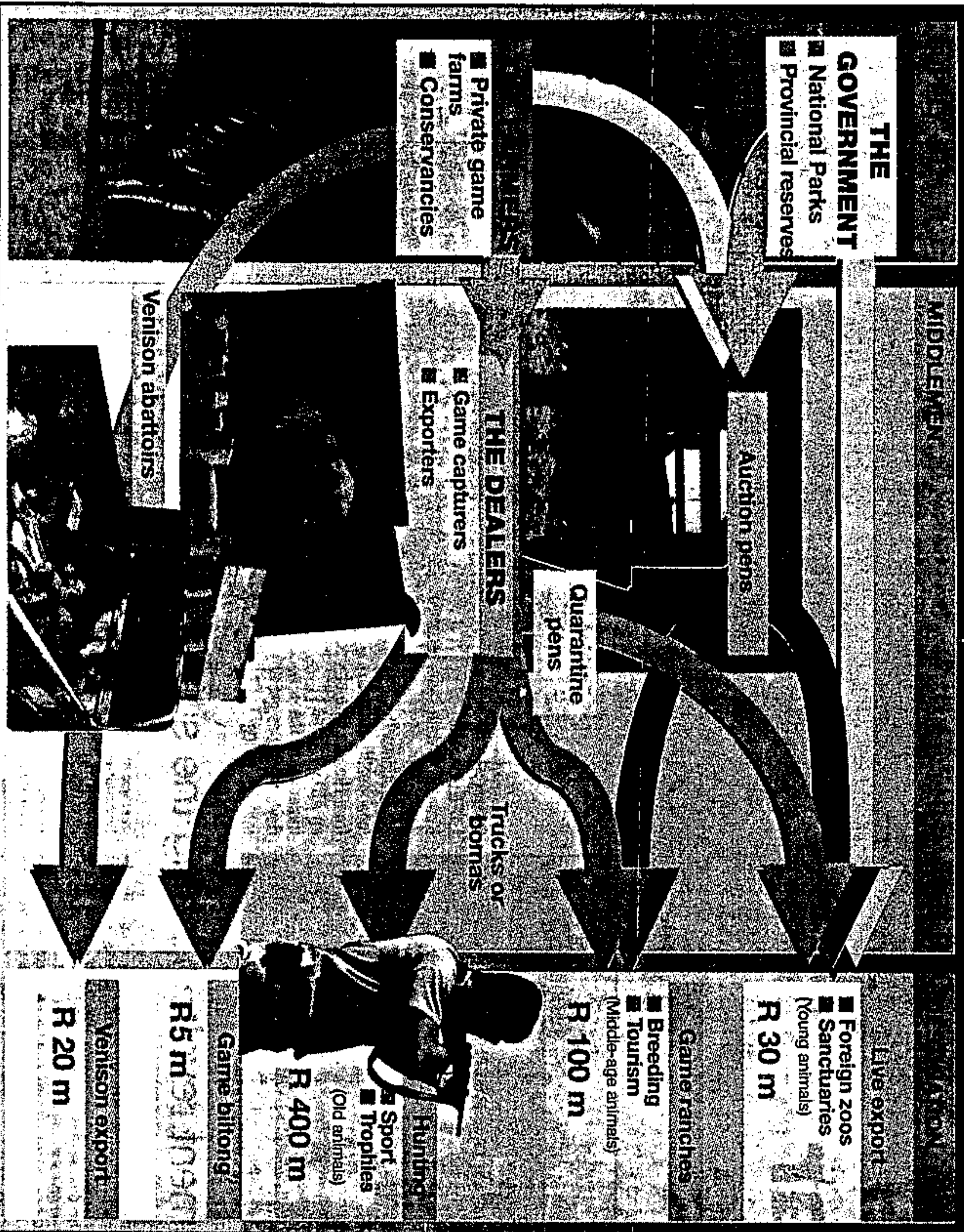
The bulk of the live sales trade is limited to the country's 10 000 private game farms, thanks to Cites restrictions and the enormous cost of preparing animals for export.

But half a dozen of South Africa's 22 registered animal dealers, including Ghiazza's African Game Services, make their profits through huge mark-ups to foreign zoos and safari parks, after tanning wild mammals in quarantine bonas.

Disease-free buffalo are "the BMWs of the game trade", with an average price of R70 000 each, but high volumes of impala (R600), blue wildebeest (R2 800) and, in KwaZulu-Natal, nyala (R4 700) provide the mainstay of the local industry.

Game farmers and environmental protection groups credit the game trade for almost doubling the number of wild animals in South Africa over the past 20 years.

However, critics say cost-cutting among competitors has led to many incidents of cruelty, while some "problem sets" such as elephants are said by some to be "worth nothing without a bullet in their heads".



THE GOVERNMENT

- National Parks
- Provincial reserves

MIDDLEMEN

Auction pens

Quarantine pens

THE DEALERS

- Game capture
- Exporters

Trucks or bonas

Venison abattoirs

BUYER

Live export

- Foreign zoos
- Sanctuaries (Young animals)

R 30 m

Game ranches

- Breeding
- Tourism (Middle-age animals)

R 100 m

Hunting

- Sport
- Trophies (Old animals)

R 400 m

Game killing

R 5 m

Venison export

R 20 m

Graphic: SHAHN IRWIN

Here is how the industry works:

When a surplus occurs among a species on a game farm, owners simply call the most attractive game-capture outfit advertised in one of the farming magazines. This outfit — the dealer, or "wholesaler" — will herd the animals into bonas on the property, normally using its own helicopter at a cost of around R1 400 an hour.

The game-capture company will either store all of the farmers' excess animals in temporary holding bonas or try to avoid "double translocation costs" by trucking the animals directly to retail buyers already earmarked.

These buyers, normally game ranchers, pay an approximate markup of 30 percent, but make their profit through hunting, tourism, biltong sales and the auction of offspring from breeding

stock purchased.

In the event of export, the game-capture company will take the animals to its own quarantine area, where a full-time vet, maintenance staff and, sometimes, animal trainers must prepare them for their future homes in zoos and sanctuaries overseas.

Government conservation authorities either put surplus reserve animals out to tender — for which the "big five" game-

capture companies normally compete — or sell them individually at game auctions. The KwaZulu-Natal Nature Conservation Service supplements government budget cuts with a game sales income of between R10- and R20 million a year.

Dr George Hughes, acting CEO of the service, said game sales represented a lucrative and legitimate business, provided cruelty formed no part of it. "We don't live

in a Walt Disney world — wild animals are good business and their value has helped restore many animal populations."

One leading game-export company, Global

Wildlife Logistics, buys, "habituates", quarantines and exports between 400 and 600 wild animals each year.

Howard Crockett, director of the company,

- ### COMMERCIAL BIG FIVE
1. Black rhino (Very low volume): R400 000
 2. White rhino (medium volume): R150 000
 3. "Clean" (disease-free) buffalo (high volume): Between R32 000 and R120 000
 4. Roan and sable antelope (low volume): Between R25 000 and R55 000
 5. Giraffe (high volume): R12 000

Elephants have no value on the local market because few farmers have the facilities to hold them, while big cats like lions command a very low commercial demand because they are said to "breed like mice" and "kill the other merchandise".

said the cost of preparing an animal for international trade was two and a half times the wholesale price of the animal itself.

"We do a lot of business with safari parks in the east — especially Saudi Arabia and Dubai. If we supply zoos, it's with great care that we make sure their facilities are up to scratch — we never supply circuses."

But a game-capture helicopter pilot alleged this week that game farmers were radically overstocking their properties to keep up with the demand. He also alleged that some farmers avoided the high cost of tranquilisers by force-feeding antelope whisky to calm them for the road trip from game auctions.

"Mostly, it [the industry] is incredibly efficient and dynamic — but I've also witnessed endless horrors," the pilot said.

Mines change village life

Ka-Ditshwene overcome by blasts, pollution and even death

By HANGWANI MULAUDZI

BY the nature of their remoteness and rurality, the village of Ka-Ditshwene used to be a tranquil place where the calmness and quietness used to be interrupted by singing birds and clocks attached to their livestock.

However, the situation has dramatically changed to the opposite in this rural village, situated in Backenberg about 150 km east of Pietersburg, Northern Province.

The residents will live to forget the moving in of two mining companies - Bestaf Granite and African Red - who have changed their once-normal lives into a living hell.

They cherished the establishment of these companies and highly commended those who came up with the idea to have such companies in the village.

They believed the move would solve their unemployment problem and were also convinced the village would be on the business map. However, the move has turned the village into a hell.

The arrival of the companies also led to the unceremonious migration of the birds, which were always reviving the village through their soothing melodies.

Ka-Ditshwene is now a place of continuous blasts, pollution and death.

This is what most of the villagers revealed to City Press when it visited the area this week.

The villagers say that the severity of the noise, which comes from about 200 metres from the homesteads, has made the majority of this rural village agree that relocation would be the solution to their perennial crisis.

The villagers claim life has become unbearable; that every time the deafening sounds emanating from the continuous blastings drive them to run helter-skelter out of their cracking houses and away from the flying rocks.

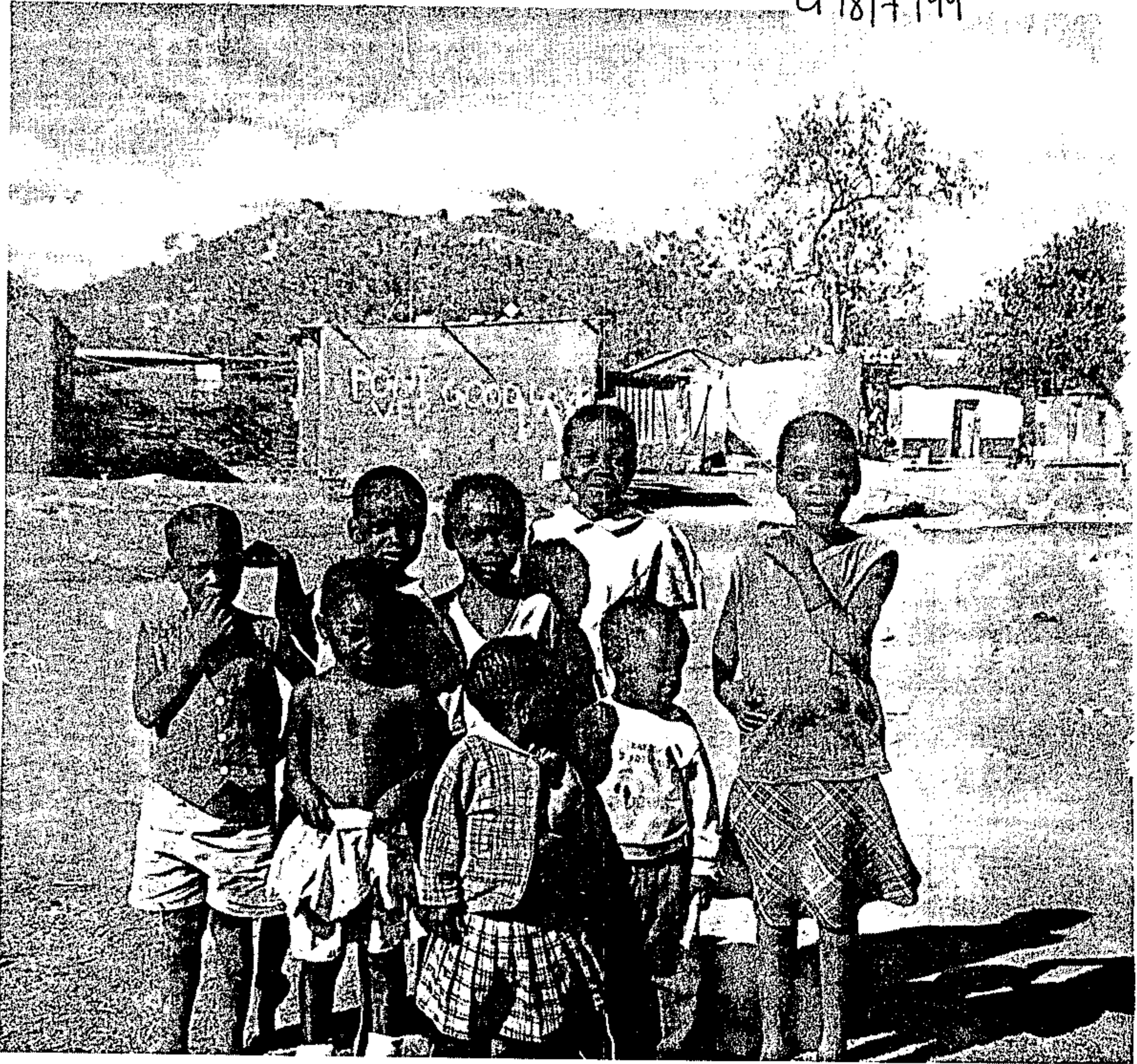
Surprisingly, none of the villagers have been crushed to death by the collapsing walls, while some allege they have escaped death by an inch.

However, a dark cloud hanged after the death of three children who swam and drowned in an unprotected pit, while another child broke both her hands last year.

It is alleged that although the companies pay for the hospital bills and the funeral costs, they steadfastly refused to compensate the family of the victims.

Pregnant women are also concerned of their in-born babies because of the prevailing situation.

A nursing sister at the neighbouring hospital, George Masebe, corroborated the women's sentiments when she admitted that the chances of their babies to live normal lives look remote.



LIVING HELL... Ka-Ditshwene villagers have had their natural habitat change for the worse

She said they could be born with hearing problems, lung infection, brain damage and other serious illnesses.

This situation is also of a major concern for the farmers who claimed to have suffered their fair share by losing hundreds of their livestock.

They alleged their livestock died after drinking water that was mixed with poisonous products used in the mines.

Paulina Maisela, a school teacher and member of the Ka-Ditshwene mining negotiation forum, said they have enough of the blastings and all they want was the relocation.

Maisela said the mine companies have brought much suffering into their lives and there was the rise of social problems.

"There is a sharp increase in sexual transmitted diseases, AIDS is also on the rise," said a concerned

Maisela.

"There is also an influx of foreigners, who are employed by the companies, and this could be another contributory factor to a lot of rare diseases we are experiencing lately.

"There is also the rise of pregnancy among young women who have fallen prey to these foreigners. They promised them money in exchange for sex."

The furious Maisela launched a

scathing attack at the provincial government for failing to solve the problem.

"We have been pleading with them since three years ago, but to no avail."

Maisela, who also called the intervention at all stakeholders in the province, said her forum would not leave the matter without a fight.

Several attempts to get comments from the companies' representatives were unsuccessful.

Conduct code for EU's executive a boost for reform

(56)BD19/7/99

AARTSELAAR — Romano Prodi set his incoming European Commission on the long road to reform at the weekend, striking an early blow to win back credibility and political support for the disgraced European Union executive.

At his first meeting with the 19 nominees to his team in a castle near Antwerp, the former premier of Italy got speedy agreement on a code of conduct aimed at stopping scandals that toppled the previous executive. Prodi was brought in by the 15-nation bloc's leaders in March after the commission executive resigned in the wake of a report saying it had lost control of a fraud and cronyism-infected institution.

British commissioner Neil Kinnock, one of only four members of Jacques Santer's team to be returning to Brussels and charged by Prodi with reforming the body, said the code accord was "great progress".

However, he said, the code represented only the beginning of an uphill struggle to restore the commission's credibility: "There's no single act that will get the kind of confidence and trust that an international public service like the commission should have. That's got to be worked for; it's got to be earned."

While his team at Aartselaar gathered for a photograph on the castle lawn, Prodi said his "new and clear" code required commissioners to act in accordance with the highest standard of public life.

The code of conduct is aimed at ruling out conflicts of interest, by limiting commissioners' outside activities and making them declare their financial interests.

"I think it shows the determination of the commission to turn the page, be more open and transparent and to make sure everything we do is as clear and above board as possible," Britain's second commissioner Chris Patten said.

Despite Prodi's pre-emptive strike, the commission faces several hurdles before it can take office, as each commissioner must be grilled by the European parliament at what deputies have vowed will be tough US Senate-style hearings. The parliament has the power to reject the commission line-up if it is not satisfied.

Sweden's Margot Wallstrom, one of five women nominated to the commission, said she regretted Prodi had not been able to bring more women to Brussels, as the parliament had demanded. — Reuter.

Paradyskloof golf course battle set for High Court

Stellenbosch opponents cite their constitutional rights

One of several controversial decisions taken by Michael Louis while he was planning minister - the rezoning and subdivision of Paradyskloof farm outside Stellenbosch for a golf course-hotel development - is being taken to the Cape High Court on review.

Lawyers acting for objectors to this scheme have sent a letter to new Planning Minister Leon Markovitz, informing him of this move and asking him to supply full written reasons for his predecessor's decision.

The letter was dated June 30, but late last week Mr Markovitz said he had not yet received it.

He told the Cape Argus he would welcome a round-table discussion with the lawyers before they brought the action.

Mr Markovitz also said his Cabinet colleague, Environmental Affairs Minister Glen Adams, could be invited to the meeting, which would be "without prejudice".

"Let's hear what the problems are so that all parties have a better understanding... I think that's the wise thing to do," he said.

One of the issues the lawyers want clarified is why the province's chief directorate of planning (land use control) recommended the approval of the proposed R200-million-plus development, while at some point



JOHNVELD
ENVIRONMENT WRITER

its directorate of planning services was recommending that it be refused.

The lawyers are acting for the Stellenbosch Save the Mountain Alliance, which includes the Brandwacht Action Group (Brandwacht is the adjoining residential suburb), Wildlife and Environment Society, Stellenbosch Interest Group, and individuals Stephen Finemore and Marie-Louise Radziwill.

In a letter to Mr Markovitz, the lawyers said their clients intended taking the province's rezoning and subdivision decision on Paradyskloof to the High Court on review.

"This was in addition to their clients' formal appeal against Cape Nature Conservation's decision to authorise the controversial development in terms of environmental legislation and regulations.

This appeal is currently being considered by the new Western Cape Environmental Minister, Glen Adams.

The lawyers told Mr Markovitz that they did not believe he had complied with his obligation to furnish reasons for the decision.

"Our clients require your written reasons for the exercise of their rights, both in terms of the planning and environmental legislation as well as their right to just administrative action in terms of section 33 of the constitution.

"Our clients intend enforcing these rights, as they are entitled to do in terms of section 38 of the constitution."

The lawyers also hinted at further High Court review action against Mr Adams, if he turned down the appeal against Cape Nature Conservation's decision.

They told Mr Markovitz they believed it was "not convenient for the High Court to review the respective decisions of ministers in the provincial government on a piecemeal basis, and we accordingly propose that you agree, when furnishing your reasons, that we need not issue, serve and file papers in the review application before the appeal is determined".

(76) ARTS 19/7/99

Part of an unsigned recommendation by the province's directorate of planning services reads: "Stellenbosch, as an historical town, is seen as the prime South African example where an array of factors such as the natural environment, rural character, cultural historical heritage and educational infrastructure mutually reinforce one another to create a unique place of work and play.

Let's hear what the problems are. I think that's the wise thing to do.

"The biggest threat to Stellenbosch's unique character and quality is fragmented urban development which destroys precious agricultural land, natural habitats and the juxtaposition thereof (vistas, views, landmarks, architecture).

"It would be unwise to prejudice this aesthetic attraction for tourists in itself, with unharmonious development.

"The directorate concludes that when this application is viewed holistically, the objective of a sustainable environment, where there is a balance between the built environment and open spaces, and between the consumption needs and renewable resources, is not met."

Amakhosi put faith and funds into game parks

ARTS 19/7/99

ENVIRONMENT WRITER
A unanimous decision by traditional leaders of communities bordering the Hluhluwe-Umfolozi Park in KwaZulu Natal to invest more than R700 000 in a tourism accommodation development inside the park, has been hailed as a first for the region and possibly the world.

In February last year, the KwaZulu Natal Nature Conservation Service instituted a "community levy" on entrance and accommodation fees in parks under its control.

Funds from this levy are placed in a community trust for later distribution, via local conservation boards, to approved, sustainable projects in communities neighbouring all the service's protected areas.

To date, the trust has accumulated almost R4-million. Ten percent of its funds are held back to help those communities in areas which do not generate significant amounts for the trust.

At a recent meeting, all 10 of the traditional chiefs, or amakhosi, from the Hluhluwe-Umfolozi Park area unanimously agreed to invest the R730 737 that had accrued to their communities from the trust, generated by tourists visiting the park.

An extract from the minutes of their meeting reads:

"We, the 10 tribal authorities around this park, unanimously declare that we

would like to invest the entire sum for 1998/1999, including interest, in a future accommodation project in the park as our equity for future pro rata profits/dividends, in partnership with the Nature Conservation Service."

The decision has been hailed as a landmark in the history of nature conservation in KwaZulu Natal, if not in the world.

George Hughes, acting chief executive of the KwaZulu Natal Nature Conservation Service, said they were "greatly heartened" by the decision.

"This is a wonderful gesture of faith in the future of conservation, of confidence in the current land-use of the Hluhluwe-Umfolozi Park, as well as a very wise investment for the future of their people in terms of employment and added opportunities through increased tourism.

"I cannot think of another instance where communities have voluntarily chosen to invest this sort of money in a protected area.

"The amakhosi debated where such a development should be placed and recommended that in the best interests of all, it would be preferable to site it within the protected area, on neutral ground.

"This was seen to be a way of ensuring that no one community would benefit more than another.

"We are extremely excited by this decision and are looking forward to formalising the issue very shortly."

Jumbo game of chess

THE Tuli elephant saga, in which 14 young elephants were allegedly mistreated at Africa Game Services (AGS) outside Brits a few weeks ago, may seem to be just another fight against cruelty to animals.

The senseless beating of the elephants shown on M-Net caused revulsion and was condemned by various organisations and the public.

However, closer scrutiny of the saga points to an elaborate campaign by animal rights groups to influence the country's policy on wildlife management, with the Tuli elephants being used as part of this plan.

When AGS owner Riccardo Ghiazza bought the elephants from the Tuli Bloc in Botswana last year to train them for overseas zoos, the relevant authorities in South Africa and Botswana satisfied themselves that he had not contravened any legislation governing trade in wildlife.

South Africa and Botswana, as well as Namibia, Zimbabwe and other African countries, subscribe to the policy of the sustainable utilisation of natural resources, including wildlife.

This was reaffirmed by new Environmental Affairs and Tourism Minister Mohammed Valli Moosa when he condemned the mistreatment of the elephants.

"While the needs of communities (particularly poor rural communities), the imperatives of conservation and the sustainable use of our natural resources, as well as the welfare of animals, are all important considerations for us, nothing can justify unnecessary cruelty to animals," Moosa said.

But the unwillingness by animal rights activists to accept that wildlife cannot exist as a sacrosanct entity, and that South Africa and other countries have the right to derive socio-economic benefits from the sustainable use of their natural resources, lies behind the Tuli saga.

Animal rights groups oppose all forms of animal use and usually place the interests of animals even before that of humans.

On the other hand, conservation organisations such as the Rhino and Elephant Foundation (REF), Endangered Wildlife Trust and the World Wide Fund for Nature support the sustainable utilisation of wildlife.

But a blunder last year by Ghiazza – when he opted to use the harsh and unacceptable Indonesian method of training the elephants – gave the National Council of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (NSPCA) ammunition to attack South Africa's wildlife management policy.

The society mobilised its allies overseas, who trashed the South African embassy in London and called for the boycott of all South Africa's tourism and products to put pressure on the country to abandon its policy on wildlife

The recent alleged maltreatment of 14 elephants has revealed that some animal rights groups may have hidden agendas, suggests **Russel Molefe**

(56)



Differences between animal rights groups and conservation organisations over the sustainable use of South Africa's natural resources lie behind the Tuli elephant saga.

Sowetan 20/7/99

PIC: PAT SEBOKO

management.

Dr Andrew McKenzie, a well-known conservationist who recently resigned as REF's director, put it this way: "It was an attack, not on the alleged and identifiable perpetrators, but on the state and the people of South Africa.

"The attack was aided and abetted by a group which does not seek opinion or perspective from South African conservationists, but identifies the country as a target despite the fact that this will not be in the interests of the elephants."

When the beating of the elephants was again "exposed" a few weeks ago, the NSPCA seized the opportunity to stage another assault on the country's wildlife management policy.

But the NSPCA did not explain to the public that the beating happened under the noses of its monitors, who were stationed at AGS since the organisation was granted custody of the elephants by a Brits magistrate.

Instead of the monitors using the powers granted them by the court to stop the beating, which went on for about eight minutes, they filmed the incident and handed the tape to M-Net.

This was seen by conservation organisations as a calculated move by the NSPCA to pursue its own agenda to bring the country into disrepute in the hope that the authorities would be forced to change the current policy on wildlife utilisation.

REF has since laid a charge against the NSPCA for being an accessory to the beating of the elephants and called on NSPCA patron-in-chief, former president Nelson Mandela, to urge the organisation to withdraw from processes that brought the country into disrepute.

The World Conservation Union also believes that the NSPCA worked under the pretext of care and welfare for the elephants to score political points.

The union's Saliem Fakir said: "It is of concern that the NSPCA, which was to have played a custodial role, should see it wise to take advantage of the situation to pursue its own agenda.

"This we find just as abhorrent as the whipping and beating of the animals. It also borders on a different kind of abuse – that despite the rhetoric that is put forth, the NSPCA and possibly other parties, are using the Tuli elephants as part of an elaborate political chess game."

But NSPCA spokeswoman Barbara Nash emphasised that their only agenda was the welfare of the elephants.

Dismissing the accusations as "utter rubbish", Nash said: "There is no hidden agenda. We are in the forefront of preventing cruelty to animals. If one looks at our track record, one can make up one's own mind."

'Deadly cargo' run done before

It was in November, 1992, that the Japanese ship, Akatsuki Maru, escorted by a lightly-armed Japanese coastguard vessel and shadowed by a Greenpeace tug, rounded the Cape of Good Hope carrying a cargo of plutonium waste.

And in 1995 the dedicated nuclear material carrier, Pacific Pintail, sailed from Europe around Cape Horn and across the Pacific Ocean with its nuclear waste cargo, sparking major protests.

In 1997, its sister ship, the Pacific Teal, rounded the Cape carrying 14 tons of nuclear waste.

This shipment was belatedly criticised by then Environmental Affairs Minister Pello Jordan, who said the ship, which sailed to within 90 nautical miles of the South African coast, had broken an agreement to remain outside South Africa's 200 nautical mile "exclusive economic zone".

His deputy, Peter Mokaba, took a much harder line, slamming the movement of hazardous waste as irresponsible.

SA warns on nuke ships set for Cape
Moosa 'concerned' over fuel shipments

JOHN YEID
ENVIRONMENT WRITER



Two British ships carrying high-level reactor fuel, which can be readily used to make nuclear bombs, appear set to pass the Cape of Good Hope en route to Japan.

The vessels, each carrying about 220kg of mixed-oxide nuclear fuel (MOX) for use in Japanese power plants, are scheduled to leave the French port of Cherbourg today and their route will be announced tomorrow.

Representatives of the British, French and Japanese governments have already asked to brief Environment Minister Valli Moosa - suggesting that the two dedicated nuclear material carriers, Pacific Pintail and Pacific Teal, will be using the shorter sea route around the Cape of Good Hope.

Mr Moosa has expressed concern about the proposal and called for a full report from his department and from the foreign envoys.

Gavin Carter, a spokesman for British Nuclear Fuels, said

countries along any of the routes which could be used by the ships received confidential advance information from the three governments. The ships did not plan to enter any territorial waters - that is, come within 12 nautical miles (about 22km) from the coastline.

In 1997, the Pacific Teal drew a belated condemnation from then environmental affairs minister Pello Jordan, when it rounded the Cape carrying 14 tons of nuclear waste to Japan and breaching South Africa's 200-mile "exclusive economic zone".

Mr Moosa said yesterday he had taken note of the controversy surrounding the shipments and shared

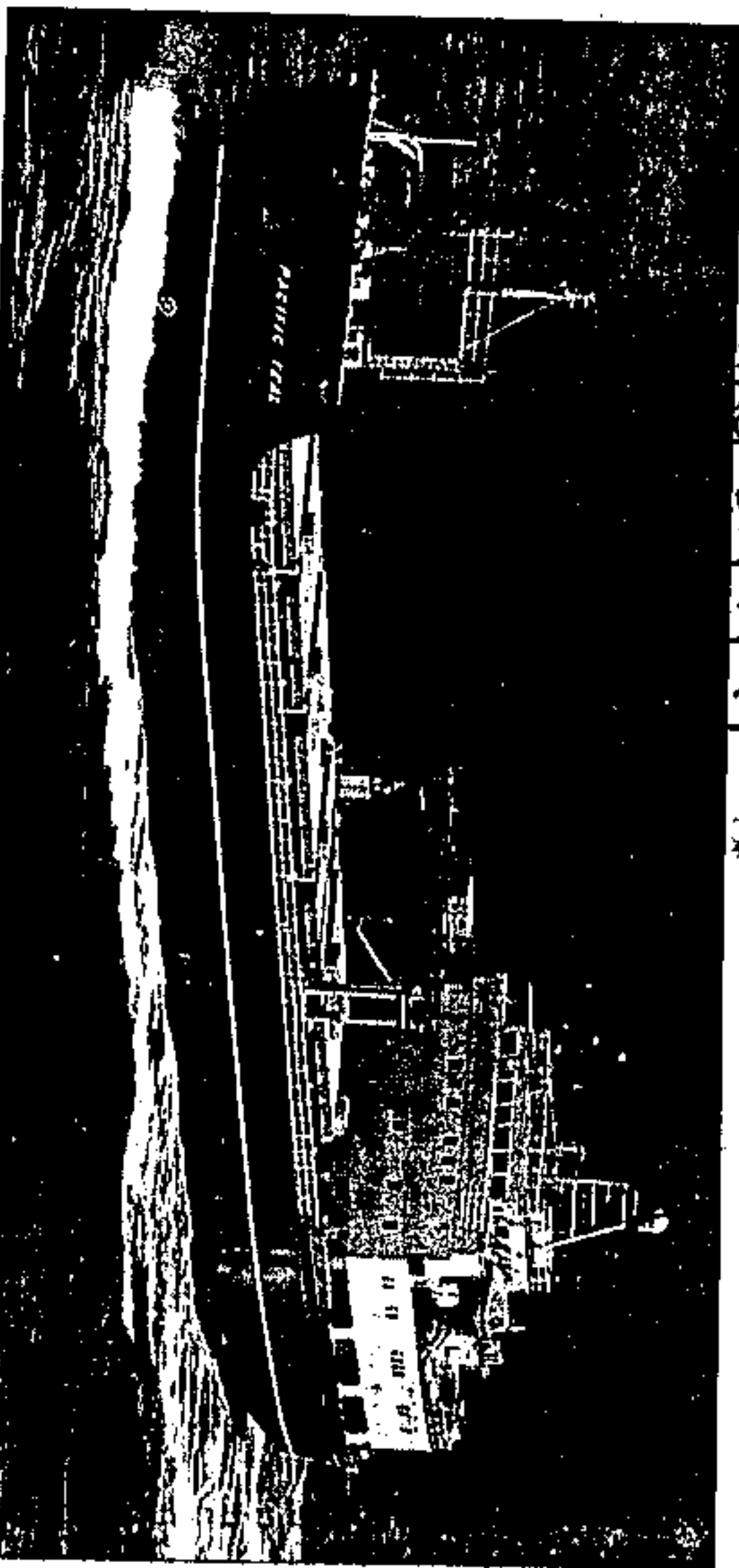
the concerns of "the various stakeholders and environmental groups concerned".

"It is imperative that everybody concerned must realise that the transport of nuclear waste should not be taken lightly and that it is a practice about which the South African population is very concerned," he said.

The voyage marks the first transfer since 1992 of so-called "direct use" nuclear material, which contains plutonium in a form considered easiest to convert into nuclear bombs.

The Pacific Pintail was loaded with its cargo in Barrow-in-Furness on the north-west English coast, and the Pacific Teal was loaded in Cherbourg.

Each ship has been armed with three 30mm cannon and carries a high-speed small craft armed with machineguns, reportedly the first time since World War 2 that any British-flagged merchant vessel has been armed.



Deadly cargo: In 1997 the nuclear material carrier, the Pacific Teal, rounded the Cape with a cargo of 14 tons of nuclear waste.

According to the environmental pressure group, Greenpeace, whose protest delayed the ship's departure from Barrow on Monday, the material being carried in the two ships constitutes more than that used in India's entire nuclear weapons programme. At least another 80

plutonium shipments are planned over the next decade.

Mr Carter said the MOX shipments were "almost indistinguishable" from similar successful shipments since 1969, including one of "vitrified residue" - plutonium waste encased in glass - that had been sent around the Cape in 1997.

MOX pellets were of a "hard ceramic material that is so stable it can survive in a nuclear reactor where temperatures can reach over 1 800°C," he said. "If you placed a pellet in water it would take thousands of years to dissolve."

Activists reject safety claims

Assurances about the safe shipment of nuclear fuel to Japan are not accepted by many environmental organisations, which are demanding an end to the movement of all nuclear materials.

The Wildlife Society's Western Cape branch said it was opposed to the shipment of both nuclear fuel and nuclear waste, "because there is always a risk of leakage".

"We question the security arrangements regarding the shipment," said a society spokesman.

"Also, this is an arrangement between Britain, France and Japan, which has impacts on all countries along the route. And since it's a first-world problem, we don't see why it should be pushed on to our coastline.

"The bottom line is that there is no need for the shipment at all".

Liz McDaid of Earthlife Africa's Cape Town branch said they were opposed to the shipment.

"Non-transparency and secrecy characterise the whole nuclear industry," she said.

"And while we're focusing on these shipments, we also have to look at what's happening inside South Africa with the nuclear industry. We're calling for transparency, and we're asking our Government to open up the debate around these ships."

Monkey on wildlife industry's back

By focusing on narrow issues with emotional appeal animal rights groups ignore the benefits of the trade, writes Julian Sturgeon

THE Tuli elephant saga has drawn attention to the important issue of animal welfare within the wildlife industry. The scenes aired by Carte Blanche have caused an outraged public to demand immediate action to "save the Tuli elephants". Various agencies have been mobilised and practical solutions have been arranged—so we are led to believe.

Unfortunately, in the wake of this stampede of good intentions, we have lost sight of the practical realities. The wildlife trade is a global industry that turns over billions of dollars annually. SA is a significant supplier to that trade. An article in the Sunday Times last week estimated the value of the industry to be about R550m, employing about 200 000 people.

This is probably an underestimate. The industry holds tremendous capacity for growth as well as business opportunities for disadvantaged rural communities.

The wildlife industry includes live export of animals, game lodges and tourism, hunting, breeding and meat production. The point is not to ban this trade but to manage it properly. Welfare is part of good management. The industry should be transparent with effective monitoring systems built into the structure. Inspection and evaluation of industry practices should be the norm as they are in most other industries.

Unfortunately, this is not the case, creating opportunities for animal rights groups to appropriate the animal welfare issue and smuggle a different set of issues into the public arena.

However much people might dislike the concept of "utilisation" it has been part of human culture for millenniums and it is here to stay. Animal rights groups, which are quite distinct from animal welfare groups, would have us believe that there is something fundamentally wrong with the utilisation of wild species; to that end they have created the notion of "animal rights".

Their most common strategy is to select species that have a powerful emotional appeal for humans and to influence public opinion around specific events involving those animals. The Tuli elephants



Protests against the treatment of the Tuli elephants have played into the hands of animal rights activists.

Picture: MARTIN RHODES

are a case in point. Other examples include seal culling, whaling, the ivory trade, the trade in tiger penises, gall bladders from bears and so on. In western culture nobody is prepared to defend cruelty to animals so the animal rights groups are unopposed when they raise specific examples of cruelty within the industry.

If they are arguing for a blanket ban on trade in wild species they have never said so. This is probably because they know it is not an argument they can win. Trade in wild species is so widespread and so valuable that it will never stop.

Such trade is only one step removed from an even bigger industry—trade in

domesticated species. If animal rights groups believe in their cause why have they not attacked the cattle industry?

Trade does not pose a major threat to the conservation of wild species. This fact is easily verified by reference to the reports of conservation bodies like the World Wildlife Fund and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature. The biggest threat to conservation, globally and locally, is loss of habitat through land conversion.

Mountain gorillas are threatened because of uncontrolled logging of indigenous forests. The Bengal tiger is probably doomed, not because it has been

hunted to the brink of extinction, but because it competes for land with farmers and has been forced into smaller and smaller forest areas.

The bald eagle in the US was rescued from extinction only when it was recognised that indiscriminate pesticide use by farmers had a devastating effect on its reproductive system. Vultures in SA are threatened because farmers abuse poison as a control measure.

Underlying all these examples is the conversion of wild habitat into agricultural land. Extinction of wild species, especially of insects and amphibious species such as frogs, has reached frightening propor-

tions. Trade has had very little to do with this trend and in many instances has been responsible for increasing the numbers.

A good example is the rescue of white and black rhinos by KwaZulu-Natal's Nature Conservation Service—a process that started in the 1960s and has relied extensively upon trade to pay the costs of conservation.

There are numerous examples where trade has been beneficial to a particular species. Why, for example, are cattle so plentiful on this planet? Literally millions are slaughtered daily and their carcasses sold to the food industry. Could it be that trade in this particular species has increased its numbers astronomically?

Humans have always utilised other species and should create proper management regimes to make such practices sustainable. To do this we need the participation of government, the private sector and society. Government is responsible for maintaining a regulatory framework within which the industry can function. This framework enables the issuing of various types of permits and licences. It also embodies scientific and management authorities responsible for ensuring SA's compliance with international treaties such as the Convention on Biodiversity.

Finally there is the question of monitoring, which is partly government's job, partly the industry's and partly that of society. The problem in SA is that both government and the industry have fallen down on the job. Society has stepped into the breach with a number of unfortunate consequences.

One of these has been the demonising of the wildlife industry together with some of its stalwarts and defenders. Awash in crocodile tears, we have lost sight of the big picture. As the dominant species on this planet it is our responsibility to maintain a balance between ourselves and all those species, both plant and animal, from which we draw sustenance. We are part of nature—not above it.

—Sturgeon is director of the Africa Resources Trust, a rural development and conservation organisation.

Moosa asks for nuclear (56) CT 2117/99 ship report

ENVIRONMENTAL Affairs and Tourism Minister, Mohammed Valli Moosa, has expressed concern about a proposal to ship nuclear fuel around the Cape, and has called for a full report from his department and representatives of other governments involved.

He said yesterday it was imperative that the transport of nuclear waste should not be taken lightly.

The Pacific Teal was due to sail on Monday from Barrow in England to Cherbourg in France, on the first leg of a journey carrying plutonium to Japan, but turned back after a stand-off with environmental activists.

No new departure date has been set for the vessel.

Moosa said in a statement he had taken note of the controversy surrounding the shipment, and "shared the concerns of the various stakeholders and environmental groups concerned".

He was awaiting a detailed report plus official information from his department and representatives of the relevant governments.

"It is imperative that everybody concerned must realise that the transport of nuclear waste should not be taken lightly. Such transportation should at no time be at the expense of creating any risk to the South African population or the marine ecology."

PROJECT DID NOT WORK

One Knyrna jumbo left

CT 22/7/99

(56)

TWO Kruger Park elephants which were moved to the Knyrna Forest in 1994 as part of an experiment, are now in Shamwari Game Reserve. JASPER MULDER reports.

THERE is only one elephant left in the Knyrna Forest, following the moving of two elephants from the forest yesterday to the Shamwari Game Reserve in the Eastern Cape, between Port Elizabeth and Grahamstown.

Just one old female elephant, aged 50, still lives in the forest and she is the only elephant in the country not fenced in.

The moving of the two elephants to Shamwari was carried out by a team from the Kruger National Park, led by wildlife veterinarian Douw Grobler. Everything went according to plan, according to Shamwari wildlife manager, Johan Joubert.

The females, both aged about

14, are part of the group of three elephants originally moved to the Knyrna Forest from the Kruger National Park in July 1994 in the hope of saving the Knyrna Forest elephants from extinction.

When the three arrived, they were first placed in a boma in order to adapt to the forest habitat and diet. Two months later they were released and within three weeks, they had met the 50 year-old cow. Shortly afterwards, the youngest elephant died, possibly from stress caused by the new environment.

The two remaining Kruger Park elephants remained with the old cow for seven more weeks, before leaving her. A year later the three animals met again, only to

stay together for a week. It was the last time that the three were seen together.

However, the National Parks Board, the Rhino and Elephant Foundation and the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry later became concerned when the younger animals began to spend less and less time in the forest and started venturing onto private farms.

In January 1997 the elephants caused thousands of rand worth of damage to a farm in Huyssteen, when they destroyed irrigation systems and broke fences.

"We were finally able to locate the two elephants, but because the animals had moved into the mountains for a long time, we just weren't able to capture them because our vehicles couldn't reach this mountain area," Joubert said.

But earlier this week an opportunity suddenly arose to capture

the elephants when they were sighted in an area where vehicle access for the rangers, veterinarians and wildlife managers from Shamwari was possible.

"We were certainly not happy that we had to make this decision," said Dag Willemse.

"Our project obviously didn't work out as we had hoped it would as the animals just could not adjust in the forest. This is sad and when the old female dies it means the end of the Knyrna Forest elephant in South Africa."

The two younger elephants were transported safely to their new home.

They now have a secure environment and the company of 39 other elephants.

"They are doing just fine and have adapted nicely. They are already out in the reserve, mingling with the other elephants," said Shamwari's Tracey Rodrigues.

Environment is about people — Metcalfe

Pearl Sebolao

MARY Metcalfe, the newly appointed Gauteng agriculture, conservation, environment and land affairs MEC, plans to use her portfolio to turn the citizens of the province into "environmental activists".

The former education MEC also wants to remove the perception that conservation is an elitist domain.

Metcalfe emphasised the need to provide for pollution-free residential areas that are serviced by public transport and near amenities such as shopping centres.

In a wide-ranging interview Metcalfe said that apartheid rule, which had no respect for the environment or human beings, had left Gauteng with poor spatial planning.

This had resulted in a drain on public resources.

Gauteng MEC emphasises focus on land use, planning

It also meant that the majority of South Africans had to grow up in environments that were not only unhealthy but also "aesthetically and spiritually impoverished".

With limited land, continued infrastructural development and a continuing influx of people into the province, the provincial government would have to prioritise optimal management of natural resources to ensure sustainable development.

Metcalfe, who has been entrusted to "aggressively manage" Gauteng's environment and land use, also plans to ensure that environmental concerns are central to planning.

Her new responsibility is part of the Gauteng government's integrated economic development strategy as espoused by premier

Mbhazima Shilowa, who has instructed "that the way we allocate land (must) make sense economically, socially and environmentally".

This includes social planning, such as ensuring that houses are built on well-allocated land near amenities and industrial and economic activity.

Metcalfe said determining land use would be the central function of her department, which had already started reviewing land use policy and associated functions.

The department is also preparing a proposal for consideration by cabinet suggesting how the complex array of functions related to land should be allocated.

A satellite map of Gauteng will assist the study and identify open spaces that can be

developed for economic or residential use.

"We have to do away with dormitory townships in the post-apartheid SA so that we have integrated cities," she said.

One of the major tasks in the next two to three years, Metcalfe said, would be to ensure that the necessary legislative instruments were put in place to ensure the coherent implementation of the National Environment Management Act and Waste Management Act at provincial and local government level.

She would also review all bylaws to see how they could be simplified and made more effective.

Metcalfe indicated that she would also use existing legislation to strengthen community participation in environmental issues and would like to see community driven solutions as part of her drive to create environmental awareness.

BD 22/7/99

IN SAME CATEGORY AS PLUTONIUM

Nuclear fuel to round Cape

IN A FEW weeks a ship carrying highly radioactive nuclear material will pass Cape Town. The chances of an accident are minuscule at most, but everyone knows more is at stake than immediate safety. JUDITH SOAL reports.

THE nuclear transport industry announced yesterday that the shipment of nuclear fuel which left Europe for Japan on Wednesday — without specifying its route — would indeed travel round the Cape.

As the announcement was made, senior executives of the shipping companies concerned popped up in the city, eager to reassure a doubting public that the voyage would be safe. They rushed press kits showing an impressive range of safety features to the local media and patiently answered the same old questions for perhaps the 100th time.

Well may they worry. One of the ships, Pacific Teal, was supposed to leave England on Monday but was delayed after a run-in with environmental protesters in Greenpeace. Already the South African and New Zealand governments have expressed "concern" about the shipments and everyone knows it doesn't

take much to whip up sentiment around "atomic gevaar".

This shipment is different from most because, rather than carrying spent nuclear fuel for reprocessing, it is transporting plutonium in the form of Mox fuel. Mox — which stands for mixed uranium and plutonium Oxides — is the latest development in nuclear technology.

Whereas conventional nuclear fuel is made only of uranium, Mox tries to solve the problem of what to do with the (highly radioactive) plutonium component of nuclear waste.

Because the shipments are carrying Mox fuel they fall into Category One of the International Atomic Energy Agency's physical protection structure (safety requirements).

Trying to find out what this categorisation means from British Nuclear Fuel plc's Gavin Carter yesterday was tricky. "Does this imply that the ship-

ment is close to nuclear bombs?" I asked.

"No," he laughed. "Well, it is in the most dangerous category of nuclear material," I said.

"No, no," he replied. "Then it is the category with the most stringent safety regulations?" I tried again.

"No, I wouldn't say that." "So what would you say?" "Well, the proper term is that it is highest on the list of protection requirements," he countered. Apparently Mox fuel falls into the same category as plutonium 239 — the stuff that is used to make nuclear weapons and needs to be accompanied by an armed ship to protect against hijacking.

Some say Mox technology is essential for the survival of nuclear energy — making these shipments crucial to the industry (seeing as Japan doesn't have the technology to produce Mox fuel).

They are crucial to the environmentalists for the same reason. "You can't really quantify the danger of shipments like this," said the Environmental Monitoring Group's Stephen Law. "With their double safety hulls and

overdesigned features one shipment is probably fine; it's not as though thousands of lives are in immediate danger. The question is whether the direction we are going in is sane."

He said Japan was accumulating plutonium "at a rate of knots" and didn't know what to do with it. "Already there are signs that Mox technology isn't what it is cracked up to be and won't solve the problem."

The increased risk of radioactive pollution was an inevitable consequence of nuclear power. "If we decide that this is the only way to go, in 10 years will we see 20 or 30 of these shipments a year?" he asked. "What will the risk be then?"

The debate between those for and those against nuclear energy will rage long after the Pacific Teal and her sister ship have passed.

Meanwhile, representatives of the industry met Deputy Environment Minister Joyce Mabudhazai yesterday to discuss the shipment. It was a courtesy call really, because according to international law there is nothing South Africa can do to stop the shipments, whether it wants to or not.

Gray appeal dismissed, hearing set

Simphiwe Xeko and AENS 23/7/99

The disciplinary hearing against suspended Mpumalanga Parks Board CEO Alan Gray ruled yesterday that the board had legal jurisdiction over him and proceedings into 23 charges of misconduct and maladministration against him would continue.

The ruling follows an appeal by Gray that the board had no legal jurisdiction over his actions.

Board chairman Francis Legodi confirmed independent presiding officer Kobus Lowies dismissed Gray's argument.

"Lowies ruled that the (board) is Gray's legal employer and is therefore fully entitled to discipline him," Legodi said. A date for Gray's disciplinary hearing was set for August 3 — almost one year after Gray was suspended.

The charges were sparked by Gray's role in a R1.3bn promissory note scandal in which he used 32 public game reserves as collateral for six illegal promissory notes worth roughly R300m each in return for a series of offshore loans. The promissory notes were issued without ministerial, cabinet, Reserve Bank or treasury approval.

The scandal eventually cost finance MEC Jacques Modipane and environmental MEC Fish Mahabala their jobs and sparked bitter infighting that cost Premier Mathews Phosa his position in the province.

Gray is also accused of abusing the board's budget and various other state funds to bankroll the African National Congress and several of its leaders.

The police fraud unit and Judge Willem Heath's special investigating unit are probing his alleged use of front companies and bogus expense accounts to channel about R1.1m out of the board with the assistance of his former finance director, Nico Krugel.

Destination China for Ghiazza's 'ark'

Fiona Macleod

(56) / m + 07 23-29 / 7 / 99

Wildlife dealer Riccardo Ghiazza is putting together a huge consignment of animals to send to the Far East, which would have included some of the Tull elephants if the furore about their treatment on his farm had not erupted.

Members of the industry say Ghiazza has an order for more than 400 animals from a safari park in China, and he has been buying up animals around the country in the past few months.

The shipment was due to go out at the end of this month or in August, but the Tull elephant saga may cause complications.

Conservation officials have been watching Ghiazza's property near Hartebeespoort Dam like hawks since early this month, after M-Net's *Carte Blanche* programme placed the public spotlight on him by showing footage of his staff beating the 14 young Tull elephants left on his property.

There is concern that the embattled Ghiazza may resort to using an unregistered airline carrier to send the animals to China, endangering their lives en route.

Other wildlife dealers said this week they will be more wary of doing business with Ghiazza in future, especially since it has come to light that he is also being investigated in connection with illegal trafficking.

The *Mail & Guardian* reported two weeks ago that the endangered species protection unit, a branch of the police service, is scrutinising Ghiazza's alleged links to some of the kingpins of Southern Africa's illegal wildlife trade.

The list of animals known to be in Ghiazza's possession at the moment reads like a tick-list from a zoo. It includes highly endangered species like 12 wild dogs and two black rhinos, exotics like a Bengal tiger and two black bears, as well as cheetahs, lions, hyenas, white rhinos, giraffes and nyalas.

The animals come from various sources, including zoos and some of the country's more reputable dealers. They say in their defence: Ghiazza did not buy the animals directly from them, but through middlemen.



Wild card: Riccardo Ghiazza managed to ship out 200 animals on a cheap Russian flight last year in the midst of the rumpus over the the Tull elephants.
PHOTOGRAPH: ADIL BRADLOW

Jeff Galsford, representative of the KwaZulu Natal Conservation Service, which hosts South Africa's largest and most prestigious wildlife auction each July, says Ghiazza bought four giraffes and 15 nyalas at this year's auction.

"We can't refuse him registration as a buyer although it's a bit awkward because of his reputation now. But unless he's closed down or declared *persona non grata*, we will deal with him."

Ghiazza has an "open zoo permit", which means he can keep all kinds of animals on his property for as long as he wants. But as soon as he wants to move them, he has to apply for transport permits.

These transport permits, plus the export permits he would have to get to send the animals overseas, are supplied by the Department of Conservation and Environmental Affairs in the North-West — the province where Ghiazza's business, African Game Services, is based.

Officials in the department say Ghiazza receives an average of 600 permits a year.

He has recently been given permission to move various animals — including four rhinos, bought from Sable Ranch in the North-West and from Thabamanzi game ranch in Warmbaths. The department was not prepared this week to release lists of his recent permits.

Ghiazza was out of the country when the

latest Tull elephant scandal erupted on July 4, but he returned this week and immediately started negotiations over the fate of the 14 youngsters.

He has been ordered by Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism Mohammed Valli Moosa to find a solution acceptable to the World Wide Fund for Nature and the National Council of SPCAs. The main sticking point in the negotiations this week involved five of the elephants which he has sold to Craig Saunders for R750 000. A North-West businessman with whom Ghiazza has close links, Saunders has given evidence in court in favour of Ghiazza's elephant-training methods.

Ghiazza said he was "too busy" this week to discuss the planned consignment to China. Members of the wildlife industry are worried that, while the focus is on the elephants in the next couple of weeks, he will manage to slip the shipment out of the country.

"When the whole rumpus over the Tull elephants first started last year, he managed to get about 200 animals out on a cheap Russian flight, right under everyone's noses," says Keith Micklejohn, a KwaZulu-Natal dealer.

He adds that Ghiazza is giving legitimate South African dealers a bad name in the lucrative international wildlife trade. Estimates value this legitimate trade at about R500-million a year.

Some outfits in the United States are refusing to deal with Ghiazza or anyone associated with him in the wake of reports that large parts of the consignments of animals he ships out have died en route.

One of the chief concerns is that airlines registered with the International Air Transport Association (Iata) will refuse to take Ghiazza's cargo to China, and he will resort to using a non-Iata carrier. Iata lays down standards for the transportation, feeding and handling of animals.

"The point is, you can catch a wild animal in the afternoon, put it in a box and get it on to a plane by the evening. But it will be dead by the time it gets to the other end," says Micklejohn.

"This is not the way to do business. Doing it properly takes a lot longer."



Krisjan Lemmer

Woof

Another honour may be in the pipeline for the Great Man, aka Nelson Mandela — a seat, or at least standing room, alongside the great Nelson of maritime fame.

Lemmer hears that our former president is a favourite, alongside the queen, to fill the fourth plinth in London's Trafalgar Square. The other three plinths are occupied by King George IV and a couple of British military commanders whose reputations have proven less durable than Lord Nelson's — whose column, set on high so that he could have sight of the sea, of course, dominates the famous tourist site.

The occupant of the fourth plinth, in the north-west corner, has been the subject of controversy for more than 150 years. Apparently, betting is that the queen will pip our man to the post, but only if she will assent to being depicted on top of Red Rum to make up for her lack of popularity post-Di.

Maybe if Madiba offered to share it with Lassie?

Tut tut

The South African Historical Society held a conference at the University of

the Western Cape last week on the theme, *Not Telling: Secrecy, Lies and History*. Among the distinguished contributions was a paper by Manfred Georg Aschaber on the subject of Hendrik Verwoerd's assassin, Dimitrio Tsafendas.

In an introduction to the paper, Aschaber asks of Tsafendas: "Was he a madman, or a man with a mission? ... Perhaps Mary Shelley came closest to summing up the life of Tsafendas with the words she put in the mouth of Frankenstein's monster: 'Am I to be thought the only criminal, when all humankind sinned against me?'"

Which reminded Lemmer of the conclusion to an article published by the *Mail & Guardian* on October 30 1997, based on the Liza Key film about Tsafendas, *The Furtivos*: "A madman, or a man with a mission? Perhaps Mary Shelley came closest to summing up the life of Tsafendas with the words she put in the mouth of Frankenstein's monster: 'Am I to be thought the only criminal, when all humankind sinned against me?'"

"Secrecy, lies and history"? How about plagiarism?

Not telling

In his pursuit of secrecy, lies and history, Prof Lemmer (Victoria Cross 1st Class, Naboomspruit University) was intrigued by an article in *The Sunday Independent* by a former political prisoner, Tony Holiday, regarding a paper on myth-making and imprisonment delivered at the UWC conference by a United States-based academic, Dr Fran Buntman.

Holiday quotes a footnote to the Bunt-

man paper that appears to suggest that, in the run-up to the 1994 election, Dr Andre Odendaal — former director of the Mayibuye Centre, the repository of historical material relating to the liberation struggle — tried to cover up details of the (Govan) Mbeki/Mandela battle on Robben Island. Odendaal emphatically denies this.

What Lemmer finds even more fascinating about the Buntman paper, however, is the extent to which this intellectual struggle raged between these heroes of the liberation struggle and their followers. By her account, it lasted from the late 1960s to the mid-1970s. It was fought over issues ranging from communism versus capitalism to justification for the armed struggle (Madiba allegedly being a waverer) and for strategic participation in apartheid structures.

It developed into acrimony over "the question of communication between the African National Congress on Robben Island and in exile and Mandela's status as the de facto leader of the ANC in the prison", according to Buntman. She seems to suggest that things got so bad that Mandela, Walter Sisulu, Mbeki and Raymond Mhlaba were forced out of the "high organ" — the four-man committee that led the ANC prisoners.

Maybe, if the historians have finished nattering to one another, they might get around to telling the public what went on?

Off the grass

No wonder the Boks pussyfooted around in Wales!

When a few slabs of turf literally fell off the back of a lorry in Cardiff recently, nearby householders excitedly gathered it up for

replanting in their back lawns. It was valuable stuff in more ways than one. Grown in Lincolnshire at R1 200 a metre, it was more expensive than the most luxurious woollen carpets. It was being carted away from the Millennium Stadium for storage to allow construction work to resume after it had been tried out with the Wales versus South Africa match.

"This grass is part of history," said Peter Cavan proudly of his new lawn, which has been declared off-limits to his pet Alsatian. "It was the first time Wales had ever beaten South Africa!"

Wouldn't want a mutt pissing on that, would we?

Africa dawn

Talking about the millennium, South Africa will be in the limelight when the sun dawns on the Mother City on the morning of January 1. As part of the BBC's programming for the event, on which it will be splurging R250-million *total*, viewers will see the new dawn rise from the Great Wall of China, Stonehenge, the white cliffs of Dover and Table Mountain.

Wonder what the SABC will be filming: Thabo having breakfast?

Kalamari kops

From an e-mail update to sent by police headquarters to crime correspondents around South Africa: "My report 'Armed robber: Brackenfell' refer.

"Page 2 — Flying Squid should read Flying Squad.

"Riaan Pool."

Thank heavens for that!

Fight to stop nuke ships,

Greenpeace urges SA

AKU 23/7/99

New Zealand protests to Britain, Japan and France

Johannesburg - Greenpeace International urged South Africa and other countries on the route of two ships carrying high-level nuclear fuel to Japan to oppose the shipments.

New Zealand today underlined its opposition to the shipments, which will also traverse the southwest Pacific Ocean to Japan, and said it was making formal complaints to Britain, France and Japan.

The lightly armed British cargo ship Pacific Teal left the French port of Cherbourg carrying the first batch of nuclear fuel on Wednesday.

It was to link up with sister ship Pacific Pintail, which had already loaded a similar cargo in Britain, and head for Japan.

The controversial cargo is plutonium capable of being used for manufacturing nuclear weapons.

The ships will pass through Cape waters en route to Japan. Each shipment, according to

Greenpeace, carries a quarter of a ton of plutonium, about seven tons of highly explosive ammunition, and 1100 tons of fuel oil.

"It is inconceivable that Britain, France and Japan think they have the right to make these deadly transports through the waters of other sovereign states without any process of consultation," Greenpeace spokesman Damon Moglen said.

"Clearly the transporting countries are only concerned about the well-being of their plutonium programmes."

British Nuclear Fuels Limited and the French state-owned nuclear company Cogema announced yesterday that the ships would travel to Japan via the Cape of Good Hope and the south-west Pacific Ocean.

Mr Moglen slammed the company for making the announcement after the departure of the shipments. "Making the announcement after

the departure of this dangerous shipment reveals NBFL and Cogema's arrogant disregard for the legitimate concerns of the en-route nations," he said.

Countries affected had demanded prior consultation and resolution of urgent safety, security and liability issues. But instead they had received an "after-the-fact ultimatum".

Greenpeace warned the shipments could fuel a powder-keg in a region already beset by military tensions - between mainland China and Taiwanese, and between North Korea and its neighbours.

The environmental group called on the Japanese government to cancel its plutonium imports and procurement programme and provide peaceful leadership in the region.

It urged China, Taiwan and North and South Korea to exercise restraint and caution. In Wellington, acting Foreign

Minister Simon Upton said today: "The government has made diplomatic representations in London, Paris and Tokyo to underline our opposition to any shipments of MOX (mixed-oxide fuel) and other hazardous nuclear materials that might come close to our country."

Yesterday Prime Minister Jenny Shipley expressed her concern to Japanese Foreign Minister Masahiko Komura during a visit to Japan.

He told her Japan was aware of New Zealand's concerns and reassured her the shipments were safe.

The voyage marks the first shipment since 1992 of so-called "direct-use" nuclear material, which can be converted into weapons.

Greenpeace plans to track the shipment with its flagship Rainbow Warrior and other vessels. Tokyo Electric Power, one recipient of the cargo, said the ships would arrive in late September. - Sapa-Reuters

THE WILDLIFE BUSINESS

(h6) PM 23/7 1999

HOOVES ON THE BLOCK WEAR THE HORNS OF A DILEMMA

Game auctions are spreading wildlife, but controversy lingers

The concept was novel, its execution a dismal failure.

Bushveld farmer Van Schalkwyk (his first name is lost in the fog of time) broadcast an intention to sell by auction all animals — in pairs, "like Noah" — that could be caught on his land. On the appointed day, buyers turned up in droves, but not a single animal could be found, and the auction flopped. That was about 30 years ago, and Van Schalkwyk was laughed into obscurity. But his idea — to auction wild animals for cash — has flourished into a multimillion-rand industry despite its inauspicious beginnings and sporadic high-profile controversies.

Now, game auctions attract buyers from all over SA, and abroad. Legitimate game exports from SA may now be worth as much as US\$30m/year, says consultant

and former head of the Natal Parks Board's game capture unit, Keith Meiklejohn. Game ranching turns over about R500m/year, half of it in the Northern Province.

The game trade has been a driving force in the phenomenal growth of the private-sector game industry since the Seventies. Despite the latest uproar over the ill-treatment of captive juvenile elephants on the African Game Services farm near Brits, North-West Province, and the "canned lion" hunting scam a few years ago, proponents of the game trade argue that sales are vital to wildlife conservation as they help to diversify habitats and encourage farmers to manage wildlife as a valuable resource.

At present about 10m ha of private land are devoted to game farming, says Theuns

Eloff, director of Polchetstroom University's Centre for Wildlife Economics. About 300 000 ha are "reclaimed" for game from cattle farmers each year.

Conservationist Clive Walker of the Northern Province's Waterberg Biosphere and the SA Rhino Association says there was only one game farm in the Waterberg area in 1981; now there are 22, covering more than 150 000 ha, and more wild animals in the Waterberg than there were at the turn of the century.

"Before the Eighties, the big five, with the exception of leopard, were extinct in the Waterberg, and 10-15 years ago it was not even considered worthy of mention as a rhino area. Today they are all back and the Waterberg is considered the fourth most important rhino range in SA."

It has boosted land prices dramatically, Walker recalls that when he persuaded Cape Town businessman Dale Parker to buy 5 000 ha in 1981, it cost R550 000 (R110/ha). A couple of weeks ago a 2 000 ha farm was sold for R7m (R3 500/ha). "That was exceptional, but the average land price is about R2 000/ha."

Though conservation may benefit, the

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HEARST INTERNATIONAL SALES

IT'S ALL IN THE GAME

Game auctions since 1991

Game	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	
18 000									
14 500									
11 000									
7 500									
4 000									
Total game sold									
Total value (Rm)									

Average game auction prices during 1998*

Game	Average price (R)
Wildebeest	1 212
Buffalo	1 074
Eland (Cobonant)	1 337
Giraffe	1 026
Lion	1 325
Zebra	1 321
Hippopotamus	2 450
Sable Antelope	1 788
Ostrich	1 788
Wilddog	15 500

Average auction prices for White Rhino

Year	Price (R)
1992	19 000
1993	15 000
1994	15 000
1995	15 000
1996	15 000
1997	15 000
1998	25 000



ultimate motivation of the industry is profit. The trick is to combine the two elements to mutual advantage. Game can bring higher returns per hectare than cattle in many areas, says Eloff. This is because wild animals offer the farmer a multiple income stream through ecotourism and hunting for trophies and meat; the cost of breeding and rearing cattle is offset only by the once-off sale of each animal. "Hunting, both trophy hunting — mostly by visiting hunters from the US and Germany — and biltong hunting (a domestic industry) are probably worth a combined total of R350m-R400m/year," says Eloff. "A hunter will pay a farmer anything from R4 000 to R6 000 to shoot a kudu, and many times that amount for a rhino."

Added to that is the income derived from nonhunting guests who stay in a lodge on the farmer's land just to see and photograph the animals. But game was not always viewed favourably. Before Willie Roux, of auctioneers Veesentral, conducted SA's first officially sanctioned game auction in 1973, wild animals were widely regarded by farmers as "vermin" because they competed with cattle for grazing. "That changed with the first auction because for the first time it gave a monetary market value to the game," says Roux. That first auction at Hoedspruit, near the Kruger Park, was plain sailing, he recalls, although the State vet initially refused to condone it, fearing it would spread foot and mouth disease and conservation authorities also opposed it, arguing that game belongs to nature and should not be

traded. The auction proceeded on condition that the animals were quarantined for 60 days. "We raised a few thousand rand; impala sold for R50/head, giraffes R1 000 each — a lot of money. But more important, we established a market price for game for the first time."

SA's premier auction is the KwaZulu-Natal Conservation Services' annual sale, which has been running for 11 years and raised just more than R11m this year for the cash-strapped provincial authority. Next in importance is the Brits Sable Ranch auction, which raises about R6m/year. There are scores of lesser sales, which vary tremendously in the quality of stock and game handling facilities, adding to the controversy around the game business. There is also a huge trade in animals by private contract. The National Parks Board is prevented from auctioning surplus Kruger Park game because of foot and mouth disease in the park, and it has insufficient animals in its southern parks to justify auctions. "When we do sell animals, it is on the basis of public tender," says Kruger Park game capture manager Gouw Grobler. "Last year we raised about R11.5m through this method."

The lucrative nature of the game trade could tempt unscrupulous traders to treat the animals as mere commodities, which would lead to high mortality of animals in capture, captivity and translocation, and the spread of domestic livestock diseases. There are also serious moral questions about terrifying animals in capture and then selling them in the knowledge that some will become hapless targets and well-trophies for big-spending "hunters". Meiklejohn, who now runs the game

company Global Wildlife Logistics, says there are accepted techniques and special diets for restoring the rapid loss of condition resulting from capture. But many small operators don't understand this. "They think the animals can be captured, penned and sold like domestic cattle."

He says he walked out in disgust during a recent Rustenburg auction because of the appalling conditions. "Animals were in poor condition: one died in the middle of bidding and had to be withdrawn, others had broken horns and one a broken leg. It was pitiful. There was just no excuse."

The game trade has raised concern in other countries. For example, Kenya has banned the hunting and private sale of game, while Namibia and Zimbabwe have instituted various restrictions. Meiklejohn has bought and exported large and small animals to all parts of the world, and says he has lost just two — both ostriches — proving the business can work. He says he was instrumental in getting the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (NSPCA) to monitor game sales and capture conditions. He wants specialised animal handling facilities and the International Air Transport Association recommendations on animal transport to be enshrined in law. Walker concurs: "We need far more stringent regulation — perhaps by strengthening the NSPCA's mandate. There are those who advocate fewer controls, but my gut feel is that regulation is needed to allow an independent agency to monitor the welfare of wild animals in captivity." Han Payne

SA tells nuclear ship to steer clear

ART 24/7/99 (nb)

British vessels will not dock at SA harbours

The Government has asked the two British ships carrying nuclear fuel from France to Japan to stay out of its territorial waters and its larger marine economic exclusion zone (EEZ).

Deputy Environmental Affairs and Tourism Minister Joyce Mabudafhasi said yesterday she had met British, French and Japanese diplomats for a briefing on the shipment around the Cape of potentially deadly plutonium, which has been opposed by environmental activists and the New Zealand government.

She said the Cabinet had already decided in 1997 that vessels carrying nuclear material around the South African coast should be treated in accordance with national and international law.

She said the Government's overriding interest was to minimise risk to human health, marine life and the environment by ensuring the safe passage of the ships to Japan.

She had been given assurances that the ships, the Pacific Teal and the Pacific Pintail, would not dock at any South African harbour.

South African law requires that ships carrying nuclear material in its waters have to have a licence to do so, but no application has been received by the Council for Nuclear Safety.

The briefing, at the Government's request, followed Environmental Affairs and Tourism Minister Valli Moosa's statement earlier this week that he was concerned about the shipment.

Democratic Party environment spokesman Errol Moorcroft said yesterday that the Government should ensure the ships steered clear of its territorial waters.

He said South Africa's coast included some of the most treacherous maritime areas in the world, as attested to by the host of shipwrecks along it.

Greenpeace plans to track the shipment with its flagship Rainbow Warrior.

British Nuclear Fuels, the parent company of the firm that owns the ships, maintains that safeguards would ensure that the environmental effects of an accident would be negligible. - Sapa

Old asbestos mine is still killing villagers

By HANGWANI MULAUDI

DESPITE its closure more than 20 years ago, the asbestos mine which was left open is still claiming dozens of lives of Ha-Mathabatha villagers.

At least 50 people are reported to have died since the beginning of the year.

Efforts by the Potchefstroom University Reclamation Project to rehabilitate the mine have been stalled because those who worked on the projects fell seriously ill because of the poisonous asbestos that has resulted in the deaths of some of the workers.

The epidemic, which is fast taking over the area, according to the residents, needs urgent attention before it spreads out of control.

In an attempt to get their situation addressed, the villagers turned to City Press. They want initiatives taken on their behalf.

Those interviewed spoke in harsh voices, launching scathing attacks against the mine management which has since vanished and against the provincial mineral and energy department for failing to solve the problem.

Mathabatha Health and Asbestos Association director Shadrack Molokoane said that area is experiencing hazardous asbestos fumes which are fast destroying the nation.

He said initiatives to deal with the problem should receive a high priority from government officials.

According to Molokoane, the mining company (Egnep Asbestos) from the UK started operating in the early 1920s until 1978, when the mine closed.

Molokoane said that in that period of 58 years, 21 other small companies developed, leaving the situation uncomfortable for everyone in the area.

Molokoane said that since the mines closed 20 years ago, many lives had been lost.

He added that there was every likelihood that more lives would be lost.

This prompted an intense investigation which revealed that the cause of the deaths and disabilities was the asbestos dust in and around the village.

"It is known that our people are not dying of natural causes. The fumes from the asbestos pits are the cause.

"Our village is seriously affected by the fumes. People are running around trying to locate a better place for themselves, but unemployment and poverty makes this impossible.

"The Malips River serves as the only source of water in the area, but the water is also contaminated.

"How long must we continue to bury people on an almost weekly basis? The government has been fully informed about this disaster," said Molokoane.

Molokoane said they are trying on their own to locate the mine management to claim compensation for the losses incurred and still to be incurred.

He said his organisation is currently taking down statistics of all people infected by the asbestos.

A DYING PEOPLE ... Shadrack Molokoane says asbestos fumes and dust are continuing to kill people in the Ha-Mathabatha area where a UK company, Egnep Asbestos, operated a mine for 58 years until its closure in 1978. Residents want to be compensated for their suffering

So far they have established that more than 300 people have fallen victim to the fumes and the number is expected to increase.

"We are a dying nation, but we

are not going to allow these exploiters to get away with murder.

"We are more than willing to take the fight to mine management wherever they are, whether we get any assistance from the government or not," said Molokoane.

(212) (56)

CP 25/7/99

family buried a decomposer
... thinking it was hers.



Are we ready to watch baboons die out?

Cash crisis threatens to put chasers out of jobs

Is R300 000 a year too big a price-tag to ensure the continued existence of the Peninsula's baboon population - one of the region's major tourist attractions - and to provide several jobs for impoverished locals at the same time?

That's the question being asked by concerned environmentalists as money to pay five official baboon monitors, more popularly called "baboon-chasers", runs out.

The monitors have been playing a major positive role in recent months in keeping baboons away from houses in Kommetjie, Scarborough and Da Gama Park where there's the greatest risk from trigger-happy residents and dogs, and in protecting them from careless motorists by escorting the troops along public roads.

The monitors' jobs had been due to finish at the end of this week when money to pay them ran out, although SA National Parks stepped in at the eleventh hour on Friday with a further two months' funding.

But the issue of employing the monitors on a long-term basis has not yet been resolved as there is disagreement over who carries responsibility.

Ironically, the funding crisis comes at a time when environmentalists sense an important shift in public perception about baboons, which are one of the few naturally occurring mammal species still found locally, making them an important component of the new Cape Peninsula National Park.

This shift in perception can be gleaned as newspapers carry reports with headlines like "Roger the Dodger outsmarts his hunters yet again", "Baboon gives Claremont 'runaround'", and "Hairy' house-breaker a sign of the times" - all referring to male baboons



JOHN YELD
ENVIRONMENT WRITER

wandering into suburbs recently.

Dave Gaynor, a Scarborough-based zoologist who is doing post-doctoral research work on primates, says something is being done to stop the decline in numbers of baboons on the Peninsula for the first time since people set foot in the Cape.

He points out that the presence of the monitors and the fact that they have reduced by a factor of 12 the time baboons spend in residential areas, have resulted in baboon mortality being reduced to a quarter of what it was.

Also, instead of trapping, shooting, and selling baboons to laboratories or allowing the local population of these animals to sink into a quiet

but inevitable decline, adult male baboons found in the suburbs are now being caught and released into areas where there are troops with a shortage of adult males.

"And amazingly, this is also the first time that we even know how many troops and how many individual baboons there are on the Peninsula."

"This helps us make a rational assessment of the status of the baboons, enables us to know where 'dispersing' adult males come from and allows us to choose the best site to release them into - where there are chances of being accepted by a troop

are greatest." Dr Gaynor said. Some Peninsula residents had expressed surprise over the past couple of years about the sudden influx of baboons into residential areas, Dr Gaynor said.

"But as a zoologist who has worked on natural baboon populations in Mkuzi (KwaZulu Natal), the Cederberg and De Hoop, I, on the other hand, am surprised at why this has not been happening before."

He explained that in all natural populations, male baboons left the troop they had been born into and went to look for another troop where they would not be breeding with close relatives.

"So begins the life of an adult male baboon: always trying to get into and maintain his position in a troop where there are reasonable chances of reproducing."

"The tenure of these baboons in a troop can be anything from two weeks to 15 years, depending how they integrate and what females they get friendly with."

'Without money... the baboons on the Peninsula will again be on the lonely road to local extinction'

"And if they are not successful in one troop they will move off - disperse - at some stage to look for another troop to join."

So it was inevitable that where there was a population of baboons surrounded by residential areas, some of the adult males attempting to move to new areas to search for other troops would end up in suburbs, Dr Gaynor said.

This was especially true when there was only one isolated troop - the Tokai/Silvermine troop - on the northern half of the Peninsula.

In the past, there appeared not to have been the same reaction when

adult male baboons were found entering residential areas, although such incidents had occurred.

"If you press people's memories or dig into old newspaper files, you do find that male baboons were killed."

For example, one had been shot and killed at Kloof Nek, while another had been shot in Fish Hoek Main Road by a traffic officer.

The reason for the changed reaction was probably because interest in baboons and an awareness of their threatened status on the Peninsula had increased significantly over the past few years, Dr Gaynor suggested.

"So a baboon in the suburbs is now newsworthy, and both residents and authorities are more aware that it's illegal to just quietly shoot a 'problem' baboon."

Also, the baboon population - and especially the troop in the northern half of the Peninsula - was recovering from an era when they were actively trapped and shot.

"The vast majority of these captured animals would have been males," Dr Gaynor said.

"Males are shot because of their big size - as adults they are twice the mass of females - and because they are bolder than females."

"If you set a trap, you are more likely to capture male baboons, because even from as early on as just two months, males are more inquisitive than females."

Although some people had been illegally killing baboons - particularly in Tokai forest - until recently, most trapping and shooting had been stopped 11 years ago.

It took male baboons seven to nine years to reach full adulthood, Dr Gaynor said.

"So what I'm suggesting is that during the past few years, things have been quiet as there have been

ALT 26/9/99



Away from trouble: two of the Peninsula's five official baboon "chasers" herd a baboon troop away from Kommetjie where the animals had been raiding houses on Friday

very few males recruited into full adulthood.

"And this assumption is backed by the fact that currently there are eight adult females to every one adult male. In natural populations there are two to three females to every male."

"This clearly shows a history of selectively killing male baboons."

Some people opposed to baboons would probably consider this a great way to solve the alleged "problem", he suggested.

"They'll probably say 'Great, why don't we carry on selectively removing male baboons, then we'll have fewer males moving into the suburbs?'"

"But it's clear that, ultimately,

the result of such a strategy would be to condemn the Peninsula's baboon population to extinction."

In the shorter term, such a strategy would severely restrict the genetic pool of the baboons, as they were reliant on dispersing adult males to mix the genes in a population, Dr Gaynor said.

Whereas a violent "knee-jerk" reaction to the baboons had previously resulted in their disappearance from large parts of the Peninsula, a much better option was to start any dispersing males which got into the suburbs and to release them where they could fulfil their biological role.

Already, two troops in the Cape of Good Hope area - one of whose last

adult male had been shot dead by a resident in Da Gama Park - had benefited from the release of dispersing adult males caught wandering in suburbia.

"However, all such releases might be in vain if the remaining troops on the Peninsula are not kept out of harm's way, and this equates to residential areas," Dr Gaynor warned.

This was why it was so important to find additional funding for the baboon monitors.

"Without money to continue, the reversal of the trend of declining numbers of baboons will not be possible and the baboons on the Peninsula will again be on the lonely road to local extinction," he said.

Klipspringers back at Cape Point

It's magic, says veteran conservationist as animals are reintroduced

(56) ARt 26/14/99

JOHN YEED



ENVIRONMENT WRITER

After an absence of nearly 70 years, a special piece of magic has been restored to the Peninsula's mountains - nearly a dozen pairs of klipspringers, one of the most graceful and distinctive of South Africa's small antelope species.

Although never plentiful because they are naturally what biologists term a "low density" species, and because they are vulnerable to a range of carnivores - including leopard, caracal, baboon and even black eagle - klipspringers were a common sight on the Peninsula's mountains until the turn of the century.

But they appeared to have come under increasing pressure from feral dogs and hunting by humans, who used their pelts for saddle stuffing, and they finally faded from the Peninsula in the early 1930s.

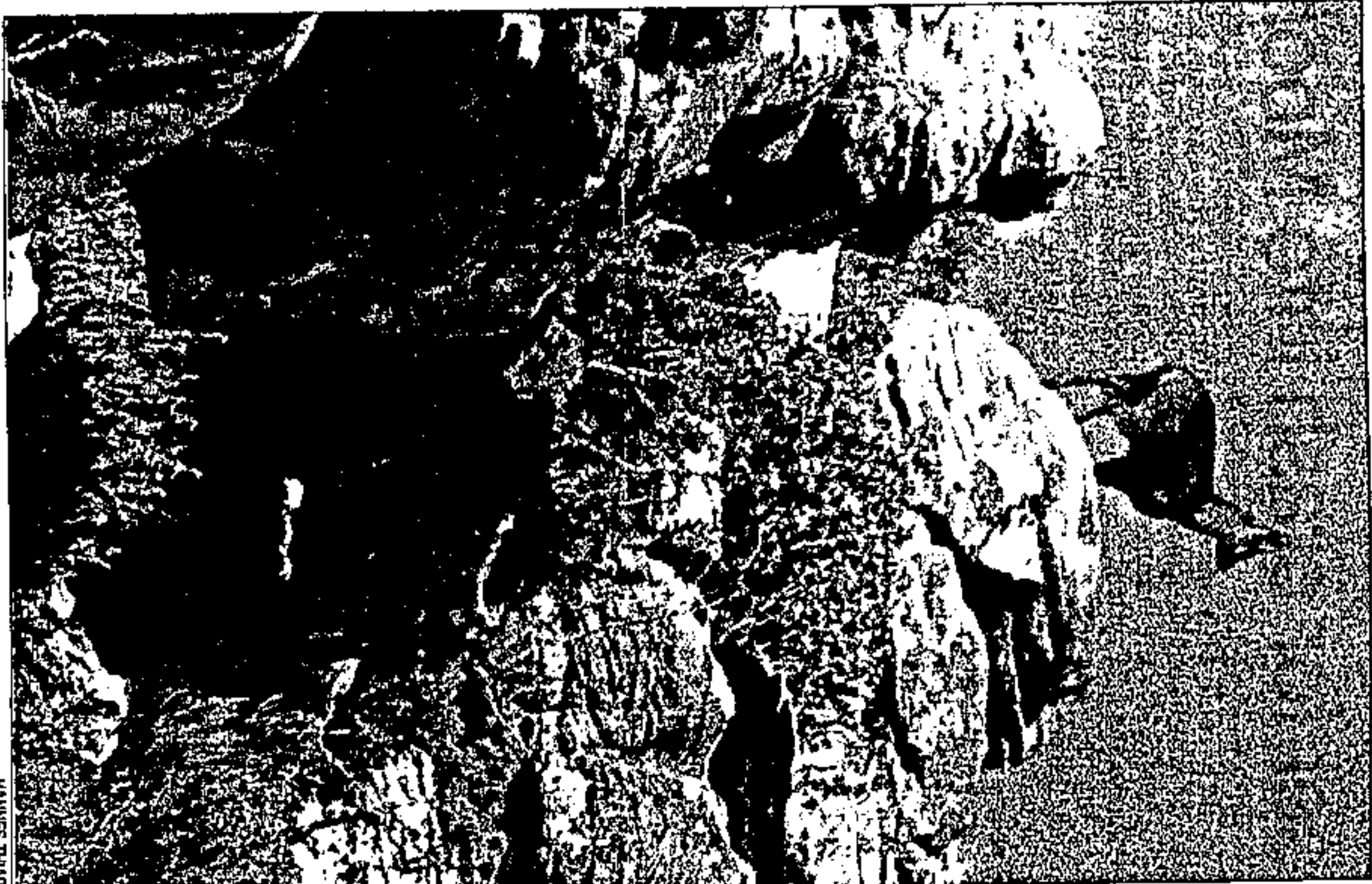
Now, as part of South African National Parks' policy of re-introducing indigenous animals that have been exterminated in their natural habitats, 19 klipspringers have been successfully returned to the Cape Point section of the new Cape Peninsula National Park, and another 11 will join them shortly.

The animals were all captured in Cape Nature Conservation's Hottentots Holland nature reserve, where there is still a healthy population.

Ten were released near Ollantombos at Cape Point early on Saturday, prompting an emotional response from Howard Langley, conservation manager of the national park, who worked at Cape Point when it was still a local authority reserve.

"This is wonderful! It's so exciting!" he exclaimed as the klipspringers were released one at a time from their individual crates to bound up the nearby rocky slope.

Watching one of the animals standing in silhouette at the top of the small cliff in characteristic pose, Mr Langley remarked: "This is

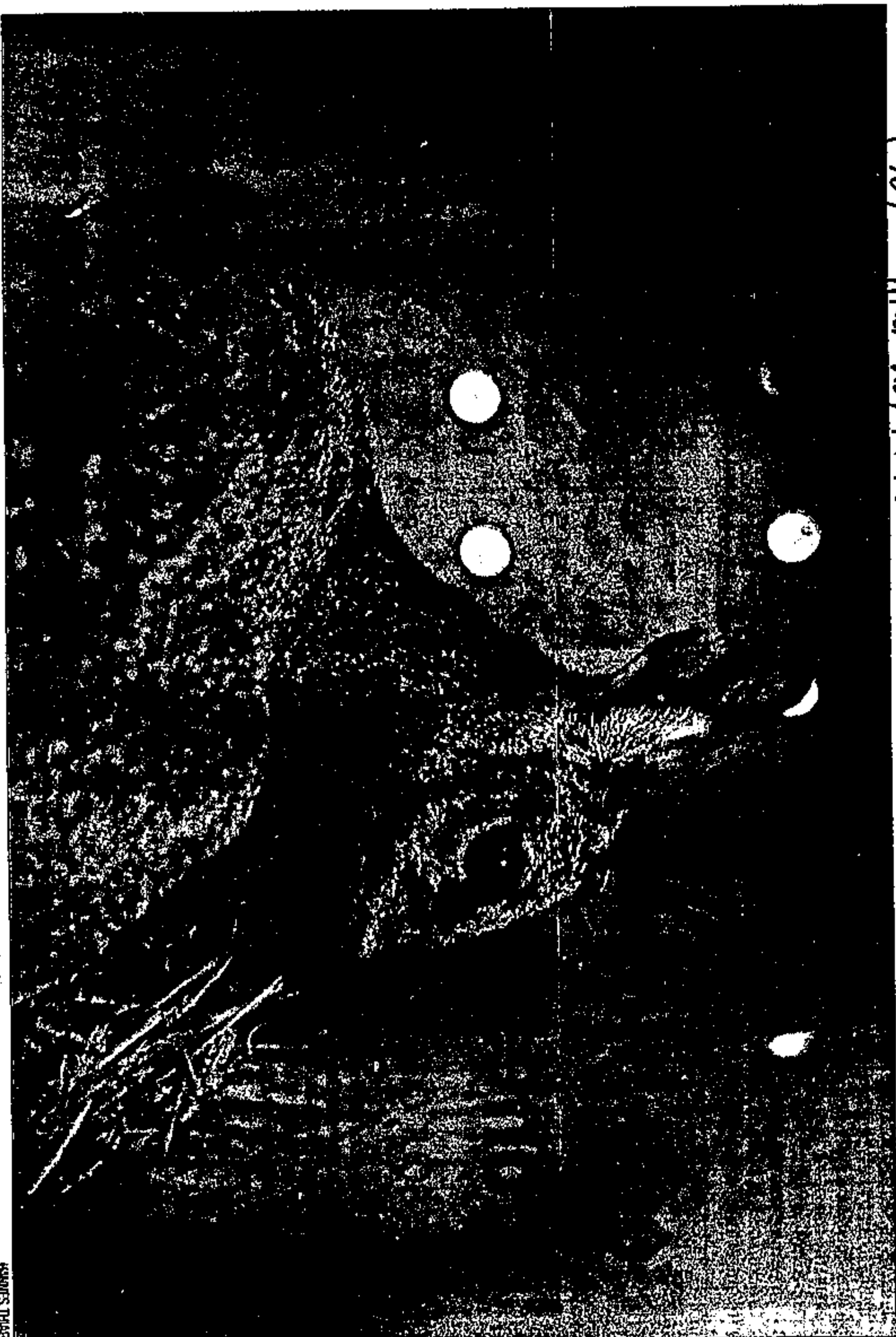


HAWES THART

Home again: one of the klipspringers released at Cape Point



New life: conservation officials and friends carry the klipspringers to the release site



HAWES THART

Biding time: one of the klipspringers released at Cape Point on Saturday waits in its transport crate to be introduced to its new home

magic, it's just magic!"

The klipspringers were all captured on Friday by a team headed by the parks' veterinarian, Piet Morkel, using a special net-firing capture gun from a helicopter.

Owen Withridge, assistant section ranger at Cape Point, who helped in the operation, said the team had experienced a bit of trouble finding the animals.

"And there was a bit of snow around, which made things pretty chilly. But once we'd found them, the capture went smoothly and quickly," he said.

Dr Morkel was also pleased with the operation.

"Nothing is ever totally perfect, but this was good - the capture went pretty well.

"It's lucky they (klipspringers) are such sweet animals. There are not many of them you can do this sort of thing to."

Mr Langley told the Cape Argus that the re-introduction of klipspringer was a "milestone event" for the new national park.

"Since the late 1960s, there's been much talk about the need to reintroduce this species, but with no action.

"It's therefore a feather in the cap of National Parks that, with the new park only a year old, we already have the nucleus of a viable klip-

springer population established.

"The next step is to undertake a comprehensive population survey of the thars on Table Mountain and to develop a strategy to remove them so that klipspringer can reclaim their historical home in the area."

He was referring to a report by Mike Knight of the scientific services branch, who recommended in a report on the re-introduction of klipspringers that the presence of the exotic Himalayan thar on the Table Mountain section of the national park was a "complication".

"As both the klipspringer and thar prefer similar habitats of steep rocky slopes and rocky outcrops,

and are mixed feeders, it's expected that there would be some degree of competition between these two species," Dr Knight said.

"Ideally, the re-introduction should also coincide with a campaign to remove the thar from the area."

Several people watching the release of the klipspringer expressed regret that Douglas Hey, a former director of Cape Nature Conservation who had long argued for their re-introduction at Cape Point, was not present to witness the historic event.

Dr Hey is visiting his family in Australia.

Nuclear cargoes raise concern

By Stephen Law

A VESSEL carrying nuclear cargo has left France bound for Japan. The vessel is one of a fleet of five "Pacific" vessels purpose-built to transport radioactive material over long distances, in this case, plutonium.

The "Pacific" fleet is owned and operated by a consortium of French, British and Japanese parastatals. Japan has a number of nuclear power stations. Under contract with France and Britain, spent fuel from Japanese reactors is shipped to France for "reprocessing", and the products shipped back to Japan.

All these products are dangerously radioactive, particularly plutonium, the active ingredient in nuclear weapons. As such, reprocessing forms a key link between the peaceful and belligerent use of nuclear power.

For very good reasons, the vessel carrying the plutonium is accompanied by another vessel, armed to resist hijack attempts.

Although the shipping company refuses to divulge the ship's route, a number of previous, similar shipments of plutonium and radioactive nuclear waste have sailed past the Cape, and many more are likely to follow.

A leakage or spillage of this cargo could have devastating effects - on sea life and ultimately on humans. The link between exposure to radioactive material and the likelihood of cancers is well documented.

An even greater threat exists of the ship being hijacked and the material being used to manufacture nuclear weapons.

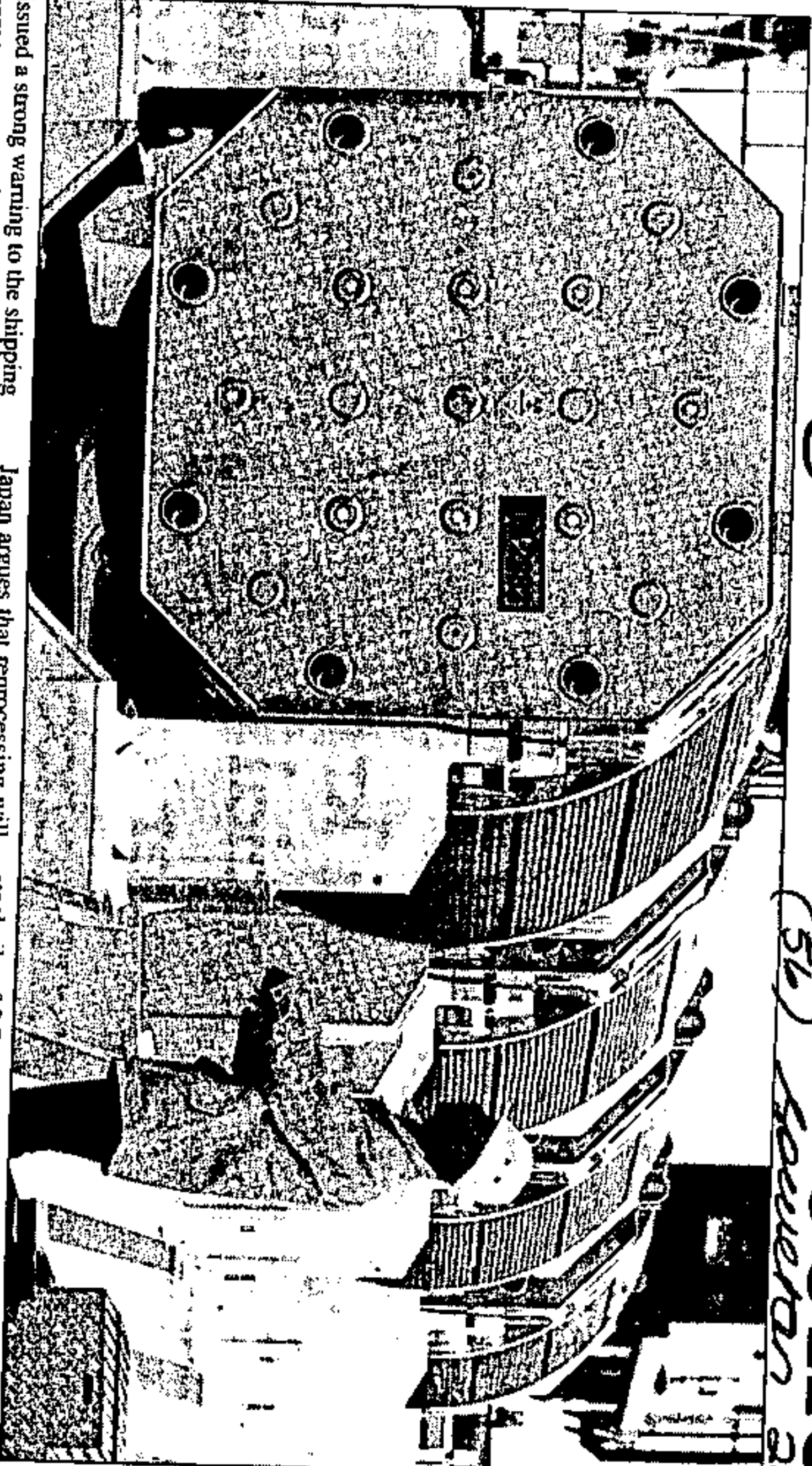
There are many risks inherent in the sea transport of radioactive material. The operators of the vessels claim that all precautions have been taken, that the vessels are "state-of-the-art" and that contingency plans exist.

We should accept the word of these "experts" with a healthy degree of scepticism. Accidents at sea do happen - and when they do, they take little heed of the credentials of experts.

We question why South Africa should stand aside, while two so-called First World countries send large amounts of nuclear material halfway across the world, using sea routes past countries that have no interest in their deadly cargo.

Were these countries consulted? On the contrary, the operators have been highly secretive about the timing and route of these shipments.

The New Zealand government has



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A French nuclear technician looks at four containers carrying plutonium fuel on the dock of Cherbourg port, western France. The containers will be loaded on to the *Pacific Teal* cargo ship for departure to Japan. PIC: AP

issued a strong warning to the shipping company to steer clear of their waters. On previous occasions, many other countries refused the ships permission to sail in their territorial waters.

We question why these shipments are being made at all. Japan has its own reprocessing facility, but this is too small to deal with all its spent fuel. Even with the shipments to France, only about half of its nuclear waste is reprocessed.

Japan argues that reprocessing will reduce waste, since the recovered plutonium will be burned up in so-called MOX and fast-breeder reactors.

However, the MOX programme has been scrapped on economic grounds and the development of fast-breeder reactors seems to have been postponed indefinitely for technical and safety reasons.

Already by 1994 Japan's reprocessing policy had led to a plutonium

stockpile of 8.7 tons. This is estimated to increase to over 15 tons by the end of 2000.

The irony is that Japan is a strong supporter of nuclear disarmament and has an official "no stockpile" policy on plutonium.

Japan's energy policy and practice are curiously contradictory. It does not have sufficient capacity to reprocess its own spent fuel, and so it must ship this

or through states' EEZs, and the right of innocent passage through the territorial sea of coastal states.

"Notwithstanding, I have requested that the ships stay out of our territorial waters and our EEZ."

Mabudafhasi said the Government's overriding interest was to minimise risk to human health, marine life and the environment by ensuring the safe passage of the ships to Japan.

She had been given assurances at the briefing that the ships, the *Pacific Teal* and the *Pacific Pintail*, would not dock at any South African harbour.

South African law required that ships carrying nuclear material in its waters had to have a licence to do so, but no application had been received by the regulatory authority, the Council for Nuclear Safety.

"Further assurances were received that radiological protection and safety arrangements meet international stan-

dards," Mabudafhasi said. She said the diplomats had been requested to communicate any new developments to a special committee in her department.

The briefing, at the Government's asked, followed Environment Affairs and Tourism Minister Valji Moosa's statement earlier last week that he was concerned about the shipment.

"It is imperative that everybody must realise that the transport of nuclear waste should not be taken lightly and that it is a practice of which the South African population is very concerned," he said.

Democratic Party environment spokesman Errol Moorcroft said on Friday that the Government should ensure the ships steered clear of its territorial waters.

The South African coast included some of the most treacherous maritime areas in the world, he said, as

attested by the host of shipwrecks along it.

"A spill of nuclear pollutants would do untold damage to one of our greatest natural assets, destroying marine life and endangering the lives and livelihood of many thousands of our citizens," Moorcroft said.

"This sort of risk cannot in any way be countenanced."

The ships have left France, after being delayed in a confrontation with protesters in Britain, and are expected in Japan by late September.

Greenpeace plans to track the shipment with its flagship *Rainbow Warrior*.

British Nuclear Fuels, the parent company of the firm that owns the ships, maintains that the safeguards it implements in transporting nuclear material would ensure that the environmental effects of an accident would be negligible. — *Sajpa*

Nuclear ships warned, steer clear of SA

THE South African Government has asked the two British ships carrying nuclear fuel from France to Japan to stay out of its territorial waters and its larger marine economic exclusion zone (EEZ).

Deputy Environment Affairs and Tourism Minister Joyce Mabudafhasi said on Friday she had met British, French and Japanese diplomats for a briefing on the shipment around the Cape of potentially deadly plutonium, which is being opposed by environmental activists and the New Zealand government.

She said the Cabinet had already decided in 1997 that vessels carrying nuclear material around the South African coast should be treated strictly in accordance with national and international law.

"We accept that international law grants any state the right of freedom of navigation of its ships on the high seas

or through states' EEZs, and the right of innocent passage through the territorial sea of coastal states.

"Notwithstanding, I have requested that the ships stay out of our territorial waters and our EEZ."

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No elephant fetish: in defence of nonhumans

Abuse of animals may have been part of human culture for ages, but so were slavery and female circumcision, writes **Beatrice Willshire**

WHEN the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals tried to intervene in a straightforward case of animal abuse near Brits last year, little did they know that they were stepping into a politically charged nightmare. They had no reason to expect the reception they received from conservation bodies when their specially trained wildlife unit tried to stop the beatings, chaining and sleep deprivation of 30 Tuli elephants.

In September 1998 the Animal Anti-Cruelty League had tried to stop another publicised animal abuse — a game auction near Bronkhorstspruit that had gone horribly wrong. No one accused the Animal Anti-Cruelty League of being radical. The wildlife abuse in question, however, involved only buck and wildebeest.

It is only when elephants are involved that double standards seem to apply. Because elephants are synonymous with ivory and ivory is synonymous with financial fortune.

In SA elephants have come to symbolise the political battle over international trade in endangered animals. Former deputy minister of environmental affairs and tourism Peter Mokaba admitted as much when, at the 1997 Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species conference in Harare, he pointed out that the conference was "not about elephants, it (is) about sovereignty".

As Julian Sturgeon, in his emotional



One of the baby elephants from the Tuli reserve in Botswana at Riccardo Ghiazza's Africa Game Services in Brits.

trade against the animal rights movement (Monkey on wildlife industry's back. Bushness Day, July 21) points out, SA's wildlife industry is worth about R550m.

The fact that the wildlife trade, which he so vociferously defends, is indeed a multibillion dollar global industry (as is

drug trafficking) does not make it morally right. Contrary to Sturgeon's argument that animal rights activists "select species that have a powerful emotional appeal for humans and influence public opinion around specific events involving those animals", animal rights philosophy does not

discriminate between species.

While it is fashionable among the politically correct to embrace campaigns to "save the whales", it is decidedly un-PC to want to "save the pig".

The difficulty in spreading the animal rights message lies in the fact that animal

rights do not advocate the humane treatment of only certain species or "emotional" animals like elephants. Animal rights are about ending what is euphemistically termed "utilisation" of other species, where "utilisation" refers to the killing, maiming and general abuse of nonhumans.

As Sturgeon points out, humankind has been doing this for millennia. Backstab, slavery, child labour and female circumcision have also been part of human "culture" for a long time, but this does not make any of these practices morally acceptable.

In Sturgeon's own words: "Monitoring is partly government's job, partly the industry's and partly that of society." Animal rights groups are part of this society.

It has been said that every great new movement goes through three stages: ridicule, discussion and acceptance.

When the 19th century author Mary Wollstonecraft wrote a treatise on women's rights it was stated by a critic who scoffed: "Women's rights? They will be telling us animals have rights next!"

Today the women's rights movement, like the movement for human rights, is an accepted fact, and the animal rights movement — the next of the great "rights" movements — is moving towards acceptance.

As much as some would wish it not to be so, the animal rights movement is here to stay.

Willshire is national co-chair of the Animal Groups Alliance of SA.

(78) PD 28/7/99

Fines slapped on thieves found with 3000 arums

Lily project could help preserve wetlands, create jobs

(56) ART 28/7/99

JOHN YELD
ENVIRONMENT REPORTER

Five men caught poaching 3 289 arum lilies from property owned by the Helderberg municipality have each been given R300 spot fines by conservation officials.

Two Cape Nature Conservation district service officers investigated the incident after Helderberg law enforcement officers stopped the men's vehicle in Macassar.

In terms of the provincial nature conservation ordinance, it is illegal to pick flowers without the land owner's written authority.

Ironically, the fines come soon after the Cape Metropolitan Council (CMC) completed a viability study into arum-picking in the region.

The study strongly recommends a pilot wetland cultivation project for the planting and harvesting of arum lilies as an income-generating source for local communities.

The CMC says the project could contribute significantly to the preservation and restoration of urban wetlands in the metropolitan area, and would be a welcome addition to the lucrative cut-flower industry.

Paul Gildenhuys, Cape Nature Conservation's area manager, said the poached arum lilies had been chopped off with a panga.

"Unfortunately illegal flower pickers often cause permanent damage to the environment in this way."

He said arum lilies were also the habitat of the protected arum lily frog, an endemic species (occurring naturally only in the Western Cape) that had the ability to change its colour according to background, temperature and light.

"When lily plants are damaged, the arum lily frog loses its habitat," said Mr Gildenhuys.

Brian Watkyns, chairman of the CMC's Planning, Environment and Housing Committee, said two striking arum lily varieties were particu-



CAPE NATURE CONSERVATION
Local is lekker: the arum lily frog occurs naturally only in the Western Cape

larly suited to the Western Cape's climate and were highly desirable in domestic and international markets.

The pilot project would be controlled by the local community, but would be implemented and managed in partnership with the local council which owned the wetland.

Once established, the project was expected to create about 100 jobs in various sites, each up to 20 000m².

Brown's Farm retention pond and the Khayelitsha wetland had been identified as suitable for this pilot project and a more detailed investigation was under way at these sites, said Mr Watkyns.

"This is an excellent and novel opportunity to promote the development of poorer communities by facilitating sustainable income-generating projects that also benefit degraded riverine ecosystems.

"Once the pilot project is under way and has proved to be successful, we intend to investigate the planting and harvesting of other wetland sites," he said.



ANDREW INGRAM
Blooming illegal: conservation officers Tienie van der Westhuizen, front, and Dian Dreyer with some of the confiscated arum lilies cut with pangas by poachers

Sewage contaminating sea

as old coastal pipe crumbles

R460 000 to fix 400m of sewer and save Main Road from collapse

ART 29/7/99
(76)

PETER GOOSEN
Special Correspondent

The failure of the main sewer between Muizenberg and St James is believed to be responsible for the the high coliform count in the area's sea water.

The South Peninsula Council was shown a grim and graphic video

of the sewer, photographed by a mobile video camera that travelled along its length.

Parts of the 50- to 60-year-old pipe have collapsed and some manholes are caving in because the cement used in their construction is crumbling from the effects of methane.

Sewage-contaminated water is escaping and finding its way into the sea, and water from outside is enter-

ing the pipes, making the problems worse.

The council was told by the executive director of engineering services, Dave Buerger, that unless the pipe was fixed urgently the condition of the pipe and manholes would worsen. It was possible sections of Main Road could collapse.

The pipe would be repaired by pulling a new pipe inside the old. To

repair about 400m of pipe between Muizenberg and St James and St James and Kalk Bay would cost about R450 000 and there was enough money in the budget for the job.

But unfortunately this is not the end of the tale. Much of the South Peninsula's 320km of sewer is in similar condition, with Kirstenhof, Grassy Park and Lavender Hill also needing urgent attention.

Caltex cleans up its act

TABRIO HALLIM
STAFF REPORTER

ART 29/7/99
(76)

Residents of Table View, Bothasig and Edgemead will be breathing cleaner air within a year when the Caltex refinery's new tailgas treating unit reduces gas emissions from the plant.

This follows a five-year feud between residents and Caltex over the high levels of air pollution in the area.

Residents blame Caltex for respiratory ailments and asthma-related problems - especially among children in the area near the refinery - although Caltex is just one of several industrial plants in the vicinity.

A ceremony was held at the refinery yesterday to mark the

first day of construction of the unit, which should be running by June next year.

Andy Birkinshaw, chairman of the Table View Residents' Association, warned that the effects of toxic gas and sulphur dioxide, in particular, "are detrimental to the health of the community".

Paul Buley, Caltex's general manager of refining, said more than 28 tons of sulphur dioxide were released daily.

The new treating unit would reduce this to eight tons a day.

"This will bring the Milnerton refinery to a level of sulphur dioxide emissions that is not only way below local government legislation, but which is also well beneath the guidelines published by the World Health Organisation," said Mr Buley.

Water pollution threat to millions

By Russel Molefe (126)

MILLIONS of people in Gauteng, parts of Mpumalanga and Free State could be in danger of contracting water-borne diseases because of pollution of the Vaal River.

The Water Research Commission (WRC) has said that the pollution of water sources, which may cause cholera and severe diarrhoea, is making it increasingly difficult to provide pure drinking water in the areas.

The WRC said it had found that some harmful organisms had a natural resistance to chlorine, a chem-

ical used to purify water.

"During the purification process of water, most but not all of these organic compounds are removed or broken down to more elementary products that are easier to consume.

"It is impossible to remove all of these organic compounds that occur in water sources other than by very expensive processes that put a further financial burden on the consumer," the WRC research manager Ms Annatjie Oelofse said.

What exacerbates the problem is the long pipelines and the warm climate of South Africa which con-

tribute to growth of bacteria in the water distribution networks.

However, Oelofse said these problems occur worldwide and the research conducted by the WRC was aimed at determining the extent of the problem under local conditions.

"The quality of treated water is tested on a daily basis by most of the water suppliers to prevent the deterioration of the water quality.

"It is the duty of all of us to protect our water sources and prevent pollution, because at the end it is the consumer who has to pay for expensive water treatment," Oelofse said.

Sowetan 29/7/99

Parks scandal probe begins

(76)

ARG 31/7/99

Nelspruit - A team from the Investigative Directorate for Serious Economic Offences met Mpumalanga's embattled Parks Board for the first time this week after taking over a criminal fraud investigation into the R1,3-billion promissory note scandal.

The team, headed by advocate Gerda Ferreira, met Mpumalanga Parks Board chairman Francis Legodi and other senior managers.

Mr Legodi said the unit had asked for full co-operation while it investigated the promissory note scandal and its associated probe into a network of front companies allegedly used to defraud the state of at least R1,7-million.

Ms Ferreira confirmed the meeting. She said her team would be in Nelspruit until Wednesday.

"We've just taken over this investigation and don't want to say too much at this stage," she said.

The companies being investigated were allegedly used to illegally channel more than R1,7-million out of the Parks Board to the African National Congress and some of its provincial leaders.

The illegal expenditure was exposed during fallout from the R1,3-billion promissory note scandal last year, when the Parks Board admitted to using 32 provincial game reserves as collateral for six illegal promissory notes worth between R300-million and R500-million each.

- Sapa

Mkhwanazi denies any part in promissory note scandal

By LEO GAMA

FORMER MEC for Environmental Affairs and Tourism in Mpumalanga, David Sokesimbone Mkhwanazi, has denied knowledge of any promissory notes which has been the talk of the province recently.

African Eye News Service reported in last week's City Press that Mkhwanazi and two former Parks Board Chiefs, Alan Gray and James Nkambule, are suspects in the promissory notes scandal. This include current Finance MEC Jacques Modipane.

It says a top investigating team known as the Investigate Directorate for Serious Economic Offices has taken over investigations into Mpumalanga's promissory notes scandal. The article further said the promissory notes were secretly issued to a string of shady financial brokers in return for massive offshore loans.

Mkhwanazi, who resigned as MEC for that department in May 1998, told City Press that he was long gone from the department when the signing of the promissory notes took place in July 1998.

He said he finds it strange that his name is linked to the scandal. He said he was labelled in that

report as a "suspect" which, according to legal experts, implies that he is a criminal.

Mkhwanazi, well known in political circles as the province's "Godfather", was recently cleared by Public Protector, Selby Baqwa.

He was accused of allegedly turning his department into a family business by employing his wife, Cecilia, daughter, Thoko, sister-in-law, Jane Mlotshwa and brother, Zenzo Mkhwanazi.

However, Baqwa found that the allegations against the MEC had no substance and cleared him.

He found that all these people were qualified and Mkhwanazi had no influence in the appointment of his relatives.

"I was very disturbed when I first read the article."

He said he has appointed a top lawyer from Johannesburg to deal with the allegations.

Mkhwanazi is no more active in politics. He was left out of the current provincial cabinet because, he said, he wanted to concentrate on his businesses.

However, reliable sources within the ANC confirmed that the party might consider deploying him to an ambassadorship position somewhere in Africa.



DISTURBED . . . Former Mpumalanga official, David Mkhwanazi

Nuclear ships sail into storm of protest

ARL 2/8/99 (56)

Two ships, each carrying about 220kg of high-level nuclear fuel from Britain and France for use in Japanese power plants, are scheduled to round the Cape within days - maybe this week.

Their passage has prompted a strong response from local organisations and politicians concerned about the possible environmental threat. The South African Government has asked the ships to stay outside our 200 nautical mile exclusive economic zone.

But the ship's owners, Pacific Nuclear Transport Limited, a joint venture by the British and French reprocessing and nuclear fuel manufacturing companies, have refused to give any assurances on this score, saying they have legal rights to navigate outside South Africa's 12 nautical mile territorial waters.

Meanwhile not everyone is convinced that the Pacific Teal and the South Africa's marine environment. And some environmentalists argue that the issue is not so much this particular voyage - because the ships are designed to transport nuclear material and have a good safety record - but concerns about the proliferation of nuclear energy, and hence also of nuclear waste.

They also say the shipments are evidence of an unacceptable politi-

JOHN YEID
ENVIRONMENT WRITER



cal power play whereby the British, French, Japanese and American governments are simply overriding the legitimate concerns of developing nations.

One of the first people to express concern was Western Cape Environmental Affairs Minister Glen Adams, who asked his national counterpart, Valli Moosa, to ensure that the shipment was carefully monitored and that the vessels stayed outside South Africa's territorial waters.

"This ministry wishes to express its grave concern on behalf of the people of the Western Cape," he told Mr Moosa in a letter.

Subsequently, Mr Moosa's deputy, Joyce Mabudafhasi, announced that she had asked that the two ships stay out of South Africa's exclusive economic zone, following a meeting with British, French and Japanese diplomats. She said the diplomats had

assured her that the ships would not dock in any South African ports, and that their protection and safety arrangements met international standards.

Although the South African Government acknowledged international law, which granted any ship "the right of innocent passage" through its 12-nautical-mile territorial waters, it wanted the ships to remain further from the coast, Ms Mabudafhasi said.

"The overriding interest of the South African Government is in minimising any risk to human health, marine life and the environment, by ensuring the safe passage of the ships to Japan," she said.

Asked to comment, British Nuclear Fuels spokesman Gavin Carter said this request would be "carefully taken into account" by the ships' captains, who would decide the actual route taken around the Cape.

"The captains are responsible for the safe navigation of the vessels and the safety of the crew, and will take various factors into account - including the prevailing weather."

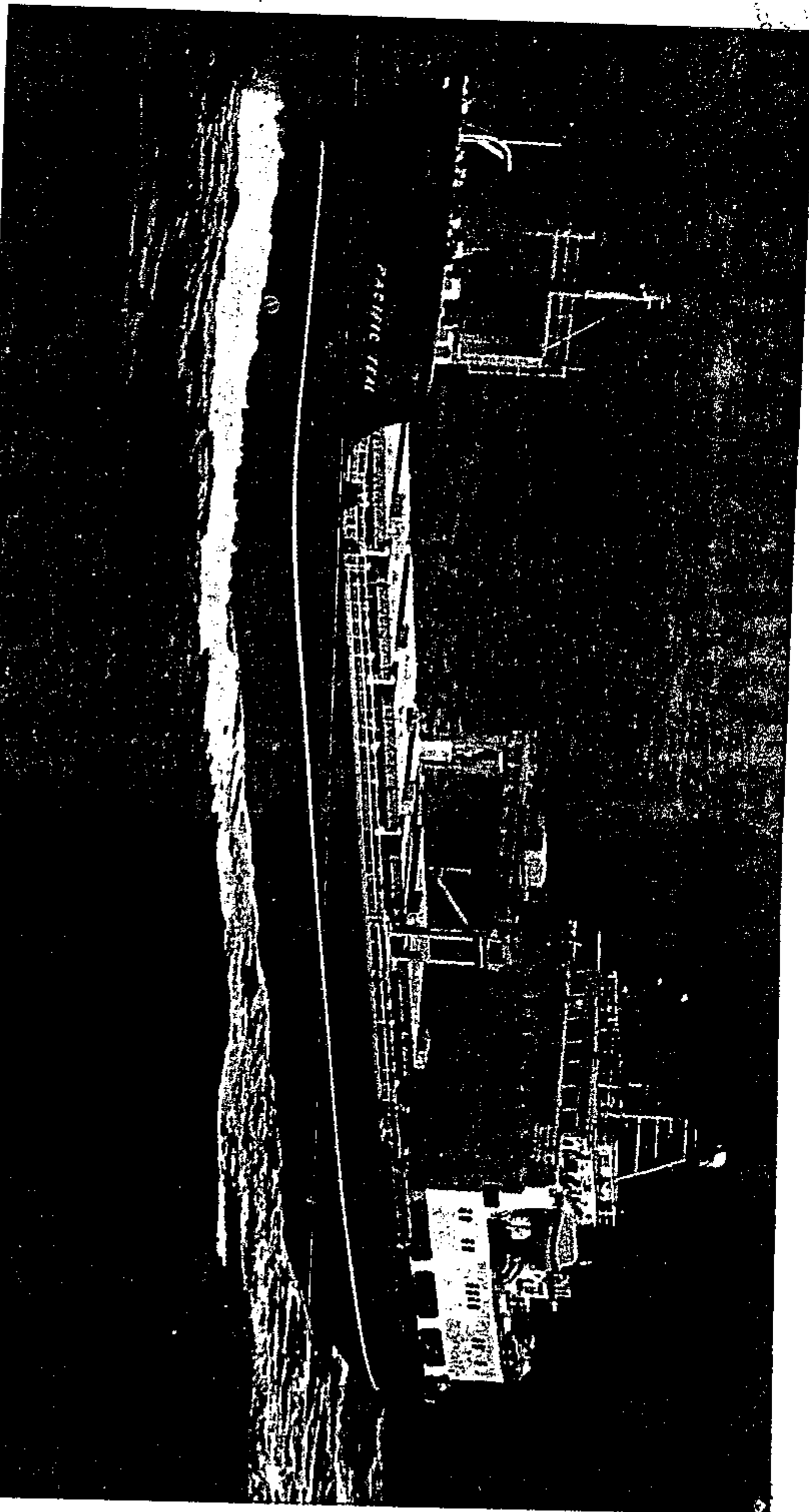
In her statement, the minister (Ms Mabudafhasi) acknowledged that our ships, like other ships, have the right of freedom of navigation on the high seas. The high seas include the area beyond territorial waters, that is, the exclusive economic zone.

"Our ships are regarded by experts to be among the safest on the seas. Cargoes that are considered hazardous, such as oil, have the same rights under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea," said Mr Carter.

But the environmental organisation, Earthlife Africa, questioned whether the truth was being told about the ultimate destination of the cargo, which included "weapons-usable" plutonium.

Earthlife Africa spokeswoman Liz McDavid said: "The plutonium fuel involved in these shipments is classified by the International Atomic Energy Agency as a category 1, direct-use nuclear weapons material. "It can readily and swiftly be converted into a form that can be used in nuclear bombs."

Blazing a trail: the Pacific Teal passes the Cape in 1997. This vessel and its sister ship, Pacific Pintail, are due to round the Cape within days carrying 220kg of high-level nuclear fuel



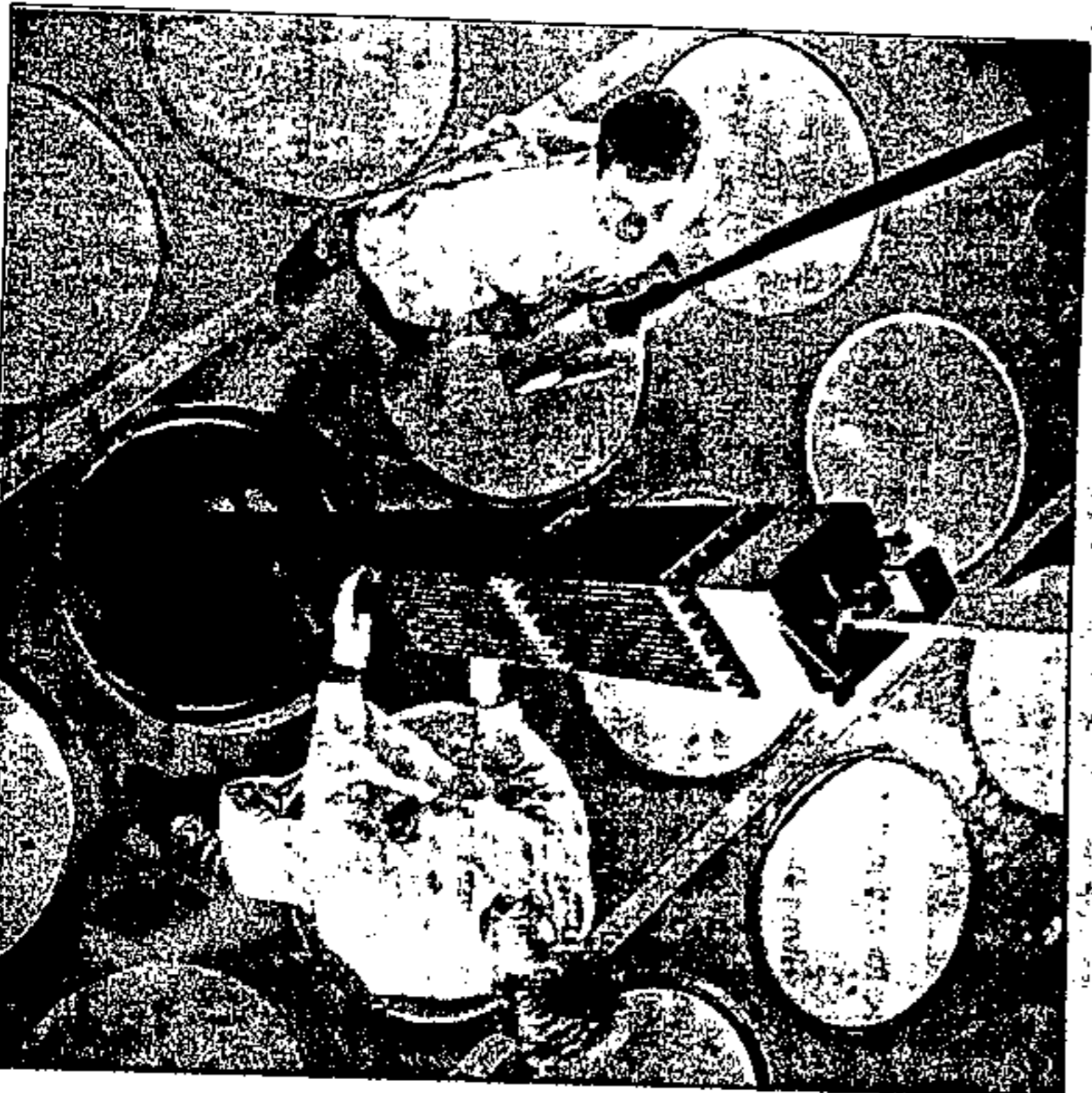
PETER KWAN

Reactor fuel 'is essential'

Nuclear power is essential to Japan's energy strategy, according to briefing notes prepared jointly by the French, British and Japanese companies involved in the shipments of MOX fuel around the Cape.

MOX, which stands for Mixed uranium and plutonium Oxides, is a conventional nuclear fuel used in standard nuclear reactors in major European nuclear-using countries.

"The only difference with the basic nuclear fuel, made only of uranium and known as UO₂ fuel, is that MOX fuel contains a small proportion of plutonium mixed with a higher proportion of uranium," the notes state.



Core issue: an MOX fuel assembly, consisting of a set of corrosion-resistant fuel rods with ceramic sheaths. MOX fuel pellets have been inserted

Satellite navigation and communication

Twin radars

YOUR GUIDE TO THE PACIFIC TEAL

Reinforced

Emergency

Salvage

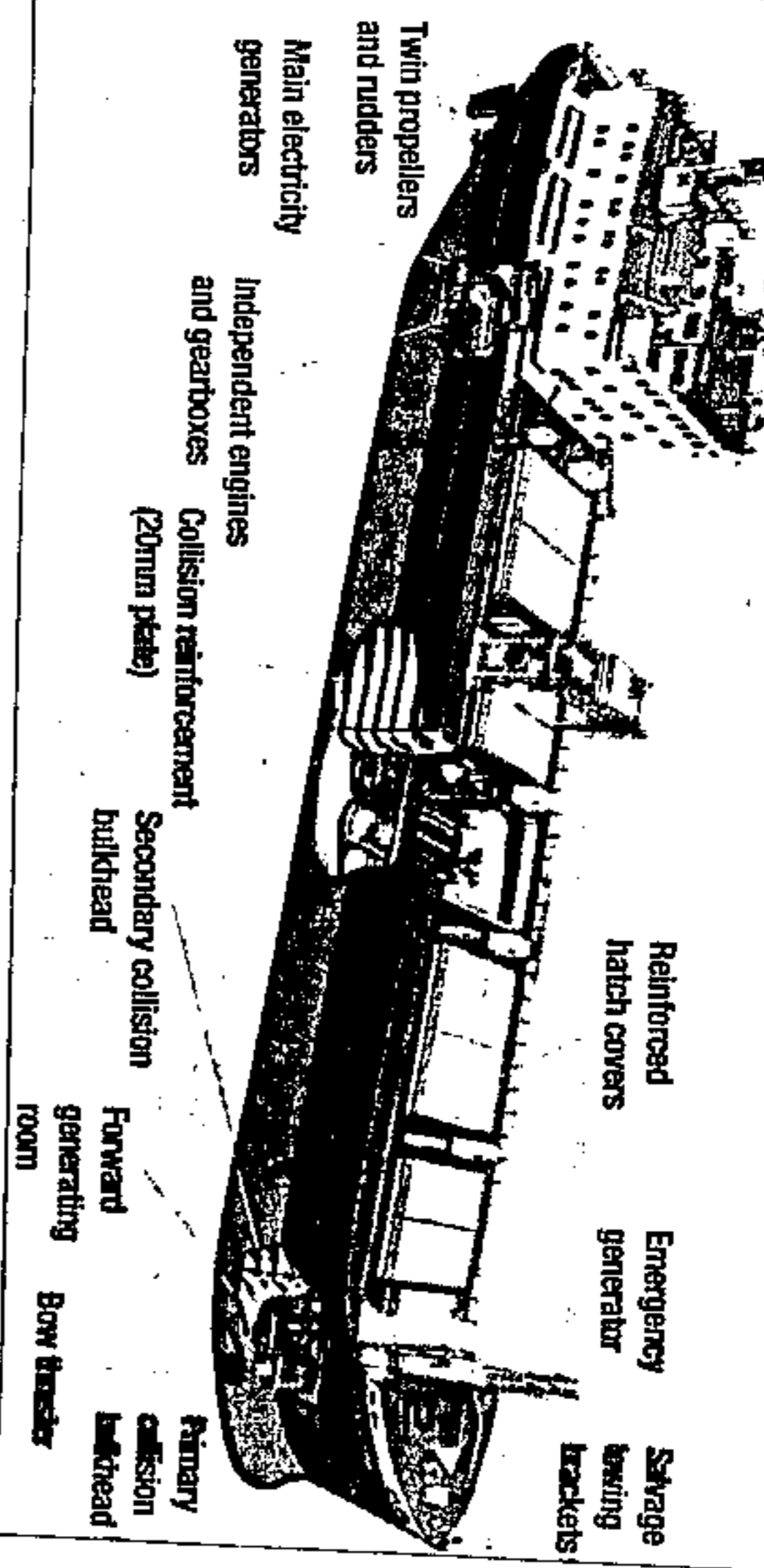
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YOUR GUIDE TO THE PACIFIC TAIL



McDaid said: "The plutonium fuel involved in these shipments is classified by the International Atomic Energy Agency as a category 1, direct-use nuclear weapons material. It can readily and swiftly be converted into a form that can be used in nuclear bombs."

These reactors had been heightened by two accidents at nuclear power plants in Japan, Ms McDaid said. These were at the Takahama plant - one of the reactors due to be loaded with the mixed uranium and plutonium oxides - on July 4, and the Tsunaga nuclear plant on July 12.

only role is to run the risk of nuclear contamination." South Africa had to voice its opposition and act against all "hazardous shipments", she said. "Internationally, South Africa should be a strong voice speaking out for a nuclear-free world. "On a macro-level, any nuclear accident or nuclear bomb affects all of us, as it threatens the environmental health of our life support systems. On a local level, our coastline provides a substantial income for the fishing industry. Our tourism industry is also under threat - any perception of nuclear contamination would drive all European and North American tourists away."

The plutonium content varies depending on the design of the fuel, and one pellet of MOX has the same energy output of one ton of coal. "MOX is the second-most common fuel for commercial nuclear power plants, just after uranium fuel ... (and) 32 commercial nuclear power reactors in Europe are currently loaded with MOX fuel."

Outcry is unnecessary, says Seapacc

Politicians and environmentalists are among those strongly opposed to nuclear shipments around the Cape coastline.

ships of plutonium, including the possible effects of a release of plutonium. (The Akatsuki Maru carried purified plutonium particles, not the same as the MOX nuclear fuel now being shipped in pellet form.)

In 1997 the Japanese government called for the prompt introduction of MOX fuel in commercial nuclear reactors. Japanese electric power companies announced that four reactors would be loaded with MOX fuel by 2000, including two in 1999.

They include Democratic Party environment spokesman Errol Moorcroft, who said the Pacific Pintail and Pacific Teal should stay outside South Africa's territorial waters.

In a summary, the society noted that stringent regulations relating to the containment and shipment of plutonium were laid down by the International Atomic Energy Agency. These regulations were enforced by virtually all national agencies.

Up to 70 reactors worldwide are scheduled to be using this fuel by 2010, including Japan, the United States and Russia.

"It's a known fact that the country's coastline represents some of the world's most treacherous maritime areas, as the host of shipwrecks on our shoreline will attest.

that those measures were such that a catastrophic accident to the ship was very unlikely.

South Africa had to voice its opposition and act against all "hazardous shipments", she said. "Internationally, South Africa should be a strong voice speaking out for a nuclear-free world.

"A spill of nuclear pollutants would do untold damage to one of our greatest natural assets, destroying marine life and endangering the lives and livelihood of many thousands of our citizens. This sort of risk cannot in any way be countenanced."

Seapacc members had inspected the Pacific Pintail when it visited Cape Town last year and had been satisfied with its seaworthiness, Mrs Rice said.

On a macro-level, any nuclear accident or nuclear bomb affects all of us, as it threatens the environmental health of our life support systems. On a local level, our coastline provides a substantial income for the fishing industry. Our tourism industry is also under threat - any perception of nuclear contamination would drive all European and North American tourists away."

The Green Party of South Africa also expressed "extreme concern", and called for a world-wide ban on the international transport and trade of radioactive materials.

Seapacc (Sea Patrol Co-ordinating Committee) is a local group whose members include representatives of the navy, air force, Maritime Safety Authority, Department of Environmental Affairs, Marine and Coastal Management division, Portnet, NSRI, National Monuments Council, Cape

dependent on the design of the fuel, and one pellet of MOX has the same energy output of one ton of coal. "MOX is the second-most common fuel for commercial nuclear power plants, just after uranium fuel ... (and) 32 commercial nuclear power reactors in Europe are currently loaded with MOX fuel."

"The oceans around the country have a spectacular history of maritime disasters, including collisions, sinkings, onboard fires, and groundings. If nuclear fuels are shipped around our coast, it will be only a matter of time before a combination of human error and natural conditions result in the loss of a nuclear cargo.

But are these realistic assessments of the actual risk of a plutonium spill as the two ships round the Cape?

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Such a disaster would devastate the living ecosystems of our southern

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Powerful package: a technician displays one of the tiny MOX fuel pellets which has the same energy output as a ton of coal

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ANC attacks Heath over collateral scandal

Taryn Lambert (76) 004/8/99

THE African National Congress (ANC) launched a scathing attack on Judge Willem Heath, the head of the special investigating unit, yesterday over the Mpumalanga promissory note scandal in which Mpumalanga finance MEC Jacques Modipane has denied any role.

The attack followed Heath's announcement that forensic tests had revealed that Modipane's original signature did appear on the notes, despite Modipane consistently claiming his signature was forged by Mpumalanga Parks Board officials.

The promissory notes were issued to a foreign company and put up provincial parks as collateral for a series of secret offshore loans. Parks board CE Alan Gray was suspended for his role in the affair. Modipane yesterday admitted that his signature appeared on the reverse side of

Forensic tests have verified Mpumalanga finance MEC's signature on the note

the document but claimed he did not know how it came to be there.

Modipane and other high-ranking ANC officials, including the secretary-general Kgalema Motlanthe, Mpumalanga premier Ndaweni Mahlangu and his recently appointed spokesman Setako Nyaka, accused Heath of distorting the truth by not announcing Modipane had been vindicated.

Instead, Heath's statement said that the investigation had been handed over to the police and the directorate for serious economic offences for criminal investigation.

Motlanthe said Modipane had been "vindicated" after being "under severe attack" for more than a year. "It concerns us that Heath does not seem to be getting to the bottom of this issue," Motlanthe said. Motlanthe said he was unhappy with

the way in which Heath handled the investigation. His actions "displayed contempt" and his conduct "left a lot to be desired".

Mahlangu, who has kept a low profile since he defended Modipane's reappointment to his cabinet by saying that it was acceptable for politicians to tell lies, said his and Modipane's integrity and that of the ANC had been wrongly questioned.

"Mr Modipane and I were wrongly accused, judged, found guilty, sentenced and handed. We trust that those people who acted as judge and executioner will publicly apologise to Mr Modipane and all others concerned," Mahlangu said.

Speaking publicly for the first time on the promissory note scandal, Modipane said the media had tried to make a "highly sophisticated issue" simplistic.

He said he had been accused of being unco-operative by suspended Mpumalanga Parks Board CEO Alan Gray because he had refused to sign the notes. Gray is being investigated on 23 charges of misconduct and maladministration by the board.

Modipane accused Heath of having "strange agendas" which was "strange behaviour" for a judge.

He accused Heath of issuing a "very evasive and very funny" media statement about their meeting without consulting his lawyers, as had been agreed.

However, Heath said he had faxed his statement to Modipane's advocate, Andre Bezuidenhout, who made changes before approving it. Heath said he had not issued the statement before receiving Modipane's lawyer's approval.

Heath said he had handed all documentation and information over to the police and the directorate for serious economic offences, who would be "in a position to look at the aspect of alleged fraud and the controversial obtaining of the signatures of Mr Modipane".

The ANC also called on Justice Minister Penneil Maduna and Safety and Security Minister Steve Tshwete to intervene. Meanwhile, Democratic Party spokesman Clive Hatch called for Modipane to be dismissed.

"Mr Modipane has disgraced himself and the Mpumalanga legislature by consistently claiming that he did not sign the promissory notes," Hatch said.

"But when indisputable forensic evidence is placed before him, he excuses himself further by saying that he signed the promissory notes under misrepresentation and therefore unwittingly."

Namaqua's floral riches

are diamonds in the dust

New book explores the coastal desert's wealth of flora



JOHN VELD
ENVIRONMENT WRITER

South Africa's newest national park - the 50 000ha Namaqua National Park, situated between Kamieskroon on the N7 highway and the coast - was launched yesterday.

The move, long awaited by conservationists, gives formal recognition, on a national level, to the region's superb natural heritage.

But the magnificent floral displays in early spring that draw thousands of tourists, are only a small part of Namaqualand's fascinating botanical wealth.

It also boasts an unrivalled range of succulents and more bulb species than any other arid region in the world, as well as some remarkable relationships with insect pollinators that exist nowhere else on earth.

Now, coinciding with the launch of the national park, the region's unique ecology has been expertly described and superbly illustrated in a new book by acknowledged leaders in their fields.

And they suggest that Namaqualand's botanical heritage could become the new, sustainable equivalent of its substantial mineral wealth which is now in decline.

Namaqualand - A Succulent Desert is the result of four years of collaboration between husband-and-wife team Richard Cowling and Shirley Pierce, and top botanical photographer Colin Paterson-Jones.

Professor Cowling is Leslie Hill Professor of Plant Conservation at the University of Cape Town. The chair is named after local benefactor Leslie Hill, who has donated generously to conserve critical parts of South Africa's rich plant life - including 45 698ha of the new national park through his Leslie Hill

Succulent Karoo Trust.

Another 930ha, in the form of the Skilpad flower reserve, has been donated by the World Wide Fund for Nature - South Africa, and the Parks Board bought 2 597ha.

Professor Cowling, one of the country's most acclaimed botanists, said that although he'd had an enduring interest in succulents, he visited Namaqualand only in 1985.

On this trip he was introduced to the Knersvlakte - that desert-like area of white quartz stones north of Vanrhynsdorp which appears barren from a distance, but which is, in fact, studded with a wonderfully rich assortment of minute succulents.

"It was a winter rather like this one - no 'blommejies' (flowers) to speak of - and I remember walking

'I hope that Namaqualanders see they're sitting on something unparalleled'

on those quartz fields and seeing these little stone plants and thinking 'What's going on here?' And in a sense that's how my curiosity was born," recalled Prof Cowling.

After meeting Mr Hill, who also has an enduring interest in succulents, Professor Cowling initiated a series of research projects in Namaqualand through his institute.

These projects, in turn, also helped the buying of conservation land for the new park through Mr Hill's trust.

Professor Cowling said conservationists had to acknowledge that Namaqualand's prosperity, such as

it was, had been based largely on mining.

"That's the reality - mining has given people opportunities. It's created jobs, and the mining companies have had, to varying degrees, a positive impact on socio-economic upliftment. There's no question about that."

"But one of the messages in our book is that if you look at the history of Namaqualand, certainly since colonial times, it's gone through waves of exploitation."

The first was the exploitation of the natural veld by stock farmers. "They turned the veld into nothing, and there's a huge environmental cost associated with that degradation."

The second was the exploitation of minerals, starting with copper and later diamonds, among other mining activities.

"There's a big environmental cost to extraction, and I don't think anyone had ever counted that cost."

"For example, if you drive from Port Nolloth to Alexander Bay, you go through a landscape that has been completely re-engineered. They've re-arranged the coastline, and it's really substantial. No one takes that into account."

"If the environmental costs of some of these exploitative economic activities in Namaqualand were brought into a proper cost-benefit analysis, the results would be much less favourable," said Professor Cowling.

"And I'm saying that the region's plants are perhaps its new sack of uncut diamonds. I'm not being overly optimistic, because it's not easy to sell the idea of little succulents being able to compete with diamonds, but I think there is potential for Namaqualand to derive more bene-

fits from its tremendous biological diversity," he says.

"And in deriving those benefits, it's going to incur fewer or lower environmental costs, so the profitability - and hence the overall sustainability of land use - might be quite good when you balance the books properly."

"And the Namaqua National Park is an opportunity to begin to develop that, and that's certainly a theme that I try to develop in the book."

'Namaqualand has gone through a series of waves of exploitation'

Are the Namaqualanders now more aware of the economic potential of their plant wealth?

Professor Cowling said: "It's a difficult question, but I would say 'Yes'. There is an increased awareness, but it's perhaps not as high as in other parts of the country - as, for example, in some parts of the southern and, particularly, the Eastern Cape, where it's staggering."

"I hope one of the achievements of our book will be to help Namaqualanders see and understand that they're really sitting on something unparalleled, and they begin to develop a sense of pride about what they have, and try to turn that into economic opportunity."

"We have to be realistic. Namaqualand is a desert, after all, and I don't want to pretend that ecotourism is going to solve all its problems, but I do think it has a significant role to play."

Namaqualand - A Succulent Desert by Richard Cowling and Shirley Pierce. Photography by Colin Paterson-Jones. Published by Fernwood Press. The recommended retail price is R195 (including VAT), and it should be available in leading bookshops by the end of the month.

Evil invader

Weed floods

(56)

into lagoon

ART 6/18/99

Problem plant hits Milnerton

JONN VELD
ENVIRONMENT WRITER

Flood waters in the Diep River have swept huge quantities of water hyacinth, one of the world's most problematic invader plants, into Milnerton lagoon in the past few days.

Although staff of Blaauwberg Municipality have been clearing the weed in the lagoon and from the beach, town engineer Dave Brook conceded that the scale of the problem was almost overwhelming.

Pointing out that a single water hyacinth bulb could multiply to form a mass of plants weighing as much as eight tons in just one year, he said: "There are no easy answers."

Water hyacinth was a problem

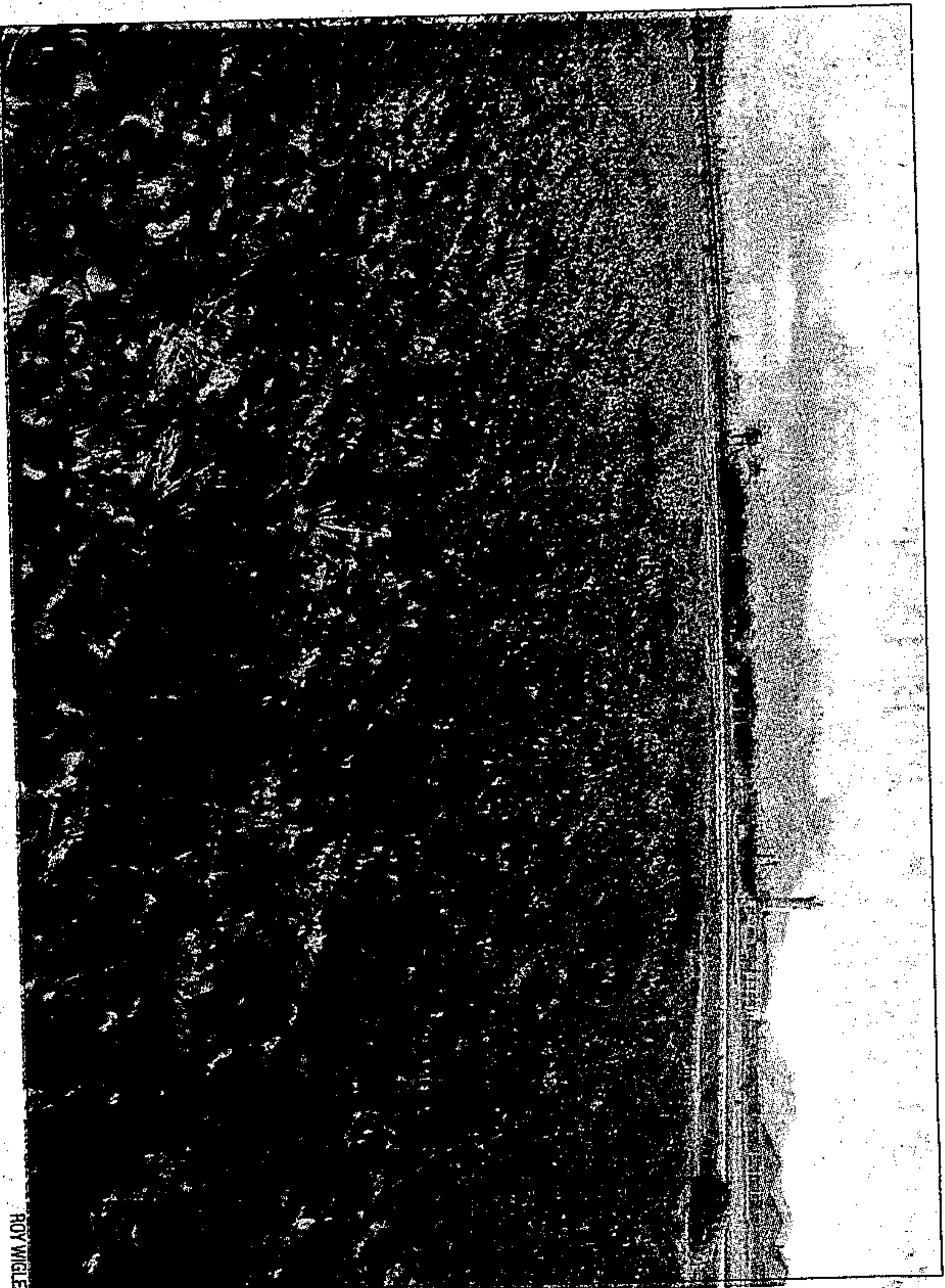
throughout Africa and in other parts of the world, Mr Brook said.

"The Diep River was fairly free of it until about five or six years ago, or maybe a bit longer than that, but now it's right through the river system."

"We have been managing it as an ongoing programme, taking out what we can on a manual basis, but it grows so fast it's virtually impossible to control."

The heavy rains of the past few days had caused the river to flood for the first time this year, and huge quantities of the weed had been washed down into the lagoon, Mr Brook said yesterday.

"We're not unhappy about this because if (the flood) does tend to clear the weed out. And one of our problems is that there hasn't been a



ROY WIGLEY

Choked: recent heavy rains have swept huge quantities of water hyacinth down the Diep River into Milnerton lagoon really good flood for a couple of years now.

"A considerable amount has been flushed through, and we are busy taking it out at the Otto du Plessis Drive bridge as fast as we're able.

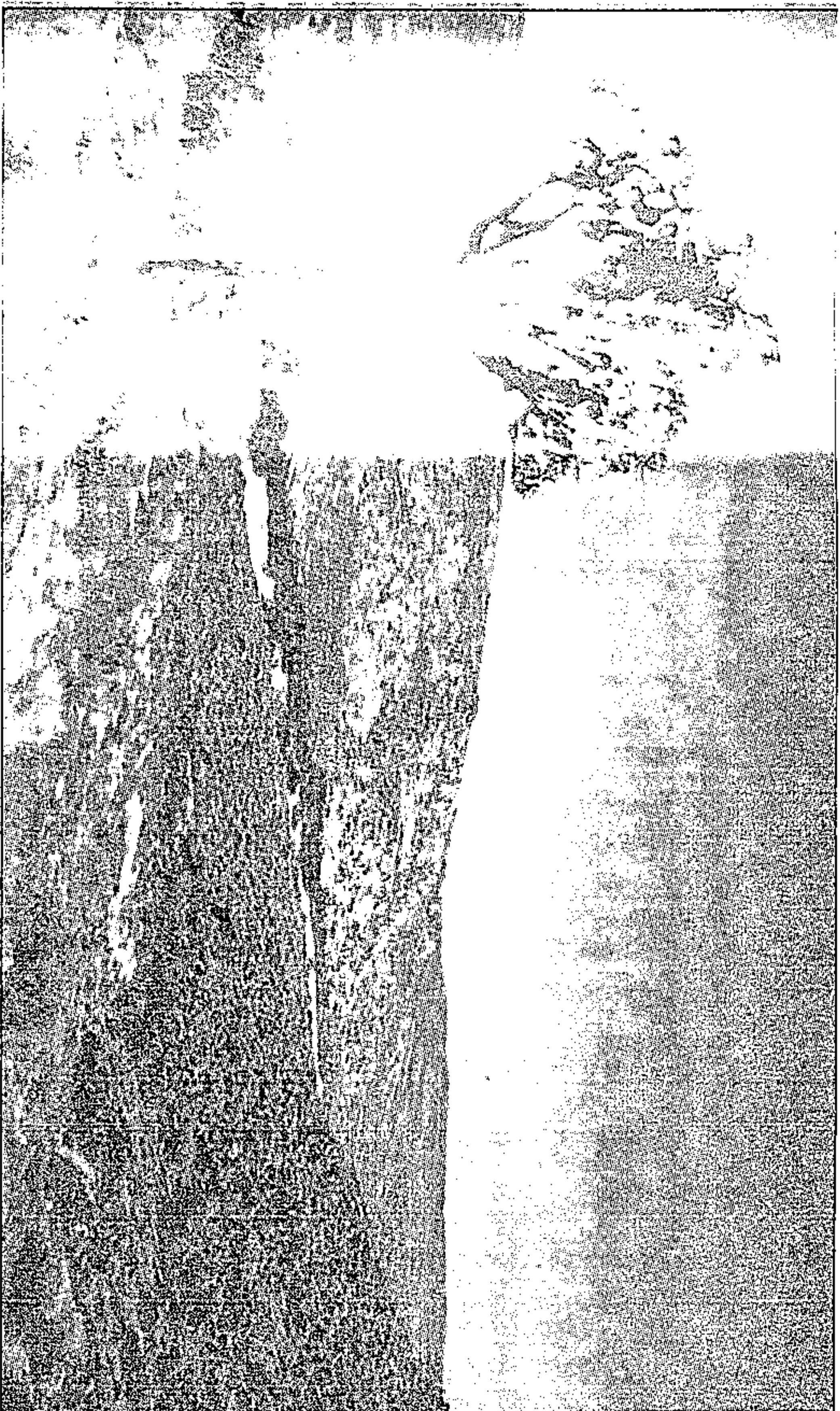
"The salt water in the lagoon kills the water hyacinth, but this means

that it then litters the beaches, and it will have to be picked up there."

Mr Brook said the municipality had considered introducing the weed which has been used successfully as a biological control agent against water hyacinth in other parts of southern Africa, but had been

unable to obtain these insects.

"We also looked at alternatives, such as spraying (herbicides), but we were reluctant to do this because it's a nature area. We're still hoping for good rains to give the river and the lagoon a good flush, because it really does need it."



SENTINEL: A kokerboom, or quiver tree, seems to be standing guard on a stony hillside overlooking a dry riverbed in the 49 000ha Namaqua National Park opened this week among the granite hills around Kamieskroon.

WWF HONOURS HILL

(56) CT6/8/99

MELANIE GOSLING
ENVIRONMENT WRITER

HE'S 90 and has a passion for succulents.

This week philanthropist Leslie Hill of Cape Town, a modest man who usually shuns publicity, broke with his reclusive behaviour and attended the opening of the 49 000ha Namaqua National Park — most of which he bought from De Beers and donated to conservation.

Because of his donation, the international conservation organisation World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) has honoured Hill as the first individual to be recognised as having made "A Gift to the Earth" — part of WWF's global Living Planet Campaign.

Although he had poured millions into buying the land — no one would disclose how much — Hill made no speech at the opening ceremony. Asked about the award afterwards, he smiled: "I'm amazed at the honour. I'd never heard of the award before."

Hill, a chartered accountant who helped build Grosvenor Motors, says he made his money by investing in the stock exchange when everyone else was selling.

He became interested in succulents in the 1960s when he met Harry Hall, then the curator of the succulent collection at Kirstenbosch.

"We used to go off on trips to Namaqualand and the Karoo and camp

out. I got very fond of him," Hill said. Namaqualand is part of the succulent Karoo biome, of which less than 3% is formally conserved.

Ian McDonald, who heads the South African branch of WWF, said his organisation had been trying to establish a national park in Namaqualand for 11 years.

"When conservation areas were first being proclaimed in the late 1890s, most of the big game, like black rhino, elephant and the big migrating herds of springbok, had been shot out in the Namaqualand and Karoo areas. When game reserves formed around the last populations of big game, Namaqualand was largely left out," he said.

But although the big game has been exterminated, the plant life of Namaqualand is abundant, with over 4 000 different plant species. Over 60% of these occur nowhere else in the world.

Recognising Namaqualand's botanical importance, WWF-South Africa established the tiny Skilpad Nature Reserve in 1988 near Kamieskroon in the Northern Cape, which soon became a tourist attraction in the "flower season".

This week, the 45 000ha bought by Hill and the 2 500ha bought by SA National Parks, were combined with the Skilpad reserve to form the new Namaqua National Park. It will be managed by SA National Parks.

Anthony Hall-Martin of National Parks said they would re-introduce game and would be setting up partnerships with private enterprise to run accommodation.

Deputy director of Environment Affairs, Rejoice Mabudafasi, said at the ceremony: "We are custodians of the third most ecologically diverse country in the world.

"Only 6% of of the country's surface is protected by conservation, compared with the international norm of 10%.

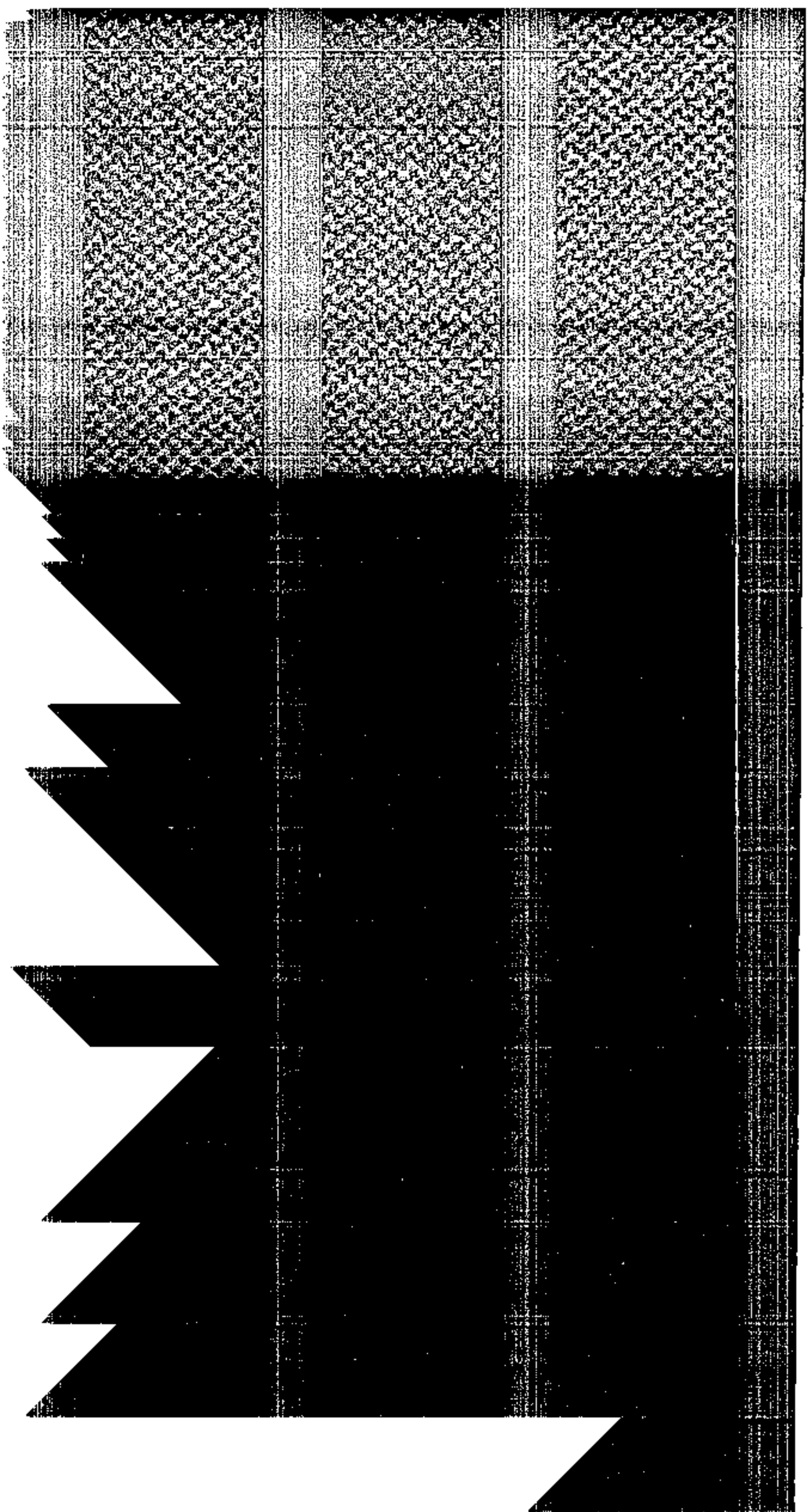
"Over 25% of South Africa's natural environment has been transformed by agriculture, urbanisation, industry, afforestation and water impoundment.

"In the current protected system, the conservation of Namaqualand is grossly inadequate, so there is a great need for a national park such as this.

"Leslie Hill, you are an example to us all, because you have given us so much so that everyone can benefit."



HONOUR RED: Leslie Hill, award deputy director of Environment Affairs Rejoice Mabudafasi. PICTURE: MELANIE GOSLING



Protesters plea on nuclear 'bullshit'

(76) 718199

JOHN YELD

Waving banners and accompanied by dogs and even a giant cart-horse, about 50 protesters marched through the city streets yesterday to voice their opposition to the shipping of nuclear fuel around the Cape.

They also delivered protest letters to the British, French and Japanese consulates, calling for a halt to such shipments and to the "invidious" nuclear trade.

Their protests coincided with the 54th anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima in Japan just before the end of World War 2.

Two ships, the Pacific Pintail and the Pacific Teal, are due to sail past the Cape in the next few days, carrying about 450kg of Mox fuel (mixed uranium and plutonium oxides) for Japanese nuclear power stations from reprocessing plants in Britain and France.

The South African Government has asked the ships to stay out of this country's 200 nautical mile (400km) exclusive economic zone. But the ships' owners - Pacific



HORSE POWER: a demonstrator and his cart-horse added their weight to the protest
Picture: HANNES THART

ic Nuclear Transport Limited, a joint venture by the British and French reprocessing and nuclear fuel manufacturing companies - have refused to give any assurances on this score, saying they have legal rights to navigate outside South Africa's 12 nautical mile (25km) territorial waters.

Spokesman for the company Gavin Carter told Saturday Argus recently that the South African Government's request would be "carefully taken into account" by the ships' captains, who would decide the actual

route around the Cape.

"(The captains) are responsible for ensuring the safe navigation of the vessels and the safety of the crew, and will take various factors into account - including, for example, the prevailing weather conditions."

During a shipment of 14 tons of nuclear waste in 1997, the Pacific Teal sailed about 90 nautical miles (180km) off the coast while rounding the Cape.

The date of the two ships' expected passage around the Cape has not been made public. Femke Bartels, one of two

activists sent to South Africa by the environmental organisation Greenpeace to help organise protests, said she believed the ships would be somewhere off Cape Town about Tuesday.

Asked to comment, Mr Carter said he expected the ships "from the middle to the end of next week", and the South African authorities would know where the vessels were.

Yesterday's protesters, who included pupils from Tamborskloof Primary, held banners and posters with slogans reading: "Our treacherous seas claim 1 000 ships", "Stop the nuclear madness" and "Britain, France & Japan: Don't come here with your nuclear bullshit".

The protest letter called on the Government to speak out against the nuclear trade. "On a macro-level, any nuclear accident or nuclear bomb affects all of us, as it threatens the environmental health of our life-support systems.

"The only solution is to halt these shipments entirely, and in the long term, South Africa must work with other like-minded countries to achieve this."

meeting late last year. dealing and all forms of evil, he said, and not listening to their grievances. Bethlehem Magistrate's Court on Tuesday. ing peace was within reach in the DRC. Reports by City Press Staff Sapa

It is Modipane's signature, not a forgery, or a cut-and-paste job - Heath

By ELIAS MALULEKE

THE report of the Health Special Investigating Unit into the Mpumalanga Parks Board promissory notes scandal has made no ruling on the role played by Mpumalanga Finance MEC Jacques Modipane.

The ANC this week took Heath to task for a statement in connection with Modipane's signature on the guarantee of the promissory notes. The Unit found that Modipane's signature was neither forged, nor stuck on the document, although it only appeared on the back of the

guarantee. Mpumalanga Premier Ndaweni Mahlangu, Modipane and ANC secretary-general Kgalema Motlanthe expressed dissatisfaction at the reluctance of the Health Unit to pronounce the innocence of Modipane in the promissory notes inquiry. The ANC and Heath agreed a signature at the back of one of the promissory notes belonged to Modipane, but the ANC claimed it was fraudulently copied. Modipane has been accused by the suspended Parks Board CEO Alan Gray of signing the promissory notes guarantee for a loan of R145 million. Modipane has denied signing the document, knowing that it was for promissory notes. The loan was frozen after the matter of pledging Parks Board assets became known. The guarantee and promissory notes were pledged to the International Bank in the US. Failure to repay the money would have led to the Mpumalanga government being forced to pay the debt or risk losing the land and all Parks Board assets. In his "summary report" handed to Justice Minister Penuell

Maduna this week, Heath made no specific findings against Modipane other than that his signature was authentic. According to the report, Heath has called for further investigation relating to Modipane's signature on the guarantee document and a criminal court of law should consider Modipane's version that he was misled as to the contents of the documents. Heath found that the promissory notes and guarantee were "manufactured" at the Parks Board offices on computer. He has called for criminal prosecution for possible

fraud and misrepresentation for the issuing of the promissory notes. Heath said there was ample evidence that Board members of the Parks Board never gave authority for issuing the promissory notes and no authority was granted to pledge the Board's property. He said the guarantee created the impression that Parks Board CEO Alan Gray and his financial manager, N. Krugel, had been duly authorised to issue the promissory notes to financial institutions. At the centre of the ANC's attack on Heath was the manner in which

Modipane's signature on the guarantee was handled by Heath. They wanted him to completely exonerate Modipane on the following grounds:

- That when the guarantee was signed in Johannesburg on July 31, 1998, Modipane was attending a disciplinary hearing in Mpumalanga.
- That a week after he allegedly signed the guarantee for the R145 million loan, Modipane was taken to ousted premier Mathews Phosa where he was accused by Gray of obstructing the Parks Board in its bid to raise funds by re-

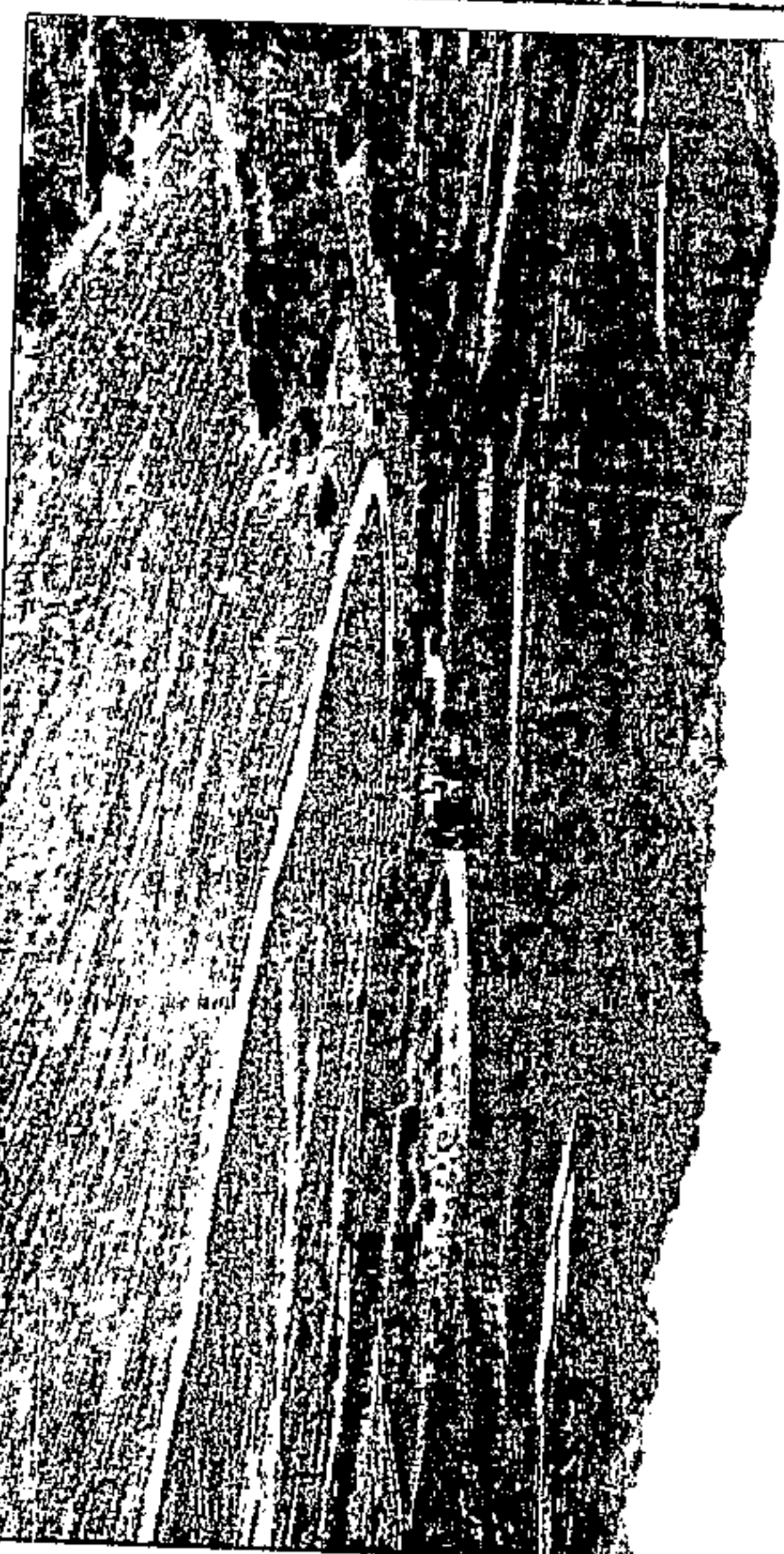
fusing to sign certain documents.

- That Modipane's signature was fraudulently used or "cut and stuck" on the document by the Parks Board.
- That Modipane's signature appeared on the back of the document and not on the front as with Gray's.

Heath Unit spokesman, Guy Rich, said traces of ink had been found, indicating that the signature was not struck on the document or copied from another document. He said the Unit only placed the facts on record, which is why it recommended further investigations.

PHOTOGRAPH BY ...





Heartland: the former Skipdad Wildflower Reserve near Kamieskroon, a key element in the Namaqualand National Park. During flower season the reserve becomes a colourful carpet of flowers.

Jewel adds lustre to nation's asset

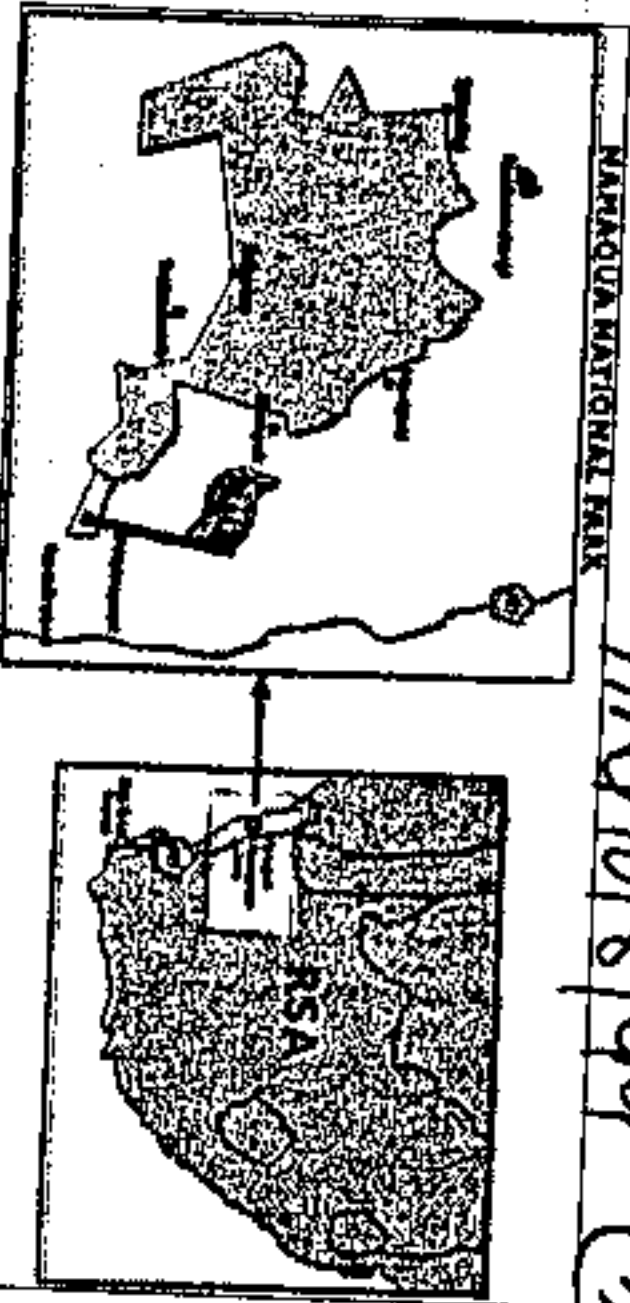
ENVIRONMENT WRITER

The new Namaqualand National Park is the "jewel of Namaqualand" with all the credentials needed to make it a successful conservation and tourism project, says Deputy Minister for Environmental Affairs Rejoyce Mabudafhasi.

In her address at the park's official opening last week, she pointed out that South Africa's 422 protected areas represent only about 6% of the country's surface area, compared to the internationally accepted norm of 10%.

"However, even this achievement should not lure us into a false sense of complacency as to our international obligations to biodiversity conservation," she said.

"If areas such as the Kruger National Park and the Kalahari Gemsbok National Park are removed from the calculation, South Africa scores an abysmal



Mapped out: the location of the new Namaqualand National Park

3.5% of its surface area as being protected.

"Furthermore, if its conservation effort is analysed against planning parameters such as representivity, pattern retention, ecosystem function and process, the picture becomes even grimmer.

"Currently, many of our protected areas do not achieve any significant conservation objectives when measured against the critical issues on an ecological time scale."

Excluding the new national park, Namaqualand's current protected area system was "grossly inadequate", Ms Mabudafhasi

—not only for preserving our biological diversity, but also promoting ecotourism in this part of the country."

Praising benefactors like Leslie Hill, the De Beers diamond mining company and the World Wide Fund for Nature - South Africa for helping to create the new park, Ms Mabudafhasi also paid special tribute to the people of Namaqualand for their role.

"For the rest of us South Africans it is our wish that this new national asset also becomes the pride and joy of our nation, like Table Mountain, the Kalahari and the Kruger National Park."

said. "It comprises only two state-proclaimed protected areas that together comprise 3.5% of the region. There's therefore a great need for other areas in Namaqualand, and indeed the whole of the Northern Cape, that must be identified for purposes of establishing national parks such as this one

Leslie Hill invests in a wealth of succulents

Benefactor funds Namaqua National Park

ARY 10/8/99 (56)

He's 90 years old and walks with crutches, but that doesn't stop Leslie Hill from the tireless pursuit of his real passion in life: South Africa's wealth of indigenous succulent plants.

And it's a passion that he matches with a financial generosity in the form of donations worth many millions of rands that has made him one of South Africa's greatest conservation benefactors - particularly for the preservation of plant and animal life in the ecological area known as the Succulent Karoo.

Known as a "biome", this biologically important area covers some 11 200km² of arid land in the west and south-west of South Africa and includes Namaqualand, the Little Karoo, the Worcester-Robertson Karoo, and the Tankwa Karoo further north.

Mr Hill has made numerous donations to support conservation efforts in the Succulent Karoo and elsewhere. In 1992, he endowed the Chair in Plant Conservation at the University of Cape Town which is the core of the university's Institute for Plant Conservation.

He also helped fund the conservatory (glasshouse) at Kirstenbosch; he donated properties to the World Wide Fund for Nature - South Africa (WWF-SA) for the Anyseberg nature reserve near Ladismith in the Little Karoo and the expansion of Addo Elephant National Park in the Eastern Cape; and his donations were used to prevent mining from spoiling the Goegap nature reserve east of Springbok in the Northern Cape.

Most recently, funds from the Leslie Hill Succulent Karoo Trust were used to acquire more than 45 000ha of property from the De Beers diamond mining company



JOHN YELD ENVIRONMENT WRITER

and this now forms the bulk of the new Namaqua National Park near Kamieskroon.

Although the actual amount was not revealed, it is believed to be well over R5-million.

The park, officially opened last week, is the first major reserve area in Namaqualand where the region's 4 000 plant species - some 69% of which occur naturally nowhere else on earth - can be formally protected.

Now, Mr Hill's huge donations have been given an international honour from WWF International, which has recognised his contributions as a "Gift to the Earth" in line with its global "The Living Planet Campaign".

Mr Hill is the first individual anywhere in the world to be honoured in this way, joining other nominees which include the Brazilian government for its efforts to conserve the rainforests.

Cape Town born and bred - he's a SACS old boy - and an accountant and financier by profession, Mr Hill shunned publicity until last week, when he agreed to being photographed at the opening of the new park and spoke briefly to journalists.

He explained that, after World War 2, he and other senior executives who had worked for British magnate A.O. Edwards had been given the opportunity of buying out his South African interests.

"We bought Grosvenor Motors



Conservation partners: from left, benefactor Leslie Hill, Deputy Minister for Environmental Affairs Rejoyce Mabudafhasi and De Beers chairman Nicky Oppenheimer

and floated it (as a company) in the late 1940s, and we did quite well. And we bought one or two other smaller things as well," he explained modestly.

Because of his interest in plants, he served on the boards of the Botanical Society at Kirstenbosch and of the National Botanic Gardens (as it was then). "And there I met Harry Hill, curator of the succulent division of Kirstenbosch, and I became very friendly with him," he said.

"He and I used to go on collecting trips to Namaqualand and Bushmanland and the Little Karoo. We would go out over long weekends and camp or stay in the Springbok Hotel, many times. And that explains my interest in Namaqualand and the Succulent Karoo."

Mr Hill, who became recognised as one of South Africa's leading succulent growers with a magnificent private collection, said he was "very

proud and honoured" to have been acknowledged by WWF, although he also confessed shyly: "I'd never heard of the award before."

WWF-SA chief executive Ian Macdonald paid tribute to Mr Hill, saying: "We salute him for his wisdom and concern, and we wish to thank him and all our other partners for helping bring this enormously important conservation initiative to fruition."

He said Mr Hill's donation in Namaqualand would have an important spin-off for another important conservation initiative: the proposed Vhembe-Dongola transfrontier conservation area between Northern Province, Botswana and Zimbabwe.

This was because De Beers had donated the bulk of the money paid to it by Mr Hill's trust for the Namaqualand properties to WWF-SA to assist in land purchases to form the core of the proposed peace park.

Saving the Orange Roughy to help the Patagonian toothfish

PD 11/8/99

MSH INC

SA trawlers are in hot water as the law of the sea protects a tasty morsel, writes Jean-Jacques Cornish

NO MATTER how bloodily their rugby giants settle their Tr-Nations differences, diplomats and conservationists from SA, Australia and New Zealand have already scored a significant, quiet victory this winter.

The immediate, albeit short-term, beneficiary of this success is an oily, unlovely, long-living, deep-dwelling fish that stretches the rugby analogy with its tough name of the Orange Roughy. That 40-cm, white-fleshed delicacy with an almost shell-like flavour, will now be allowed to spawn on the high seas off the South Tasman Rise. Only to be netted at some later stage, of course.

The envoys' triumph has a much longer-term significance for the countries of the East Antarctic Coastal States grouping, which includes SA, Australia and France.

They believe the precedent set by the affair on the high seas last month will have a positive impact on saving the Patagonian toothfish from over-exploitation. SA officials say it is the first time the conservation elements of the 1982 United Nations (UN) Law of the Sea Treaty have been so smoothly applied.

Furthermore, they notch up the protection of the Orange Roughy as a success for SA's Marine Living Resources Act, promulgated last year. It enabled Environmental Affairs and Tourism Minister Valli Moosa to respond quickly

and decisively.

The affair began when three Irvin and Johnson vessels began trawling for Orange Roughy in international seas off the South Tasman Rise last month.

Tim Reddell, general manager for trawling at I&J, said the 150 crew members on the fishing boats were mostly from historically disadvantaged sectors of SA society.

"These vessels and their crew were previously deployed on the Hake zone. The company's hake quotas have been reduced over the past years to enable the SA government to implement a policy of redistribution of quotas and allow new entrants into fishery."

To maintain full employment of the vessels and their crews, Reddell said, the company has in good faith been conducting exploratory fishing on the international high seas.

"All I&J vessels are managed in accordance with international best practices and comply to a stringent set of company conservation measures."

Reddell said the fishing operations commenced on the understanding that these fishing grounds were in international waters and outside the jurisdiction of any country.

Maybe so, said the Australian and New Zealand governments in daily notes to Moosa, but we have a management plan on this fish.

The Roughy lives up to 50 years and takes 25 years to mature, which makes its long-term prospects decidedly dicey if it is fished on its spawning ground.

The Australian and New Zealand governments realised this and agreed bilaterally to a moratorium on Roughy fishing from July last year. This has since been extended to February.

The I&J vessels, properly licensed by the SA authorities, were unaware of this agreement.

The Roughy is what fishermen call a straddling stock. While it occurs mostly in Australian and New Zealand waters — or exclusive economic zones, as they are known in terms of the Law of the Sea Treaty — it breeds on the high seas.

Conservation of such species is covered in the 1995 UN Straddling Stock Agreement which SA is expected to ratify after final approval by Parliament in the next session.

This agreement is an improvement to the treaty, a delicate balance of international measures designed to stop any country from exploiting marine resources in a manner that harms others.

In landlubber terms it is rather like preventing one country located at the head of a river from damming its waters to prevent those countries downstream from using it.

So while the I&J vessels were perfectly entitled in terms of international law to be fishing where they were,

Moosa knew that SA might easily find itself in a similar predicament with the Patagonian toothfish off the Prince Edward Islands or the highly migratory hake that move between SA and Namibian waters.

The Royal Australian Air Force kept tabs on the SA fishermen with its long-range Orion aircraft. At one stage, night vision equipment aboard the aircraft confirmed that the South Africans, who had undertaken to withdraw, had returned and were trawling in the dark.

Moosa pulled the plug by amending I&J's high-seas licence to stop them fishing on the South Tasman Rise.

"We could not be happier with the response of the SA authorities at every stage and at every level," said an Australian High Commission spokesman.

"They were very responsive and eager to learn what they could about taking this forward. It is in everyone's best interest to keep these lines of communication open and continue co-operating on the conservation of our marine resources."

Denzil Miller, senior specialist scientist at Marine and Coastal Management said this was the first time that a third country fishing on the high seas had become involved in an agreement made between two other countries.

"This has taught us that the Law of the Sea is a reality. We are going to have to be more circumspect in future."



Court action sought in Zonnekus debacle

MELANIE GOSLING
ENVIRONMENT WRITER

THE Blaauwberg Municipality has told him it's illegal, the provincial authorities have ordered him to stop, but the owner of the historic Zonnekus house on Woodbridge Island in Milnerton is carrying on bulldozing the beach and building a seawall.

Now Western Cape Environment MEC Glen Adams is seeking a High Court interdict to force Zonnekus owner Gary van der Merwe to stop.

Van der Merwe was not available for comment yesterday, but his lawyer, Rael Gootkin, said: "We've made proposals to the

provincial department and are waiting for their responses. If they choose to go the route of an interdict, we will vigorously oppose it."

Adams said yesterday: "Van der Merwe is in breach of his legal obligations. These violations are viewed in a very serious light and he must be stopped and made accountable for his conduct.

"The building works are at such a stage that the environmental damage cannot be reversed by restoring the removed sand.

"It has become apparent that a trend is emerging whereby landowners act in violation of their legal obligations to the environment, and then expect the authorities to accept their conduct. This

cannot be tolerated," Adams said.

A spokesperson for Blaauwberg Municipality said when permission had been granted for Woodbridge Island to be re-zoned for a housing scheme, the authorities stipulated that no building could take place on a 60m band around the perimeter of the island. This was intended to protect the vegetated sand dunes and help prevent erosion.

The seawall being built is in this 60m band.

Van der Merwe had also not done the legally required environmental impact assessment.

Adams said the Woodbridge Body Corporate had told his department in July this year that Van der Merwe intended building

an illegal seawall, which would have detrimental impact on the sensitive dune area.

The department wrote to Van der Merwe, telling him the building of the wall was unlawful.

Said Adams: "Van der Merwe chose to ignore the demands of the department and commenced building operations on Friday, August 6. A letter of demand was faxed to Van der Merwe on the same day requiring him to stop immediately. He chose to ignore this and building works continued over the weekend."

Zonnekus was built in 1929 by David Graaff, brother of the former United Party leader Sir de Villiers Graaff.

(56) eT12/8199

'Nerve centre' plan will help resolve conflict over new route, says Knysna engineer

ENTERTAINMENT WRITER

Knysna engineer and project manager Alan McVitty has come up with a novel idea for resolving anticipated conflict over the route of the proposed George-Knysna N2 upgraded road.

He says the extrapolated route was designed using only financial and engineering criteria, and that it ignored environmentally sensitive lake and wetland areas such as the Serpentine at Wilderness, Sedgefield's Swartvlei estuary and the Knysna River and its associated wetlands.

He wants to establish a non-government organisation or "nerve centre" where all constructive proposals for the new road can be discussed and analysed. In an attempt to find a common vision about an acceptable route for the road that will best serve the broader interests of the Garden Route community.

And he suggests that this new body, with branches in towns between George and Knysna, could be funded by local businesses who would be repaid when the expected



McVitty's N2 route (left) and above the White Bridge on the N2. He has worked on several road projects including a stint in Britain in the 1970s when he was responsible for determining the socio-economic costs of a freeway development.

Migraine vision: this is roughly the proposed 1970s route for the upgraded N2 freeway at the Wilderness National Park, but officials say errors of the past will not be repeated.

new toll road is established. "It will be a proper investment in the marketing of information, and it will be recoverable," he says.

Mr McVitty calls his proposal "Root". "I'm an educated professional and I've done my homework on this issue. I have a plan which can work," he says. "The 'No road' brigade is a thing of the past, and everyone will agree that a new road

with limited access is required to handle through traffic and open new routes for tourist development. This area is the new goldmine of the New South Africa. It's one thing to chirp to the media about the road and the reaction, but without a solution that reaction will be negative. It's a process to find a solution. If it's going to be a very positive can

the Knysna River and the N2 route. He says he is not a "greedier" and says he is prepared to invest money in his idea. Root will be established on a proper business basis, and will negotiate with the National Road Agency and the construction company building the road to find the best route, he says.

Anyone interested in Mr McVitty's proposal can contact him at (044) 385 0660.

Nuke ships rounding Cape steer clear of SA waters

ARL 13/8/99 (717)

JOHN YELD
ENTERTAINMENT WRITER

The two ships carrying nuclear fuel for power plants in Japan are rounding the Cape today, but are staying outside the country's 200 nautical mile (400km) exclusive economic zone and are far to the south.

This was confirmed by the SA Navy, which said it was not tracking the two vessels - the Pacific Pintail and the Pacific Teal - because they were so far out.

The ships are carrying about 450kg of MOX (mixed oxides of uranium and plutonium) fuel. SA Navy spokesman Glen Knox confirmed that a ship had been available to follow the two nuclear fuel carriers had they entered South African waters, as they are entitled to do under international maritime law.

"But we're not tracking them because they're a long way out, outside our exclusive economic zone," said Captain Knox.

The ships' passage around the Cape has prompted protests by a coalition of local environmental groups, who say the plutonium aboard the ships is classified by the International Atomic Agency as a "category 1" which could be "readily and swiftly" converted into a form which could be used to build up to 50 nuclear bombs.

The greenbacks behind greening

(56) 80 13/8/99

DR JOHN Ledger of the Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT) says he can pinpoint when SA companies began a mental turnaround. It was in 1989, at a hotel just outside Johannesburg. At the meeting were top SA businessmen, conservationists and a prominent German industrialist called Georg Winter.

Ledger recalls Winter talking about the reconstruction of Europe after the Second World War. Infrastructure was rebuilt, but no thought, in those days, was given to the environment. That was why European industries and governments are today spending billions trying to clean up polluted rivers and mitigate acid rain. Most of them cannot supply clean drinking water to their citizens.

It was cheaper by far, said Winter, to keep environmental damage to a minimum, or industries would have to foot huge bills in years to come.

It was also 10 years ago that overseas companies started asking questions about environmental auditing. Most SA companies had no idea what they were talking about.

Now, says Karin Ireton, head of the 10-year-old Industrial Environmental Forum (IEF), most SA companies have made remarkable strides in 10 years. Environmental management is incorporated into the way many companies are run. This is not for any warm fuzzy feelings, though. It just makes more business sense. Minimising water use, waste and energy also minimises costs. Things that may not have a price on them now, will cost money to rehabilitate if they are polluted.

Dr Ian Macdonald, director of the World Wildlife Fund SA (WWF-SA), thinks the start of the greening turnaround happened even earlier — in 1968 when Dr Anton Rupert of Rembrandt first motivated a branch of the WWF in SA.

Macdonald cites Rupert as being the first major SA industrialist to cross the green divide, and says many have followed him since. The WWF-SA trustee list looks like the who's who of top industry.

For the first time, in addition, many environmental organisations are starting to work together, co-operating and promoting each other, says Macdonald. This makes things easier for corporate donors, many of whom have been burnt by the politics of welfare, arts and culture and sport.

Some of that co-operation is courtesy of the Green Trust, the result of a symbiotic relationship between Nedbank and WWF-SA.

In 1989, business in SA began a change. Environmental auditing and impact assessments started terrifying managers. Julienne du Toit reports

Money from the bank's "green affinity" clients' bank transactions is skimmed off and given to the trust for dispersal to the most progressive, community-inclusive conservation projects.

MacDonald ascribes the rise in environmental awareness among companies to an increasing realisation that "we're all in this together. If we mess up, we have to live in it."

So he is pleased to report back, at WWF Geneva meetings, that WWF-SA brings in almost the most fundraising dollar to GDP in the world. The only one higher is WWF-Netherlands, because the proceeds of the national lottery are channelled through it.

It is one thing to donate money to a green cause, though. Do industries actually "green" themselves? The answer, at this stage, is: some, but not enough. There is still a lot of "greenwashing". The most conspicuous recent example was Sasol, which gives a lot of money to environmental causes, especially to birding.

BirdLife SA receives a lot of Sasol support. So BirdLife must have felt in a very awkward position when a totally new organisation, Save the Vaal Environment (Save), sprang up to save a bird-rich degraded wetland on the banks of the Vaal from the prospect of a Sasol opencast coal mine. BirdLife SA was strangely silent on the matter. Anyway, Save won. Duard Barnard, environmental lawyer, and the Save team forced Sasol and big business as a whole to take interested and affected parties seriously.

Ignoring such parties, as Sasol did, can be fatal for industrial projects. So can taking notice of them, but at least you get better press.

Take PPC, for example. A cement kiln burns at extremely high temperatures, and needs a lot of highly flammable fuel to keep it going. The possibility arose, two years ago, of using flammable hazardous waste as fuel, which would kill two birds with one stone: turn the hazardous waste inert within the clinker being heated in the oven, and get rid of it.

PPC launched one of the most transparent initiatives yet, backed by the Danish Co-operation for Environment and Development. Mark Drewell of PPC put his name on the line when he said that if there was one person who would be harmed by the toxic waste in-

neration, the project would not go ahead. In the end, it did not. Everything was so painfully and deliberately transparent it became clear there were too many unanswered questions about dioxin emissions. So PPC said it would not go ahead because the plant was too old and some technical questions could not be satisfactorily solved. For that, PPC won considerable goodwill, respect and a reputation for integrity.

The interesting thing is that some years before, PPC had been one of those companies merely writing out "green cheques". And yet, true to a pattern Ledger has seen a number of times, PPC progressed, in spirit at least, from being a green sponsor to a firm trying to espouse green principles.

Ledger has more examples. The EWT has many sponsors, but only two strategic partnerships. They are with the Airports Company SA (ACSA) and electricity supplier Eskom. Both of them have a problem with birds. ACSA's worst nightmare is that an aircraft accident happens at one of its airports because of birds. Eskom has vultures, eagles and other large birds flying into its power lines, disrupting supply and dying. But neither company wants to kill birds unnecessarily. No one wants to be responsible for the demise of endangered birds.

So they are working with the EWT to minimise risk and environmental damage. For EWT, and for the companies, this is a win-win solution. But why Ledger sees the Eskom partnership as special is because, as a result of donations to the environment, companies gradually became drawn in to being green themselves.

Ireton says SA is at the "top end" of the world in environmental commitment. But, as she says, there are still too many companies, mostly small to medium-sized, that do not know what environmental impact means, as if they live and work on different planets. Either that, or they are just giving environment lip service.

Even so, of the top 200 SA companies, a KPMG/Industrial Environmental Forum survey showed that around half had some kind of environmental policy. Of those, 84% agreed that environmental issues would increase in importance for them. Seen on a global scale, this is impressive.

Rumours fuel old fears for Knysna road

ARG 13/8/99

(56)

A construction company is believed to be putting in an unsolicited bid for an upgraded toll section of the N2 freeway between George and Knysna.

Rumours to this effect are causing some concern to environmentalists, because of the 1970s' proposal for an upgraded N2 that cut a swathe through some of the Garden Route's most important lakes and wetlands, including sections of two national parks.

In spite of a massive public outcry – dismissed by the then National Party government as the work of political agitators – this environmentally destructive route was surveyed and proclaimed, and property was expropriated and paid for by the State.

But the National Road Agency has dismissed any fears, emphasising that it is "very mindful of past legacies" and that it will act strictly in accordance with South Africa's tough new environmental legislation.

"It is no longer an oppressive regime that exists in South Africa," said agency chief executive Nazir Alli.

"The track record of the new democratic government will show that we have worked differently on every road since January 1995 – you don't go riding roughshod over these things any longer."

The Knysna town council has confirmed that it is holding a special meeting on Monday with Department of Transport and National Road Agency officials.

The Cape Argus has been told that representatives of the construction company, Group Five, will be attending the meeting, and it is believed that the company will put in an offer to build a toll section of the N2 between George and Knysna.

Asked to comment, a company spokesman referred all questions to the National Road Agency, which he said had arranged the meeting.

Mr Alli described the meeting as "normal" and said a whole list of issues would be discussed, including the long-disputed question of by-passing Knysna to alleviate chronic traffic congestion in the town.

Another issue was the informal settlements that had been established in

JOHN
YELD



ENVIRONMENT WRITER

the expropriated road reserve in the plateau area north of Knysna.

"We have opened this meeting to various people who are interested in helping us find a solution," he said.

Asked whether a toll-road between George and Knysna was on the agenda, Mr Alli said that such a proposal "may be a solution".

Senior officials of South African National Parks do not appear overly concerned at the prospect of a new N2, also emphasising that the public will no longer sanction environmentally destructive projects and that sound environmental legislation is in place.

Paul Sieben, manager of the Wilderness National Park, which would be most drastically affected if the surveyed route was ever constructed, said all planning in the area took into account an upgraded N2 proposal.

"We have been told officially that the proposed N2 road is still on the cards, but I've not heard anything recently," he said this week.

"The public feeling in this area is very different today to what it was in the 1970s – if you think there was an outcry then, it would be even louder now. I'm not saying it's impossible, but it's very unlikely that the public would swallow this big pill."

Peet Joubert, manager of the Knysna National Lake Area, joked that he would be the last person to be notified of any road proposal.

But he added: "With the environmental legislation that is in place at the moment, there's no way anybody is going to simply push a road through – it will have to go through an intensive screening process first, and people have woken up to the fact that they have a voice.

"And although a road is important, it will have to be weighed up against other factors, such as the national park and so on," he said.

JANET HEARD

GREENPEACE activist Mike Townsley is equally at home in a suit yelling at parliamentarians or wearing an orange survival jacket in an inflatable dinghy out at sea.

He and fellow campaigner Femke Bartels have spent the past week in South Africa protesting, debating, challenging and providing scientific information on the hazards of nuclear shipments.

The two campaigners reject the dated stereotype of scruffy dressed and sandaled green activists.

Armed with actuarial maths and political science degrees, Townsley and Bartels have sophisticated knowledge at their fingertips. They have turned rabble-rousing into a profession.

Their polished performance has paid off. Far from being dismissed as "a lunatic fringe", said the visiting activists, they had been welcomed by politicians, government ministers and maritime safety officials in South Africa.

"We have been taken seriously and that is encouraging," said Townsley, who insisted that Greenpeace's outrage at the dangers of nuclear shipments could not be dismissed as unsubstantiated hysterics and hype.

The two activists warned that there was no time for complacency now that the news had broken that the two British ships, which sparked the latest protests, rounded the Cape coast without incident this week.

The Pacific Teal and the Pintail, which are transporting 450kg of mixed oxides of uranium and plutonium fuel from France to Japan, are now on their way towards Australia and New Zealand.

"This was just the first trip. We are about to see a massive escalation around the Cape coast. More ships are on their way. In fact about 10 shipments a year are planned over the next decade," warned Townsley, 34.

Their mission has been to "cut through the veil of secrecy, to provide the information the industry won't release because it hopes to conduct all operations in secret", said Townsley.

It was Greenpeace that alerted South Africa to the route of the two shipments a month ago. "They would have left (Europe)

Green, but far from naive

Activists on the trail of nuclear shipments

In secret. In response to our efforts they did announce a route — two days after leaving. I call that dictation, not consultation."

The activists have also attempted to counter "the sick public relations that emanates from the nuclear shipping industry".

For instance, Greenpeace refused to accept the argument that the shipments were safe.

"If they were safe, why is there so much secrecy? Together, they are carrying the equivalent of 60 nuclear warheads of plutonium, the ships have 13 heavily armed private security officers on each vessel."

"How can that qualify as an innocent passage?" Townsley said.

For the past three years Townsley has worked for Greenpeace International as one of six full-time nuclear campaigners and his controversial work has seen him banned and jailed.

Bartels, 28, who is based in Amsterdam, does not travel as extensively as Townsley. She works full-time as an energy campaigner for Greenpeace Netherlands.

Bartels, who holds a masters in political science and environmental management, said she would not be satisfied doing any other work.

"I know it may sound naive, but my mission is to make the world a better place."

Since the ships left Europe over three weeks ago, the campaigners have tried to track their passage. They had hoped to leave the Cape armed with a photograph of the ships but were unsuccessful even after chartering a private plane for four hours

ST (CM) 15/8/99



TEAM GREEN: Activists Femke Bartels and Mike Townsley
Picture: JACK LESTRADE

over South African waters. However, that would have been "the icing on the cake", said Townsley.

They had succeeded in their main aim — to create heightened

awareness. "We, together with local green groups, have created an awareness that in months and years will bear fruit. We are in this for the long term, we don't expect things to happen

overnight." Ultimately, Greenpeace is pushing for anti-nuclear countries to join together to halt all shipments.

In the meantime the two activists have tried to persuade the

South African authorities to demand information from the nuclear industry, to implement an emergency plan to limit the dangers in the event of an accident and to investigate options of

compensation and liability. "At the moment, their plan consists of crossing their fingers and closing their eyes in the hope that nothing goes wrong," said Townsley.

Jackass penguins face extinction

DASSEN ISLAND — SA's Jackass penguin population has recovered in the five years since it was almost wiped out by an oil spill, but its future is far from bright.

"The prediction would be it could become extinct in the wild within 50 years at the current rate of decrease," Tony Williams, senior scientist at the Cape Nature Conservation, said at the nature reserve island 10km north of Cape Town.

Dassen Island and Robben Island are home to about a fifth of the world population of Jackass, or African, penguins. In June 1994 about 2 500 tons of heavy fuel oil from the sunken bulk ore carrier Apollo Sea set off one of the world's biggest seabird rescues.

In the next few weeks an army of conservation staff, volunteers and soldiers retrieved 10 000 penguins covered in oil which poisoned them and made it impossible for them to swim or eat. The crisis, at the height of the breeding season, orphaned many hundreds of penguin chicks.

Rejecting advice from northern hemisphere colleagues that trying to save oiled seabirds was a waste of time, the rescuers sent most of the penguins to the SA National Foundation for the Conservation of Coastal Birds for cleaning.

Many died in transit, but birds were returned to the wild and have begun breeding again. Dassen Island conservation manager Anton Wolfaardt says the foundation's rehabilitation efforts were a "resounding success ... the most successful in the world".

"By June last year, 70% of the penguins that were saved, banded and released had been seen back in the wild."

A survey in June found 5 000 more breeding pairs compared with fewer than the 10 000 before the oil spill, but Williams, who is also the foundation's chairman, warns against being misled by these numbers. "The trend in numbers of birds is down. At the turn of the century we estimate there were a million birds on this island."

The major threat to the little Jackass penguins is competition with humans for food: pilchards and anchovies that are heavily fished. There has been a noticeable rise in the numbers of Cape fur seals, which plunder fledgling chicks as they take to sea, and continual small oil spills from numerous sources such as sinkings or ships illegally flushing their tanks at sea. "We get 50 to 60 oiled birds a year even with no reported spills," says Wolfaardt.

The foundation has never charged for its work, but needs money. According to Williams, it is losing R30 000 a month and "living off its capital. It is in danger of having to close its doors in two years if things continue as they are".

Williams says the 30-year-old organisation is thinking of charging conservation organisations the R600 or so it costs to clean each oiled bird brought in. "In the past 30 years we have handled 40 000 birds," he says. — Reuter.

(56) AD 16/8/99

'Nuclear shipments threat to Cape tourism'

JOHN YELD
ENVIRONMENT REPORTER

(56) ARG 16/6/99

Shipping hazardous nuclear material around the Cape is undesirable and can threaten the region's important tourism and fishing industries, even if there is no nuclear contamination.

This is the warning from Western Cape environment minister Glen Adams, following the disclosure that two ships carrying 450kg of plutonium and uranium fuel for Japan's power plants rounded the Cape last week.

The Pacific Teal and the Pacific Pintail reportedly stayed outside South Africa's 200 nautical mile exclusive economic zone, in line with a request from the South African government.

But the shipment still attracted protests by local environmentalists and the international environmental organisation Greenpeace.

After the ships had rounded the Cape, Mr Adams said he had been approached by diplomats from the three countries involved — Britain, France and Japan — and representatives of the companies responsible for the nuclear material to discuss the

issue. He had also spoken to Greenpeace representatives.

"Nations that consume nuclear fuel should limit the risk of nuclear contamination in a manner that does not endanger any other nation without their prior consent," said Mr Adams.

"While comprehensive safety standards have been employed (in this shipment), the residual risk of disaster is still being imposed on us.

"The precautionary principle has not been complied with insofar as a credible and independent environmental impact assessment, open to scientific scrutiny, has not been made available."

Mr Adams said his ministry was concerned that the Western Cape was being placed at risk. "And, in particular, that in the event of a disaster, our marine resources and tourist industries would be most adversely affected, whether or not there is nuclear contamination of the environment.

"Because the shipments are expected to continue for the foreseeable future, the risk incurred at no benefit to us, will be a recurring risk. This is a risk that our province does not want to carry," said Mr Adams.



Time to act inclusively

Conrad Sidogo - senior media manager and member of the Western Cape Nature Conservation Board

Taking care of our environment is an inclusive responsibility - not a "whites only" business. I really believe that all or most South Africans would want to play a positive role in protecting our green heritage, but up to now it has been driven purely by our socio-economic situation.

Most people of colour have been in a survival mode, in which case concerns about the environment are not even a remote priority. People who are hungry or looking for money will kill animals and birds indiscriminately. They will chop down a tree for firewood without even knowing that it's a stinkwood, for example.

Under these conditions, whites moved into a "caretaker" position on behalf of all South Africans. Those who played leading roles should be acknowledged for what they did, but in the new spirit, greater efforts should be made to act inclusively.

I think we are already experiencing a greater awareness (of environmental issues) among black people. Yes, improved lifestyles are playing a role, but educational programmes in schools and more general campaigns have also contributed.

It should also be a major focus of organisations like Cape Nature Conservation to make intensive educational and awareness programmes a high priority to conserve and protect in the interests of everybody - by everybody!

Quality of life a priority

Andy Gubb - manager of the Western Cape branch of the Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa

I'm concerned that there is confusion between the terms "environment" and "conservation". The "environment" is a very broad term which encompasses both "green" and "brown" issues.

Green issues (nature conservation) especially are probably still largely of concern to whites, although this is part of the complex legacy of apartheid.

There is a strong correlation between socio-economic and racial groupings in our society. In addition, the Group Areas Act, by creating not only racial but also geographical apartheid, has resulted in many of the green development proposals issues being in white backyards. Geographical apartheid will start disappearing only once there

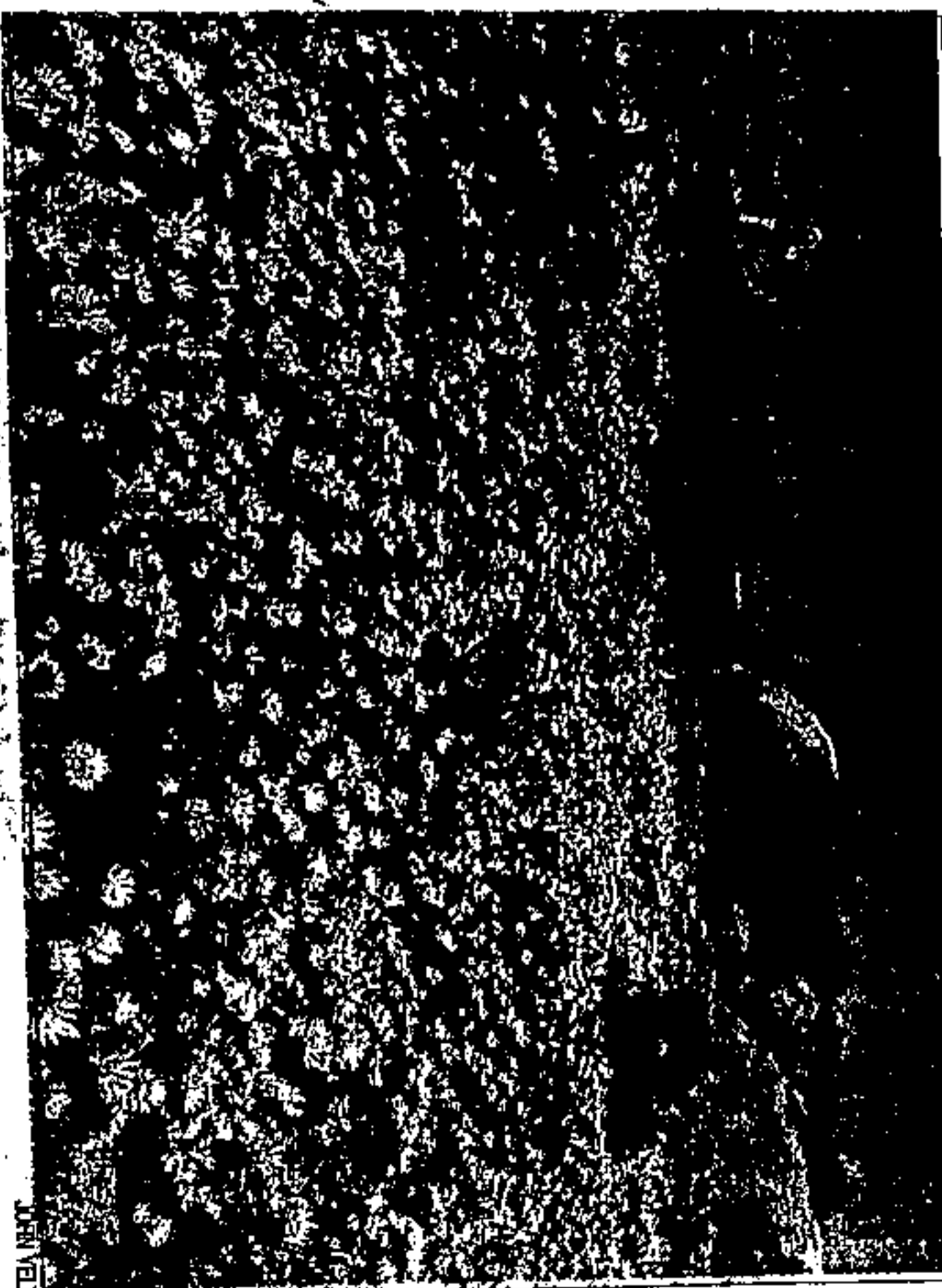
is economic empowerment of many more blacks.

The environment is definitely not just a "white" issue, as evidenced by activities of non-government organisations and community-based organisations in all sectors of society.

It is a pity that the wealth of wisdom and foresight contained in the World Conservation Union's "Caring for the Earth" strategy seems to have been lost along the way.

One of its strongest messages is that an acceptable quality of human life is a prerequisite to developing sustainable lifestyles and an environmental ethic.

The fact that "environment" has always been treated as somewhat of a Cinderella portfolio at the political level testifies to the fact that decision-makers have not truly grasped the significance of integrating the environment in all significant national policies.



A conflict of colour: environmental issues can be 'brown', like this degraded shack settlement on the Cape Flats, or 'green', as in the conservation of natural features like spring flowers in Namaqualand.

So are we all green now?

Critics say whites ignore big picture on the environment

An accusation often levelled during the 'struggle years' - and particularly in the latter half of the 1980s, as the struggle intensified and absorbed whole communities - was that environmental issues were mostly a 'white' concern with little relevance to the lives of the vast majority of South Africans. This was particularly so when the issues involved nature conservation and the preservation of plant and animal species in protected areas such as nature reserves and national parks. And despite the new political dispensation and the enactment of significant new environmental legislation in the 1990s, it is an accusation that is still heard - most recently during protests by animal rights activists

against the treatment of the young Tull elephants. Such criticism also often extends to coverage of environmental issues by the traditional media, with critics suggesting that issues are covered in a way which is of more interest and relevance to 'white' readers. They say the media features 'green' or nature conservation issues and ignores the less sexy 'brown' issues of environmental health or the more complicated policy and legislation issues which are of more relevance to most South Africans. Is such criticism fair and justified? Environment writer JOHN YELD, right, asked a range of people for their views.



(61) APRIL 16/18/1994

Address poverty first

Dr Guy Preston - environmental scientist and National Leader Working for Water Programme, Department of Water Affairs and Forestry

The "environment" as in the Tuli elephants? Or as in HIV/AIDS? Angola and Kosovo?

"Environment" encompasses social, economic, political, physical and ecological components. We cannot address a single aspect - say, protecting rare and endangered species - without addressing all of the components collectively.

One example: we see over-fed, resource-consumptive animal-rights activists sanctimoniously protesting against the sustainable harvesting of species in Africa through hunting.

oblivious of the fact that they ultimately promote the continued destruction of the poor, and the destruction of the "hairy and cuddly" species they purport to protect.

We will not address the ecological concerns of "environmentalists" unless we address poverty, unemployment, warlords, sexism, racism and other manifestations of the lack of social justice.

We all have hobby-horses. For me, human population growth is an environmental crisis, because it compounds the decadence, inefficiency and especially inequity in our use of resources.

Environment sustainability is about equity and efficiency. For people of all colours.

Awareness on the rise

Ed February - archaeologist, climber and member of the Cape Peninsula National Park committee

One cannot look at the environment as simply a "white" concern, and I disagree with people who feel this is a race issue. In fact, environmental concerns are linked to socio-economic issues.

Any society that has leisure hours will begin to spend those hours in creative ways. Traditionally, this has involved playing ball games, but more recently there's been a tendency to spend more time outdoors, and pressure on all the hiking trails and nature reserves around Cape Town has increased enormously.

And whereas previously "non-whites" weren't allowed in many of these areas, they are now.

Also, there's an ever-increasing middle class that is subject to normal middle-class

pressures and hence also the need to relax in some way. Utilising the outdoors is just one of those ways, and it's from this that more and more people of all colours are becoming more environmentally aware.

So environmental concerns were never exclusively a "white thing" - it's just that whites had more money and more leisure time and a wider range of places to go to in the outdoors than we did.

It's only through education, by various non-government groups and by various town authorities, that there will be an increasing environmental awareness.

We've only just had our second democratic elections, we have a whole nation to educate and feed, and to provide with jobs and houses.

It's only once these concerns have been taken care of that the environment will become an issue for most people. It's happening, but give it time.

Media has a role to play

Dr Rozanne Wright - Manager, Community-Based Conservation, World Wide Fund for Nature - South Africa (WWF-SA)

Most people's perceptions about "the environment" were (and are largely still) confined to the pristine, natural world.

Although there's been a shift in perception among certain sectors - not necessarily along racial lines - to encompass the total environment (the social, cultural, economic, political, biophysical and geophysical components of individual existence), the broader public is still clinging to the narrow view.

The media has contributed to this. It is more "sexy" to report on species - the feathery, fluffy and furry - and on "tourist" conservation in terms of preserving areas, than to highlight the role of humans.

This alienates the majority of people from environmental issues, since the environment is seen as "out there", rather than as part of

their immediate surroundings. For the majority of South Africans, many "green" issues highlighted in the media are neither relevant nor a priority.

Focusing on the severity of the urban environmental crisis, where profound socio-economic imbalances exist at a structural level, with the political economy as a backdrop.

I believe that the media can do a lot to change people's perceptions as to what constitutes the environment, and to make environmental matters more relevant.

Furthermore, "celebrating" local initiatives, irrespective of their size or magnitude, might encourage more people to participate in environmental issues.

I know it's easier said than done, but the environment page in the Cape Argus can incorporate more community-based environmental issues and initiatives.

While some readers might view these as trivial, there are people who think differently.

All down to resources

Marlene Laros - environmental scientist and member of the Western Cape Nature Conservation Board

Environment is about resources, and resources are of relevance to everyone. Environmental management is about the management of resources.

Critically, environmental management is about providing for basic human needs and protecting the resources on which sustained delivery depends.

Some would argue that the persistence of the incredible biodiversity and the current state of the southern African environment, despite the political economies imposed by colonial powers, show Africans to be the most remarkable managers of the environment.

One cannot dispute the fact that negative perceptions of environ-

ment were created by forced removals and dispossession in the name of conservation. It is, however, accepted that environmental management is about sustaining life-support systems and not only about looking after the "Big Five".

The bulk of the work remains to be done in changing how we use life-sustaining resources, such as land, water and energy.

The consumption patterns per capita are lower and the value applied to these resources is higher in black communities in South Africa. Environmental risks and health hazards are most often borne by black South Africans.

I don't see how these issues can be seen as irrelevant to black South Africans. Perhaps this is rather the perception and life experience of most environmental managers in the country?

Have-nots are excluded

Lella Mohamed - conservation ecologist of the Wildlife and Environment Society's Western Cape branch

There is a significant, growing, proportion of young, black (Coloured, African, Indian) people who are interested in a broader and more comprehensive bundle of issues relating to the environment, from bio-genetic engineering to permaculture.

They are typically middle-class and educated. Black professionals are becoming aware of the range of environmental issues.

But most black South Africans still do not feel ownership of our natural heritage due to the extended period of alienation from it. Pure conservation issues in this sense means little to them (us). Only where the environment intersects with development issues, health or human or cultural

rights issues, do they interest the broader spectrum of people.

Due to the circumstances most black people find themselves in, the tendency to worry more about putting food on the table than about, for example, saving whales, is justified.

In the end it's maybe not a white-black issue, but of the "haves" versus the "have-nots". Due to the legacy of apartheid, blacks make up the majority of the "have-nots".

In my opinion, the mass media does alienate the "have-nots" from participating in environmental issues because of its myopic reporting of "soft" conservation, aesthetic and "ah cute" related environmental issues. The "hard" or "brown" issues of environmental health and planning, as well as new debates on the benefits of the environment to South African society, seldom feature.

Govt may ban plastic baags, impose deposits on all bottles

MELANIE GOSLING
ENVIRONMENT WRITER

ENVIRONMENT Affairs and Tourism Minister Vaiti Moosa may ban plastic bags and make it compulsory for all bottles to carry a deposit so that they are returned for recycling.

This emerged yesterday during a briefing of MPs when Moosa outlined his department's new structures and activities. He said he would take a hard line against pollution and would throw resources and expertise at developing effective strategies for waste management and maintaining air quality.

His department has acquired R70 million from the government's poverty relief fund to run a waste management project, he said.

"We need to look for long-term, sustainable solutions. It's not good enough for companies to produce paper and plastic and bottles, and not bother with the garbage these become afterwards.

"I've been considering compelling deposits to be levied on every bottle produced so that there is an incentive to return them.

"And what about the accursed plastic bag? I have given serious consideration to restricting the use of plastic bags,

which have virtually become our national flowers — either banning their use completely, or severely restricting their use and that of other forms of plastic also," Moosa said.

One of his key challenges, he said, was to contribute to the government's overarching goal of creating "a better life for all". He stressed that his department would not concern itself only with "green" issues, but would tackle the "brown" issues of waste management, air quality and pollution.

"Brown issues deal largely with the living environment of us all — the pollution which people have to live in. The

dirt, grime and filth in our urban areas is a matter of great concern. It's a great shame that children have to walk past filthy heaps of rubbish on their way to school," Moosa said.

Another challenge is to change the perception that his department is an obstacle to development. He aims to facilitate sustainable development through job creation and better co-operation between natural resource management and tourism development.

In promoting the tourism sector of his department, Moosa said he hoped to create a new post of deputy director-general for tourism.

"I regard tourism as a national priority because as an industry it can grow faster than any other industry (and) absorb more unemployed than any other. The World Tourism and Travel Organisation is of the view that South Africa is among the five fastest-growing destinations in the world. We have a tremendous responsibility to spare no effort in building the industry."

While there was the expertise and creativity to boost tourism in this country, were also "huge gaps", he said. A major drawback is "the lack of a coherent international marketing strategy". Moosa commented, "I was speaking

to a German tourism organisation which said most people don't know about South Africa, and those that do only hear about it by word of mouth."

He said there is also a pressing need to increase the skills base in the tourism industry and to boost the number of staff in his department's tourism division, which employs only 50 people out of a total of 1 400 staffers.

One of his moves will be to restrict Soutour to its core function of marketing South Africa Internationally, and to strip it of its other duties of grading hotels and registering tour guides. These functions may be taken over by the

provinces or private companies. Moving to fishing, Moosa said he aimed to move away from the "crisis management" which had characterised the fishing quota system each year.

Contracts should be predictable, medium- to long-term and allocated long before the fishing seasons began. "This year we're not allocating them long before the season starts, but hopefully in future years we'll be able to get there."

Moosa said he would investigate turning the weather bureau into an agency, from which citizens would get their weather reports free, but foreigners would have to pay for them.

ET 17/8/99 (S)

Disposal firm turns heat on medical waste

New scheme to halt dumping

DI CAELERS
HEALTH WRITER
ARRG 17/8/99

It is 1100°C inside "Lucifer", the incinerator that reduces dangerous needles, blades and scalpels to lumps of metal that won't be hurting any children.

The heat is fierce - it's impossible to stand close by without a safety mask when the incinerator door is open - indicating that the hazardous waste that is fed in will be reduced to harmless dust and ashes.

The issue of disposal of medical waste, which includes not only the "sharps" such as needles and scalpels, but also body fluids and human tissue, has been in the spotlight since Cape Flats children began finding bags of used syringes and bloody blades illegally dumped in open fields.

Incidents in Mitchell's Plain and Delft late last year resulted in 40 children undergoing AIDS tests after playing with dumped medical waste.

Last month a child was stabbed with a syringe when youngsters found medical waste dumped in a Manenberg field next to the Nyanaga Junction shopping centre.

Now a new company, which is targeting "small users" such as general practitioners, dentists, veterinarians, beauty salons and even tattoo artists, has entered the market in which waste processor EnviroServ previously had a monopoly.

For just R70 a month, doctors can dispose of their medical waste - without moving out of their offices.

"There's absolutely no excuse in the world for anyone to be



WAYNE CONRADE

Hot as hell: operations supervisor Sean van der Schyff and the medical waste incinerator 'Lucifer'

dumping medical waste that children end up playing with," says Philip Malandrinos, managing director of BCL Medical Waste Management.

Operating from the Medical Research Council site in Delft, the company delivers containers, collects them and disposes of the contents, courtesy of "Lucifer", its superhot incinerator. City by-laws governing waste

were amended to include "hazardous medical waste" in 1994, and offences carry a maximum fine of R1 000. But still people dump waste.

As Mr Malandrinos points out, this may often not be the doctor's fault entirely. Many unscrupulous operators dump medical waste with general waste.

"Dissemination of information is vital to get the small pro-

ducer of medical waste to ensure they know what's happening to their waste when it leaves their offices or clinics," he says.

The company is servicing institutions such as Louis Leipoldt Hospital, Mitchell's Plain Medical Centre, the University of the Western Cape's dental faculty and the Eerste River Medical Centre, as well as about 230 dental and medical practices.

Emergency plans still a disaster, warns lawyer

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Four years after the AECI sulphur fire killed three people and wiped out vineyards from the Strand to Stellenbosch, emergency plans were still a disaster, says a lawyer who gave evidence at the fire inquiry.

Vincent Saldanha, a legal resources attorney, who provided evidence to the Desai Commission of Inquiry, which investigated the original sulphur fire, is worried.

"If a similar accident happens near Khayelitsha, the Macassar incident will look like second degree," he said.

Cape Metropolitan protection

services head Wynand Wessels admitted there were problems with their emergency capabilities.

According to the report on the sulphur blaze on December 16, 1995, there were "a number of deficiencies" discovered in the response of the Cape Town authorities to the incident. This included rescue services, police, hospitals and the civil defence sector.

Hospitals didn't know how to treat patients who had been exposed to sulphur dioxide, there was no evacuation plan, and a lack of planned accommodation and evacuation buses caused many residents to leave the area on the back of bakkies. They had to stay in a shop-

ping mall, where they could only stay overnight

The authorities also failed to communicate with the evacuees, and hungry residents went home while Macassar was still considered hazardous.

The Desai Commission, chaired by Mr Justice Seraj Desai, recommended in its report that "civil defence statutory planning - an emergency plan in case of disasters - and control provisions be subjected to a stringent and comprehensive review".

Now, two years after the report was released, Mr Saldanha, an attorney at the Legal Resource Centre who acted on behalf of the Macassar

disaster action committee, was adamant that nothing had changed since then.

"The South African authorities don't seem to take the accident in Macassar seriously," he added.

Mr Saldanha said not one of the recommendations the Desai Commission had been acted upon.

"Cape Town metropolitan authorities should have a thorough emergency response system. We need to know where hazardous materials are used in factories, which factories use what materials, which communities could be affected by them, and if these communities are part of an emergency plan.

"The city does not know any of

this and an industrial accident with hazardous materials could very well happen again some day," he said.

Mr Wessels said a risk analyses map was currently being drawn up with the necessary information, although it would probably take a long time to complete.

During a 1997 simulation of a nuclear melt-down in Koeberg, it was found that emergency plans were a disaster, as virtually everything went wrong. When the report on the failed simulation was made public Cape Metropolitan Council regional officer for disaster management, Geoff Lasky said: "This meant the whole strategy for managing the disaster has to be changed."

(56) ART 17/8/99

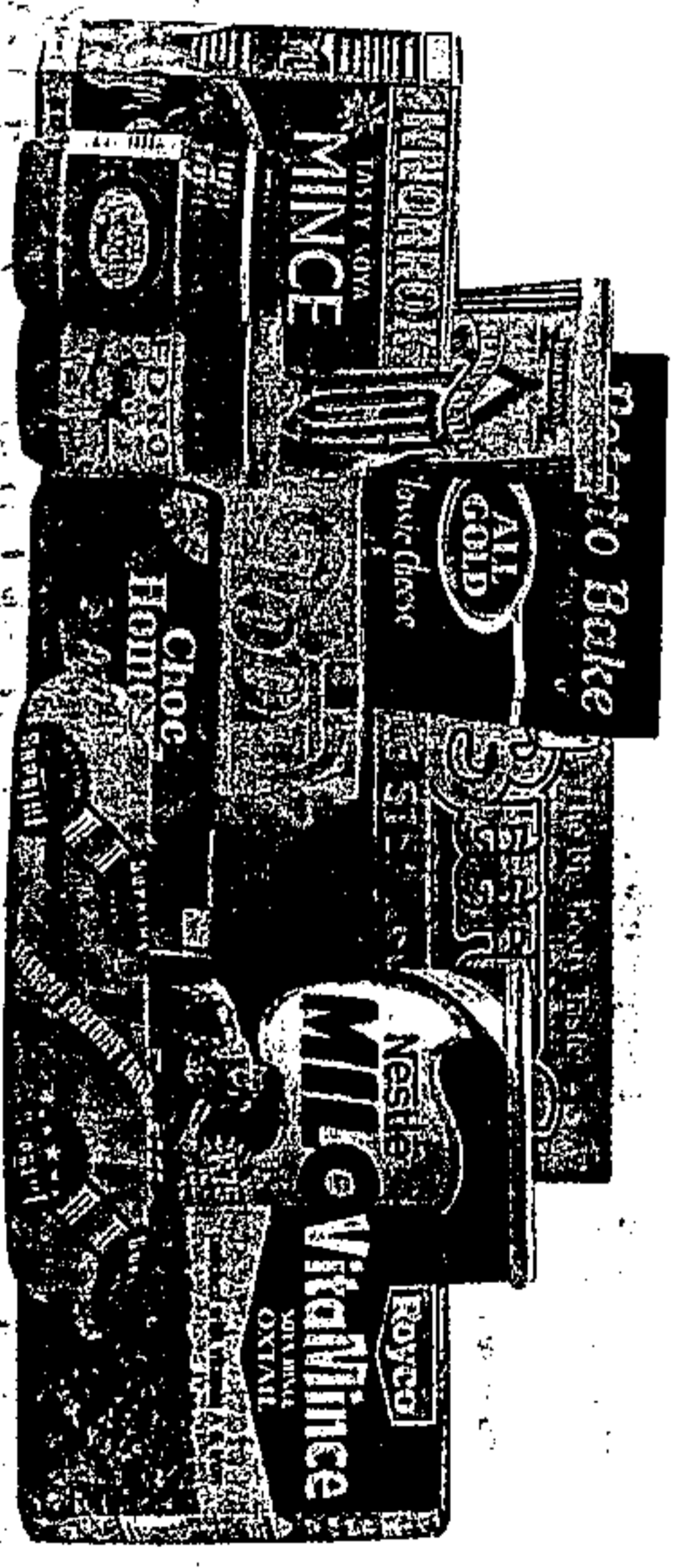
No protection against GE foods

A REPORT on the implications of genetically engineered foods stuns South African legislators for the "ominous omission" of laws to protect consumers and the "outrageous" placing of responsibility on users for environmental problems caused. Environment Writer **MELANIE GOSLING** reports.

SOUTH AFRICANS have become guinea-pigs in the genetically engineered food revolution because the government has been slack about establishing effective controls on the potentially risky technology. This emerged from a hard-hitting report released yesterday which critically reviewed South African legislation on genetic engineering, or GE.

One of the more astounding findings is that the law holds farmers and consumers liable for any environmental harm that GE may cause. Another is that protection against the possible risks posed by GE food to human health is "ominously missing" from our laws. In the light of scientific uncertainty about new technology and the "enormity" of the risks involved, the report stuns this omission. The report was commissioned by Blotwatch, a non-government environ-

DO YOU EAT THESE? If so, you have probably eaten genetically engineered soybean, South Africa imports 450 000 tons of soya cake from the US annually, of which about half is genetically engineered. Soya is used in a variety of processed foods, but consumers have no way of knowing if it is GE soya or not.



PICTURE: MUKUHD SARODIEN

mental organisation. It was compiled by Mitham Mayer, a lawyer and member of the South African delegation that attended international negotiations on genetic engineering this year at which unsuccessful attempts were made to establish a biosafety protocol to control cross-border movement of GE crops. The report states: "Of all the provisions in the Genetically Modified Organisms Act, those dealing with liability are perhaps the most outrageous. It places the responsibility on users for taking measures to avoid any adverse impact on the environment which may arise from the use of genetically engineered organisms. These provisions not only defy logic but undermine the basic tenets of justice. How can any law place liability for environmental harm arising from a potentially dangerous and new technology on farmers and consumers?"

The report said it appeared that the government is not ready to protect the environment from the potential risks of GE, yet commercial planting of GE crops is well under way, as are numerous

food trials around the country. South Africa is growing commercial crops of GE maize and cotton and experimental crops of GE strawberries, potatoes, eucalyptus, apples and soya.

The report says that because of the current lack of scientific knowledge concerning the effects of certain engineered genes once they are released into the environment, it is not always possible to anticipate long-term hazards or to quantify the harm. "The magnitude and scope of the consequences to human and animal health, and to ecosystems, may be very serious and the effects irreversible, even if the probability of risk may be low."

The report urges the government to put stringent mechanisms in place to:

- Evaluate the probability and seriousness of the harm GE may cause.
- Regulate the importation, marketing, experimentation and release into the environment of GE crops and their products.

The report pointed out that the European Union has placed a three-year moratorium on new approvals of GE food and crops while it drafts more stringent legislation due to come into effect in 2002.

In comparison, the Department of Agriculture has drafted a document for public debate on agriculture policy in

GE food report (56)

From Page 1 of 20/8/99

South Africa, but has left out the entire question of genetic engineering. "There has been no public debate on the implications of GE on agriculture or food, nor any national initiative to investigate the costs and benefits of GE," the report said.

- 1. Its key recommendations are:
- The introduction of a national policy on GE which addresses controversial issues, particularly regarding human health, rural economies, ecosystems and consumer choice.
- That the gross shortcomings in the Genetically Modified Organisms Act be addressed.
- That the Minister of Environment Affairs urgently takes interim measures to protect the environment until satisfactory legislation is in place.

One of the biggest criticisms of GE is that no one is able to say what the costs to health and the environment will be in the long-term. GE technology transfers genes between unrelated species — for instance, taking an anti-freeze gene from a fish and putting it into a strawberry to make it frost-resistant. The new organism can have new combinations of genes and therefore new characteristics not found in nature.

Another fear is that GE products may produce allergies. GE soya from the US is used in many processed foods on local shelves, from ice cream and chocolate to biscuits and cold meats.

There is no law that requires the labelling of food with GE products.

Plan to protect wildlife and help people living next to animals

COLIN MCCLELLAND

Southern African states this week approved a conservation of wildlife and law enforcement protocol which aims to protect wildlife and help people cope with living next to beasts, especially along border areas where interstate co-operation is needed.

The protocol, signed at the annual summit of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in Maputo, aims to move away from policing against poaching and to build better relations between pri-

vaté companies, states and local inhabitants. "It's about the sustainable use of wildlife, notably in trans-frontier conservation areas," said Malawian Ben Mbeve, director of the Inland Fisheries, Forestry and Wildlife sector of SADC. "The policing policy has not really benefited us, so we want people to see the benefits that conservation can mean to them," said Mr. Mbeve. "No government can police the use or over-exploitation of wildlife. But what you can do is promote the concept of co-management build the capacity to meet with companies and join hands."

However, he said policing would not be abandoned. Large game reserve projects, such as the huge Elephant Coast concessions in southern Mozambique, have been criticised for a lack of sensitivity to the rights of local populations when large animals are added to the area. Locals claim the animals destroy their crops. Game reserve investors view animal kills as poaching. Locals call it hunting just as they have always done. "Damage to crops by large animals is a grave concern, but we maintain that tourism can make up for that," said Elephant Coast project director Howard Geach. "We never said it was going to be easier. Relationships and trust have to be forged. The question of living around big animals is nothing new. But we've never had the intention of moving anyone. We've got to align the communities with the conservation aims and keep the Mozam-

bican government in the loop." Antonio Reina, director of the Endangered Wildlife Trust in Maputo, says the interests of locals are sometimes steamrollered by the state and private investors. "The policy in Mozambique land law (which does not allow freehold ownership) is that communities are entitled to the land if people can prove they have been living there for 15 years or more. "The big problem is the practical side of the question. Usually, because of a lack of capacity and his-

tory, sometimes the state and private sector override the interests of the community." Mr. Reina is active in just the sort of project the protocol hopes to encourage, at Zamave Park in Inhambane province. With funding from Cape Town's Peace Park Foundation, he is assessing the needs of the people, encouraging private sector investment and ensuring that communities have the capacity to join in the park's management and business opportunities. - Foreign Service

RAJ 21/8/99

(76) (279A)

Sea life isn't at risk, says safety officer

ENVIRONMENT REPORTER

Lieutenant Riaan Jacobs, range safety officer during the test-firing operation at Simon's Town harbour during the past week, is adamant that whales and seals are not at risk when he allows the weapon under his control to be fired.

"We're doing our utmost best to safeguard them and to prevent any incidents," he said during a Cape Argus visit last week.

Lieutenant Jacobs explained that the target - a mock Exocet missile mounted on a pole 4m above the water - was 850m away from the wall in the direction of the Roman Rock lighthouse.

The shells fired from the 76mm OTO Melara gun were fused to detonate at the "missile".

The shrapnel landed in the sea 200-300m beyond that.

If any shell failed to detonate at the target, it would explode when striking the

surface of the water at a range of about two kilometres. But because the ammunition consisted only of test rounds, which didn't contain high explosives, such an explosion would be limited, he added.

Before authorising any test-firing, he had to be satisfied that there was clear visibility of at least 4km from the "bridge" behind the gun in the direction of the target and another 3.5km either side, said Lieutenant Jacobs.

Two lookouts were stationed on the bridge with binoculars to keep watch for any sea life or for small craft or aircraft that could enter the area.

They were also in constant contact with air traffic control at Cape Town airport.

"We have to worry about people as well," he said.

Before firing started, a Namacurra harbour protection vessel was sent out to inspect the impact point and a large area of the sea around it.

During the firing, this vessel lay off

nearby Arc Rock, where its crew also kept a close watch for approaching whales or vessels.

"If we have any reason to think there may be whales on the other side, I send a second Namacurra out on the northern side of the range," Lieutenant Jacobs said.

"And I can also put a guy up on Red Hill, so we have eight extra pairs of eyes to check."

The first whale of the test-firing operation was spotted on Wednesday when it was an estimated 8km away.

"We monitored it and when it got close to the range, we called off the shooting," said Lieutenant Jacobs.

"It stayed in the vicinity and wouldn't leave, and so we lost about four hours."

"We've been shooting in excess of 15 years from the wall (the "T-wall" at the entrance to the harbour) and we've never had an incident involving a whale.

"They're in much more danger from ships."

ARL 23/56

Moosa gets

thumbs-up on

plastics ban

But 'there's lots of work to do'
ARC 24/8/99 (52)

JOHN YELD
ENVIRONMENT WRITER

Environmental Affairs Minister Valli Moosa says he has been overwhelmed by the "enormous expressions of support" for his stated intention to rid the country of the scourge of plastic pollution.

However, he is also concerned his department has to do its "homework" before making any regulations, such as the possible banning of plastic shopping bags.

Speaking at an informal briefing for journalists in his office in Cape Town yesterday, Mr Moosa said he was treating this issue seriously.

"I would like to see the plastic bag as we know it, not being used in this country... there is no doubt that something can be done about this."

But Mr Moosa has already been warned by veteran conservationist Nan Rice that he faces an uphill battle, and that preventing plastic pollution is not as simple as merely banning plastic bags.

Ms Rice, secretary of the Dolphin Action and Protection Group, was reacting to Mr Moosa's remarks to Parliament's environmental affairs and tourism portfolio committee last week, where he first suggested a possible ban on plastic shopping bags.

Ms Rice told Mr Moosa in a letter that "... you will come up against enormous resistance from both the Packaging Council of South Africa

and the Plastics Federation.

"Industry has maintained all along that legislation is not acceptable, that they have introduced all kinds of modifications and environmental education programmes, they fund 'Keep South Africa Beautiful' and other clean-up projects, and they are just as concerned about environmental cleanliness as every-one else."

Ms Rice said the industry and major users had done a significant amount to combat the country's enormous litter problem.

"It's not the plastic but litterers who are the main problem. Maybe reducing the amount of bags would help, but paper is definitely not an alternative, and you will still have litter. If you ban plastic bags, one of the biggest considerations is the number of jobs that will be lost in the industry."

Mr Moosa said he had not yet seen Ms Rice's letter, and he confirmed the Plastics Federation had already approached his department in response to his remarks.

One possible option being considered by his department was to replace plastic shopping bags with a more durable version, such as a string bag, which shoppers would take with them on each outing.

"I certainly don't think it's going to be a simple issue, but the fact that it's complicated and complex doesn't put fear into me. I've tackled a lot of complex issues in my time."

'TECHNO-FOODS NEEDED FOR SURVIVAL'

Yield-boosted plants 'vital'

ET 24/8/99 (56)

AT A PUBLIC lecture, Stellenbosch University's Frikkie Botha explained the risks of not accepting genetically engineered plants. **MELANIE GOSLING** reports.

THE director of plant biotechnology at the University of Stellenbosch, Frikkie Botha, says genetic engineering (GE) of plants is not a luxury but a necessity, as no crop in the world was showing an increased yield.

Speaking at the Royal Society of South Africa's public lecture yesterday, Botha said there had been an explosion in agricultural production since the "green revolution" of the 1940s, which had produced chemicals to control agricultural pests and had developed high-yielding hybrids.

"But since the 1970s no crop in the world has shown an increased yield," he said.

One of the reasons was the high amount of fertilisers used. The more plants were exposed to fertilisers, the less efficient they became.

He said it was not an option to increase the amount of fertilisers on the world's crops, as these were already having a negative effect on the environment, particularly high amounts of nitrogen and phosphates.

"The Great Barrier Reef is under threat because of an over-supply of fertilisers in the soil, which are affecting the coral," he said.

As the population in the developed world grew, so agricultural production would need to increase its yield. One way to increase crop yield was by genetic engineering, he said.

Botha said there were 290 million hectares of land world-wide under agriculture. By 2050, population growth would mean that the area of cultivated land needed to feed the world would increase to 725 million hectares.

"But most productive land in the world is already under cultivation. Destroying the wilderness areas for agriculture is not an option, so we have to develop new agricultural techniques to deal with this problem, and only genetic engineering has the potential to succeed," Botha said.

He said public fears about GE were mostly unfounded; for instance, that GE genes could

"jump" into the natural environment. "Do we see the sweetness of agricultural tomatoes in their wild relatives? No we don't. Yet they have been breeding sweet tomatoes for centuries.

"And I have never seen a nice, red, sweet wild melon. They're all yellow and they're all bitter. Yet they are the same species as the cultivated watermelon that we all eat," he said.

He conceded that there was a risk that humans might develop antibiotic resistance from eating GE products, but said the risk of antibiotic resistance from feed additives to livestock was greater.

"You can't buy any eggs without a very high dose of antibiotics. GE is not bringing in any new antibiotics that consumers have not already been exposed to," Botha said.

Moosa's team to study GE law criticisms

MELANIE GOSLING
ENVIRONMENT WRITER

THE Minister of Environment Affairs and Tourism Valli Moosa, is to ask his department to respond to the hard-hitting Blowatch report criticising the government for its ineffectual legislation on genetically engineered (GE) foods and crops.

The legislation does not provide safeguards for consumers and the environment.

The report, released last week, called on Moosa to slap a moratorium on new commercial releases

of GE crops until legislation governing the new technology had been tightened up.

At a press briefing yesterday, Moosa said departmental officials were in Nairobi discussing GE technology with other African countries in preparation for international negotiations in Vienna next month.

The discussions are intended to thrash out an international protocol for the cross-border movement of GE organisms and products.

"At international level there has been little agreement between developing and developed countries on this question," Moosa said. "We want to take a position that as far as possible, is in common with the other African countries, as many ecosystems go across international boundaries.

"But this doesn't mean we can't have our own regulations in the interim. "It is a matter I will have to look at more closely. "I will be asking my department to respond to that (call for an interim moratorium). This department will be most interested and will probably be the lead department in the matter."

No fishy soya in our fishpaste products, says Premier Fishing

ENVIRONMENT WRITER

PREMIER Fishing has reacted to a photograph published in the Cape Times last week showing foods which contained soya, and have said their products contain no genetically engineered (GE) crops.

The photograph of common foodstuffs which contained soya was used to illustrate that con-

sumers have no way of knowing whether a product contains GE crops or not, as there are no labelling requirements in South Africa forcing producers to do so.

In response, Premier Fishing said yesterday its fishpaste brands, Redro and Anchovette contained less than 0.5% of soya, which was not imported from the US.

More than 50% of soya cake imported from the US contains GE soya, some of which is used in a variety of processed foods.

Premier marketing director Kevin Patel said soya for both fish spreads was imported from Israel and Germany. Both suppliers had been instructed to buy only unmodified soya, Patel said. In response to a Blowatch

report, which said SA was growing experimental crops of GE strawberries, potatoes, soya and apples, the Delicious Fruit Producers' Trust said in a statement that this was "erroneous information".

The Trust said the Agricultural Research Council's Infruitec-Nietvoorbij used no genetic engineering techniques when they developed new apple cultivars.

Moosa pledges to tackle 'brown problems' fouling SA's urban environment

JHM YEU
ENHANCING WRITER

"Brown" environmental issues, such as air pollution and waste management, will enjoy a higher priority in future, promises Environmental Affairs and Tourism Minister Valli Moosa.

Mr Moosa said during a media briefing this week that many of South Africa's urban residential areas were affected by air pollution and dumped waste and filth.

"We think it (brown issues) needs more emphasis than it has had in the past, because it impacts on the immediate environment of millions and millions of people.

"We want to work on the assumption that South Africans want to live in a cleaner, better environment."

Although waste removal was the function of local authorities, this had to be merged into a long-term, sustainable waste management strategy being developed by his department.

The proposed ban on plastic bags was one of a broad range of issues being considered under the strategy.

Another was recycling at waste disposal sites by private entrepreneurs who would employ people to sort through the rubbish, as practised at a site in Johannesburg.

"Can we provide incentives for people to go into that sort of business?" Mr Moosa asked.

Turning to tourism, he said he was convinced there was "tremendous potential" for growth. The country was among the world's top five tourism growth markets, and the tourism branch of his 1 400-strong department would have to be strengthened significantly.

"And we will have to build partnerships between the state and the private sector to maximise the resource, and marketing will have to have much more attention."

Partnerships would include "outsourcing" such facilities as restaurants in national parks, about which there had been several complaints.

"It's quite clear that nature conservation officers are not best suited to catering," he quipped.

Mr Moosa predicted that the proposed Greater Addo Elephant National Park near Port Elizabeth, which would include several additional natural areas such as coastal dunes, would become a top "Big Five" wildlife destination.

Another development was a "massive" joint initiative with Swaziland and Mozambique to eliminate malaria from the corridor linking the three countries, for the benefit of tourists and local communities.

"Malaria has been one of the negatives (in this area). The technology does exist to eliminate malaria, and there's no reason why we should not do that," he said.

South Africa had to be marketed and promoted as an "all-year-round" tourist destination.

Adventure tourism, such as white-water rafting, and cultural tourism were other areas that could be developed.

(56)

Missionaries see tourism as their saviour

Wupperthal entrepreneurs invite 4x4 enthusiasts to help them preserve pristine environment

MURRAY WILLIAMS
STAFF REPORTER

"This is real life!" whoops our guide, zigzagging down a perilously steep track into a beautiful, plunging valley where the mountain air is nothing short of breathtaking.

Our hosts? The little Moravian mission station community of Wupperthal.

Almost 130 years since Afrikaans writer Louis Leipoldt's father founded the Moravian mission station, the community is using its amphitheatre of towering crags and peaks to preserve its pristine, tranquil existence.

Today, the church still owns the 36 000ha that the 3 000-strong community calls home. Wupperthal comprises the mission town, where 500 people live, and 12 small outpost settlements nestled in neighbouring valleys, where the rest live.

The community is governed, not by a local municipal council, but by the church's opsienersraad, or overseers' council headed by the Wupperthal dominee - one of four in the province - the other three being at Elin near Bredasdorp, Witwaters and Goedverwag. The four communities are watched over by the Vereniging van Opsienersraads in Cape Town.

For decades, Wupperthal residents have been employed at the tiny town's veldskoek factory, school, little post office, two stores and by the church.

But many remain subsistence farmers and their children have been forced to leave the area for the bigger towns in search of work.

The two new 4x4 trails were the brainchild of the Western Cape Tourism Board's development manager, Jurgens Schoeman. The routes cost R54 000 to build, funded by interest-free loans from Lanoc, a local rural development agency.

From Wupperthal, 75km from Clan William, the trails wind up into a world of rugged mountains and plateaus, presenting spectacular views as far as the eye can see, with barely a hint of civilisation. Adventurers are offered a choice



Safe haven: the rocks that sheltered shepherds and their flocks for centuries



Hard going: the trail is a three- to four-star route for experienced drivers only



At the edge: the route descends at a terrifying 45-degree angle into the gorge



The Cape's mountain kingdom: local community tourism officer Nolaze Salomo shows off the unparalleled majestic views

ROD WALKER

of two routes between 14km and 49km long - the latter offering parties an overnight camp site in a sheltered valley, surrounded by low hills, boasting a braai boma, flush toilets and hot-water showers.

Most of the routes follow old farm tracks, but more than a fifth of the way is over new roads, built on the advice of off-road experts from the 4x4 Club of South Africa and Toyota. More than 20 local men were recruited to work on the construction of the routes, and five of them remain employed to keep the tracks in shape.

The routes pass through rivers, crosses plains, scales ridges - the ever-present skyline alive with rock formations that defy belief in their wild contours and colours, and for

which the Cedarberg area is famed. The tracks pass a handful of picturesque, primitive shepherds' winter camps with Bushman paintings adorning the rocks over livestock kraals with decades, if not centuries, of hardened sheep dung.

Crowning the area is the looming, white-capped Steenkop. Wupperthal is just 100km as the crow flies from Sutherland, and at night the skies glitter.

Wupperthal community tourism officer Nolaze Salomo said that since the routes were opened in October last year, more than 300 4x4s had used them at a standard rate of R120 a vehicle. Every cent goes into community coffers to lay out new hiking trails and build new overnight huts and guest houses.

Wupperthal has at present just two self-catering guest cottages, a camp site and a delightful restaurant in the home and birthplace of Dr Leipoldt.

Alongside it is a small curio shop - which the tourism board plans to fill with new products crafted by locals to supplement their incomes, creating new jobs. The area also has massive potential for abseiling, paragliding and tractor "flower tours". The area, which lies next to the famous Bidouw Valley, is widely known as one of Namaqualand's most colourful.

Two members of the community have been trained and are qualified Satoru-registered, specialist guides. Their services are on hire for R50 a day, and enrich tourists' visits

with an insider's knowledge of local custom, lore and the countryside.

"It's one of our great success stories," says Mr Schoeman. "The community is very advantaged, but it takes time for it to realise how precious its culture is - to build pride."

It's not just about tourism development, but, critically, about "responsible tourism".

"We don't want to disturb the community's unbelievably precious culture," says Mr Schoeman.

"This is a real wilderness experience, while the whole area is a living museum," he says.

The tourism authorities and the community together eventually plan to offer accommodation at Wupperthal's scenic outlying rural settlements.

Smoke from burning tyres pumps dioxins into air

MELANIE GOSLING
ENVIRONMENT WRITER

THE uncontrolled burning of scrap vehicle tyres around Cape Town is pumping toxins into the air, including cancer-causing dioxins and pollutants which can cause genetic mutations and birth defects.

Black smoke from the tyres, set alight by people who recover and sell the handful of scrap metal left behind after burning, is 13 000 times more toxic than emissions from a coal-fired power plant, according to research done by the US Environmental Protection

Agency. The pollutants disperse over long distances, meaning Capetonians are exposed to them beyond the spot where the tyres were burned.

The liquids and solids left behind after the tyres have been burnt can pollute the soil, surface water and ground water, and it's possible that the pollutants can settle on pasture, food crops and in water, and accumulate in animal tissues, including meat, fish and eggs.

Humans, at the top of the food chain, are the ultimate reservoirs for these pollutants. Although burning tyres is ille-

gal, the authorities seem powerless to stamp out the practice, which is particularly widespread in Cape Town's poorer areas where recovering the scrap metal in the tyres is a way of earning cash.

Residents in Phillippi say some tyre-burning is run as "well organised operations", like the one next to the city council's cleansing branch in Phillippi where large stockpiles of tyres are kept and burned periodically. The metal that is left behind is sold to a nearby scrap dealer, they say.

Now some residents have had enough, and through the Legal Resources Centre, have called on

the authorities to take action.

Angela Andrews, from the Legal Resources Centre, has written to the city council on behalf of the South African National Civics Association, the Mitchell's Plain RDP Forum and the Environmental Justice Networking Forum, outlining the health risks of uncontrolled tyre-burning and calling for a meeting to discuss how to deal with the issue.

"This has a much wider effect on Cape Town than people realise. Dioxins are known to cause cancer from very small amounts. "In Europe and the US the public know all about dioxins and are

scared of them. Here they're being boiled up right under our noses and no one seems to worry much," Andrews said.

Hans Linde, head of the Cape Metropolitan Council's air pollution control, said yesterday: "We're very, very concerned about the tyre-burning problem, and we're trying our utmost to get a more environmentally-friendly way of disposing of scrap tyres. We've been pushing government and they've started a process, but it's not been as rapid as we would have liked."

Linde said one of the problems of policing tyre burning was trying

to get landowners to control tyres coming on to their land. It is illegal to dump tyres anywhere except at a hazardous waste disposal site.

"In the informal areas we have 14 or 15 landowners and we've tried to get them to control tyres on their land, but no one is accepting responsibility," he said.

He said a committee had been formed under the Department of Environment Affairs to look at acceptable disposal of tyres. One proposal was to set a levy on tyres, which the consumer would pay on purchase, and which would be used to finance an environmentally acceptable method of disposal.

SA will soon know what it is eating

Louise Cook (76) 99 2618199
and Sapa-AFP (76) 99 2618199

THE Chamber of Baking says it will "do whatever it takes" to ensure that the labelling of genetically modified food in SA is done satisfactorily.

Chamber GM Peter Cowme said its members strongly support the principle that the consumer is served with all the necessary information about the product to make informed decisions.

This follows a special food industry meeting called by the health department this week to generate proposals on future labelling by law of foodstuffs that contain genetically modified organisms.

Very little genetically engineered food is on sale in SA. No genetically modified imports of fresh fruit and vegetables are available, but it is understood that some modified soy products have been imported from the US. Yellow maize has also been imported for use in animal feed and 2% of the current maize crop is planted with genetically modified seed.

Health department director of food control Thes van der Venter will use proposals from the meeting as a basis for government's future policy on labelling.

Meanwhile, a major European bank has advised leading investors to sell shares in top companies developing genetically modified organisms because of their negative image, the Guardian newspaper reported this week.

In a series of reports on the development of the technology, Germany's Deutsche Bank warned that the "growing negative image" among consumers was causing problems for food groups, such as Monsanto and Novartis, the paper said.

"We note that Monsanto has spent more than \$1.5m to persuade English consumers of the rectitude of their position but, alas, to no avail," the report said.

According to the Guardian, since the reports were circulated to thousands of the world's largest institutional investors, shares in the companies named have fallen, despite rising markets. The first report, published on May 21, entitled Genetically Modified Organisms Are Dead, said: "We predict that genetically modified organisms, once perceived as a bull case for this sector, will now be perceived as a pariah."

The latest report, out last month under the name Ag Biotech: Thanks, But No Thanks, asks: "What food manufacturer will 'take a bullet' for genetically modified corn in the face of such controversy?"

Food or foul? Bio-battle is joined

Genetically modified organisms can spur food production, but some are wary, writes Louise Cook

WHAT are the chances that you will sprout odd growths after savouring a plump red tomato? Or that, if you munch the wrong kingklip, you will give birth to ... a fish?

Such questions may become more common after this week, when SA became the latest country to be swept up in the storm over biotechnology and genetically modified organisms in food.

In Europe, where consumers are known for fussiness over food, genetically modified foodstuffs on supermarket shelves have long been a bone of contention. Laws have been passed to force food companies to clearly label all engineered products.

Locally, however, the question is whether the same standards should apply in a country like SA — and the rest of Africa for that matter — where masses of people go hungry every day.

Proponents of the technology say it has huge benefits for the emerging farmer sector in SA because it would save costs on having to buy pesticides and herbicides to protect crops.

Genetically engineered food results when specific genes are artificially removed or introduced into another organism to boost a certain trait in a plant.

Genes from different species can be used to achieve a required result — for instance, a gene that confers disease resistance to a crop can be taken from any other organism.

"This is where the novelty and the power of the technique come in," says Cape Town University microbiologist Jennifer Thomson. "This is not to imply that we are capable of creating monsters in the laboratory. It is possible that the introduction of any new technology can have harmful effects and this could also be true of genetically modified organisms."

"One of the most important problems that could arise would be if a herbicide-resistant plant was able to pollinate a weedy relative."

The tone of Thomson's assessment of the possible dangers of the technology is a far cry from that heard at one of the first demonstrations against genetically modified food held at the health department in Pretoria this week.

The Safe Food Coalition — affiliated to another organisation known as the Natural Law Forum — braved the cold behind signs that told unsuspecting passers-by in no uncertain terms that disaster was about to strike. The group distributed pamphlets that linked genetically modified fare to cancer, deaths and pollution of food and water.

"We are here today to increase pub-



Members of the Safe Food Coalition stage a protest outside the health department in Pretoria earlier this week to show their opposition to genetically modified foods.

Picture: TREVOR SAMSON

lic awareness of the seriousness of the issues at stake regarding the extremely controversial genetic engineering technology now being applied to food pro-

duction and agriculture," a pamphlet distributed by the group said.

It stated that genetically modified foodstuffs are already in local shops

and farmers' fields, although few South Africans know it. "Few are aware that these foods pose new and unpredictable risks for both human health and the environment."

The group called for a moratorium on all imports and applications of genetic technology in food production and farming that has not yet been scrutinised by a board of independent scientists. "Government is clearly not ready to protect our health and the environment from the potential risks of genetic engineering," the group said.

However, any impact it hoped to make would have to be touched up with a firmer scientific base, as Safe Food Coalition spokesman Angus Durran conceded at the protest that there was no proof of any harmful toxins in the engineered food.

The coalition's criticism that government was not ready to deal with the new technology was dismissed by several parties connected to the food sector.

The health department's director of food control was not available for comment, but Thomson, backed by SA National Seed Organisation GM Wynand van der Walt, said government had been monitoring food technology for several years.

In 1997 Parliament approved the Genetically Modified Organisms Act, which is now being implemented.

A policy regarding labelling on SA supermarket shelves has not been finalised. This week the health department held a meeting with interested parties to prepare the way for legislation on the issue. The meeting included consumer group representatives, but the coalition — like the public at large — was barred from attendance.

"I feel it would be necessary to label only products to which a gene has been added," biochemical firm ProBio director Jocelyn Webster said after the meeting. "The cost of labelling is one of the issues that came out in the meeting."

According to Thomson, most scientists believe the risks associated with biotechnology in food are largely hypothetical, but agree that caution should prevail and extensive tests should be done to ensure the safety of the engineered food.

Thomson says the other side of the coin is that classical breeding has on a number of occasions resulted in food with toxic properties. "It is important to take cognisance of consumer concern and scientists will do well to ensure that safety issues are thoroughly tested before any engineered food is sent to the market," she said.

Call for ban on 'illegal' GM crops

Environmentalists say South Africa urgently needs a policy on the use of genetically modified crops to prevent damage to the environment.

Fiona Macleod reports

South Africa is growing a variety of genetically modified (GM) crops, despite the fact that no one really knows what impact they will have on the environment.

Environmentalists are calling for a halt to the release of GM crops, which are created by altering gene structures. There is evidence they may have a serious effect on other plant species. Concerns have also been expressed about their impact on human and animal health.

Environmental impact assessments - tests which by law have to be conducted for the most mundane industrial processes, like building a road - are not conducted when GM crops are planted out in the open.

Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism Valli Moosa is being called upon to provide clarity on the application of regulations governing environmental impact assessments with regard to GM crops.

Environmentalists say the government should impose a moratorium on new commercial GM crops until there is legal certainty and a national policy in place to protect the environment.

South African farmers are already growing GM cotton seeds and two different types of GM maize. GM potatoes, strawberries, soya beans and sugar cane have been grown in the open during field trials.

"The problem is, we don't know what the impacts of these crops are going to be," says Lynne Broomhall, a researcher at the IUCN-South Africa (World Conservation Union).

"They may be positive - bird species have increased in some areas of the United States where GM crops are grown - or they may be negative.

"Pollen spreading from GM crops to other plants is a worry. So is the movement of toxins through the ecosystem, and the impact on non-target species by herbicides in GM crops."

These concerns came to the fore in the US recently when it was shown that pollen spreading from GM corn could be killing off monarch butterflies, already under threat from other ecological pressures.

South African legal consultant Mariam Mayet this week completed a hard-hitting



Blessing or curse? Concerns about the impact of genetic engineering on the environment have led a number of states around the world to place a ban on the cultivation of genetically modified crops like cotton. PHOTOGRAPH: AP

review of South African legislation governing GM crops and foodstuffs. Commissioned by Biowatch South Africa, the review highlights a number of glaring anomalies and loopholes in the system.

One is that it is the responsibility of the companies who are selling GM crops to monitor their impacts when they are planted in the open. Inspections may be done by government officials, but this is observed more in the breach than in reality.

Another anomaly is that the way the law stands at the moment, if environmental damage is caused by GM crops, farmers and consumers can be held responsible for the damage and for cleaning up the environment.

"It appears as if the government is not yet ready to protect the environment from the potential risks arising from genetic engineering," Mayet reports.

The concern is that huge corporates may exploit these legal loopholes, concen-

trating on profits rather than health and environmental impacts.

Monsanto, a multinational company operating in South Africa, has been stopped from selling its seeds in other countries as a result of similar concerns.

Environmentalists in India late last year halted the sale of the same GM cotton crop that is being grown in South Africa. They accused Monsanto of conducting 40 field trials of GM cotton in five states without the correct permission or safety procedures.

After government hearings, the commercial growing of the GM cotton continued, but at least one state has banned any further field trials.

A judge in Brazil recently suspended commercial cultivation and marketing of GM soya beans until full environmental impact studies have been completed.

"The questions raised by genetic engineering will not be resolved by the laws of the

market alone; rather they will be resolved by rigorous respect for the legislation which protects life, as established by our laws and Constitution," the Brazilian judge ruled.

Wally Green, who works in the research and development department of Monsanto's South African branch, says the company is making every effort to work within the legislative framework governing GM crops.

Potential environmental impacts are rigorously assessed in laboratories before the crops are released into the open, he adds.

But these are not enough of a safeguard for concerned environmentalists.

"The risk assessments are often pretty extensive, but they are based on international studies and on desk reviews.

"We need empirical, independent tests done out in the open, taking into account the South African ecology," says Broomhall.

Frankenstein's spectre, PAGE 20

Blue cranes poisoned in ECape

(nb) MHC 20-26/89
Peter Dickson

The blue crane, South Africa's already critically endangered national bird, has become the latest victim of poverty in the Eastern Cape.

Through a combination of wars, drought and famine, Southern Africa's blue crane population has rapidly dwindled from 100 000 to 20 000 in Southern Africa over the past 15 years, placing it near the top of the endangered species list.

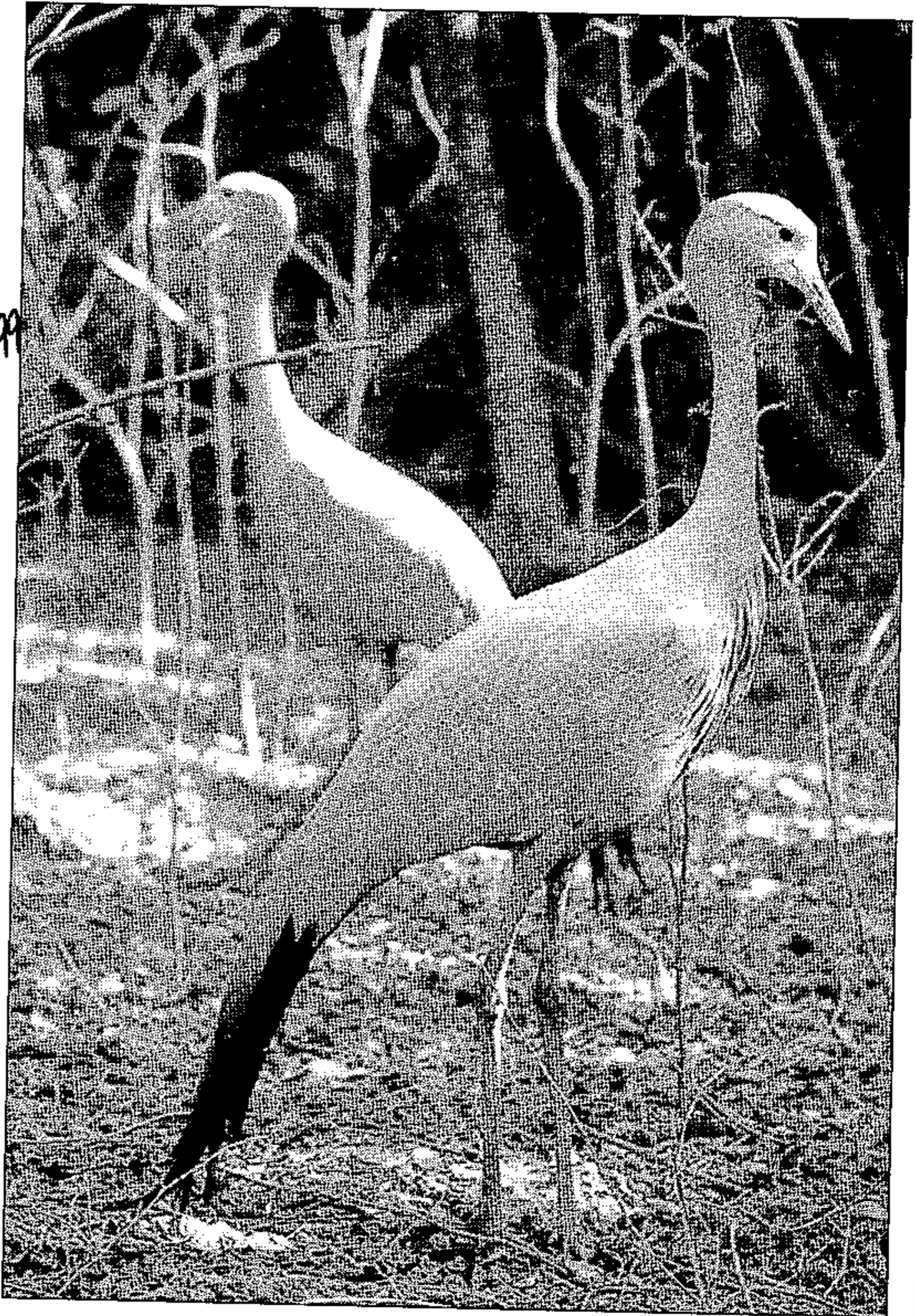
Now, in its last breeding ground in the Eastern Cape's drought-prone Karoo and the north-east Cape regions, the blue crane is slowly being poisoned for food.

State protection has not helped. In only one week last month, farmers and conservation officers found the remains of 20 cranes in Cradock's Commando Drift Nature Reserve that had died after eating poisoned grain.

Conservationists, labelling it a "despicable activity" that endangered the health of those eating the birds, are so alarmed that they have called in the police.

It's not only the blue crane, which once perched elegantly atop the impoverished Ciskei bantustan's coat of arms, that has made it on to the menu of the Eastern Cape's desperate population. The province's distinctive helmeted guinea fowl die in their hundreds every week from poisoned grain.

It is so rife, particularly in the north-east Cape around Queenstown, that the Endangered Wildlife Trust last week launched Operation Guinea Fowl in the province and urged farmers and conservation officers to report poisoning cases to their offices and to the police; and to



At risk: The blue crane, South Africa's national bird, is being poisoned for food in the Eastern Cape. PHOTOGRAPH: GARY HORLER

lock up pesticides to prevent theft. The trust is also advocating a blanket ban on free access to pesticides.

The trust's poisoning working group representative and Queenstown area nature conservation officer, Tim de Jongh, said: "Our organisation has issued a stern warning to those who misuse pesticides to poison wildlife. Everything available in the law will be used to prosecute people responsible."

Trust deputy director Professor

Gerhard Verdoorn, who chairs the working group, said the very survival of the blue crane in its natural Eastern Cape habitat was at serious risk.

The blue crane, declared an endangered species in 1984, is now classified as critically endangered. Verdoorn said this category encompasses species facing total extinction within 10 to 15 years without serious help and planning by conservationists.

Balancing act no walk in the park

JOHN VEID



ENVIRONMENT WRITER

You can't please all the people all the time, the old adage goes - and the management of the new Cape Peninsula National Park is no exception.

The delight of many Capeonians at the long-awaited proclamation of the park hasn't masked the fact that there still are sharply divergent views on many issues relating to its existence and, specifically, to its future.

These include, for example, different ideas on whether new tourism developments like funiculars, restaurants and rest camps are appropriate in the park; on baboon conservation and how to deal with this species' problematic forays into residential areas; on the management of wild fires and controlled burns on the mountain chain; and about whether the harvesting of medicinal plants and bark should be allowed within the park's borders.

Also, despite widespread public and scientific support for the programme to remove invasive alien vegetation from the park, actual clearing still elicits a strong negative reaction from some residents - most recently, when eucalyptus trees were felled on Lion's Head.

Now, a comprehensive public participation process is under way to formulate a common vision and set of guiding principles for the park that will reflect the best possible consensus on how to manage its unique natural features and on how to sustain and enhance its key role in the economy of the Western Cape.

To the uninitiated, it's a somewhat tortuous process.

Once the founding vision and set of principles have been agreed by a majority of interested people ("stakeholders" in the jargon), an environmental policy for the park will be developed.

This policy, in turn, will form the basis of a strategic management plan which sets out broad goals and objectives for five years.

Annual business plans, to be used by the park's managers for day-to-day operations, will aim to implement these goals and objectives.

The strategic management plan will include set environmental standards, based on international criteria, that will allow the managers to test the effectiveness of their operations on a regular basis - and improve them over time - and ensure compliance with the publicly approved vision and policy.

It sounds complicated, but the whole process is, in fact, simply the development of an integrated environmental management system for the park - believed to be the first of its kind for a protected area anywhere in the world, and which will

be used as a model for similar systems for all South Africa's national parks and probably also protected areas elsewhere in the world.

The process is being funded by the World Bank's Global Environmental Facility, and managed by a Cape Town-based consulting company, Common Ground Consulting, which won the tender bid in the face of international competition.

Environmental scientist Martine Laros, the project manager, explains that their initial aim is to achieve a collective vision for the role of the Cape Peninsula National Park within South Africa's network of national parks, and within the regional economy.

Four area-based "visioning workshops" have already been held, and these will be followed by a collective workshop for people from all areas. This is being held in the Cape Town Civic Centre on Saturday, September 4.

Ms Laros says: "For the first time, the process will connect people with the park, through this visioning process."

"At the civic centre meeting, we will bring everyone together to present a draft collective vision, synthesised from what we've heard during the four area visioning workshops, and our own research on those issues in the park that need to be addressed by policy."

"The workshop will also facilitate a policy 'transformation'."

"After that first collective workshop, the consulting team will prepare a revised collective vision and a draft policy framework, which we will distribute in time for discussion at the second collective workshop on October 23."

The key challenge, Ms Laros explains, is to integrate a publicly endorsed vision and associated policies with the operational objectives of the park's managers.

"It's about being able to find that very fine balance between the public domain and the operational management domain."

Is there a significant gap between those two elements at present? "I'd say they were totally confused," says park manager David Daitz.

"I think there's huge confusion about what the appropriate role of the public is, as opposed to the appropriate role of managers, in the management and development of a new national park like this."

"I think to be fair though, one has to qualify that by saying 'the public' doesn't mean everybody out there - I'm talking about that particularly interested public."

"And that's why you want to bring people together, to hear alternative issues and to debate them."

Last year, the release of a draft tourism development framework for the park sparked something of a furor among traditional conservationists who were appalled by some of its proposals - such as additional funiculars at popular points on the mountain chain.

This process was then suspended, although not because of the objections to the controversial proposals.

"What we actually said was that we wouldn't pursue the issue of the drafting of a framework until there was consensus about the vision for the park," says Mr Daitz.

"My perception is that the primary cause of contention was around the issue of whether or not you see a national park as a driver of the regional tourism economy."

"Now we don't see it only as a driver of this economy - its pure conservation virtues are very important issues, too."

"But we don't think those things are incompatible, and we think it's essential to actually concede that the park is a driver of the regional tourism economy. But that was the bone of contention at the time."

Ms Laros says the tourism development framework was a spatial plan, in terms of which various facilities were proposed for actual physical locations.

"But this (the integrated environmental management plan) is essentially a five-year strategic plan which doesn't have direct spatial connections."

"And once the publicly agreed policies are in place, this means there will be a set of broad principles under which that tourism development framework can be pursued."

James Jackelman, who is managing the process from the park's side, emphasises that the development of the new management system is not just about involving the public, "as important as that is."

"What it also does is put in place, at the operational level, procedures for dealing with day-to-day events and operational activities - for example, the handling of aspects of wild fires - that don't have anything to do with the public."

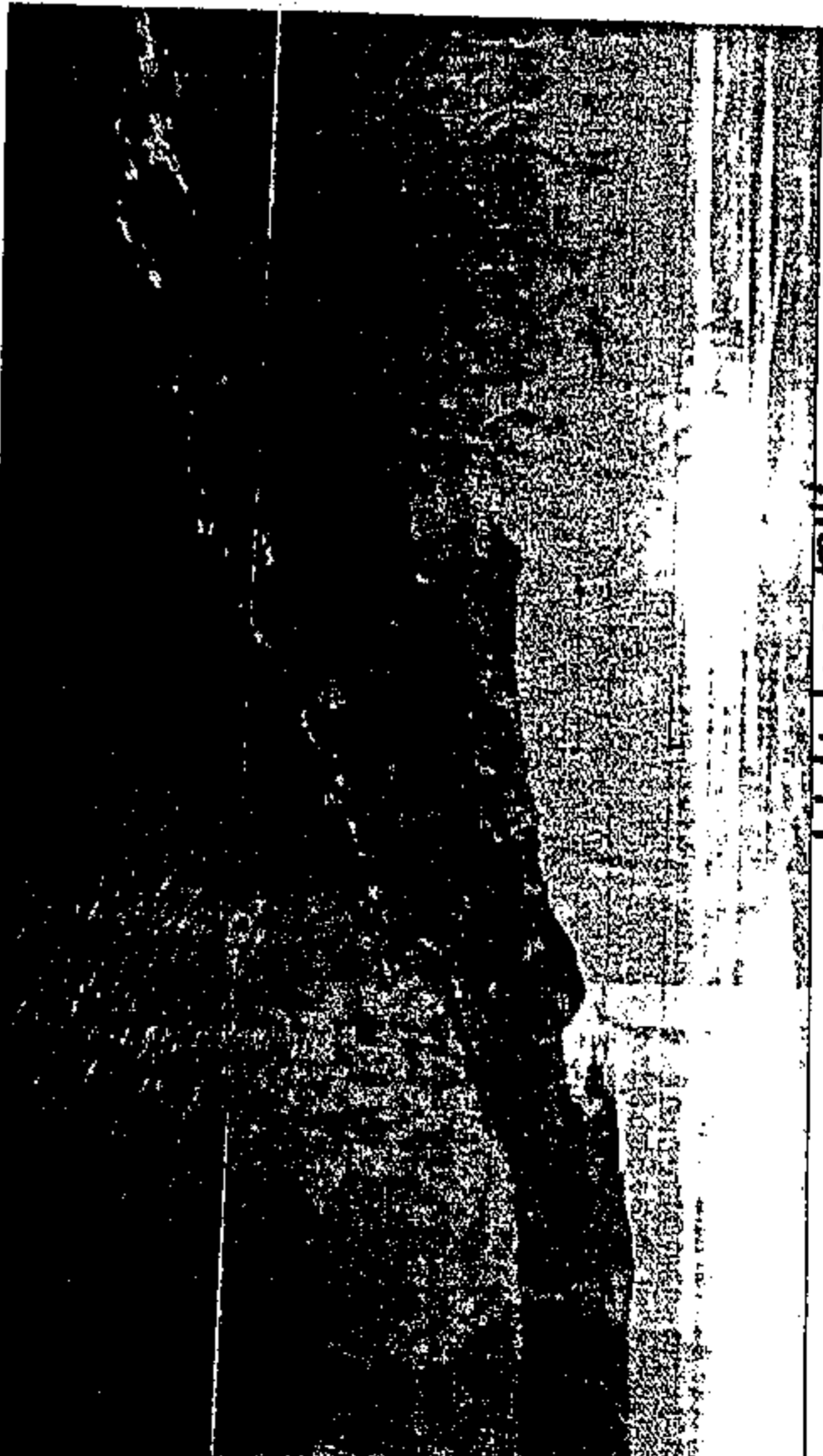
"It puts in place procedures for our operational staff which will be followed around specific management activities."

And Mr Daitz adds: "It forces you to think through a hell of a lot of issues, in advance."

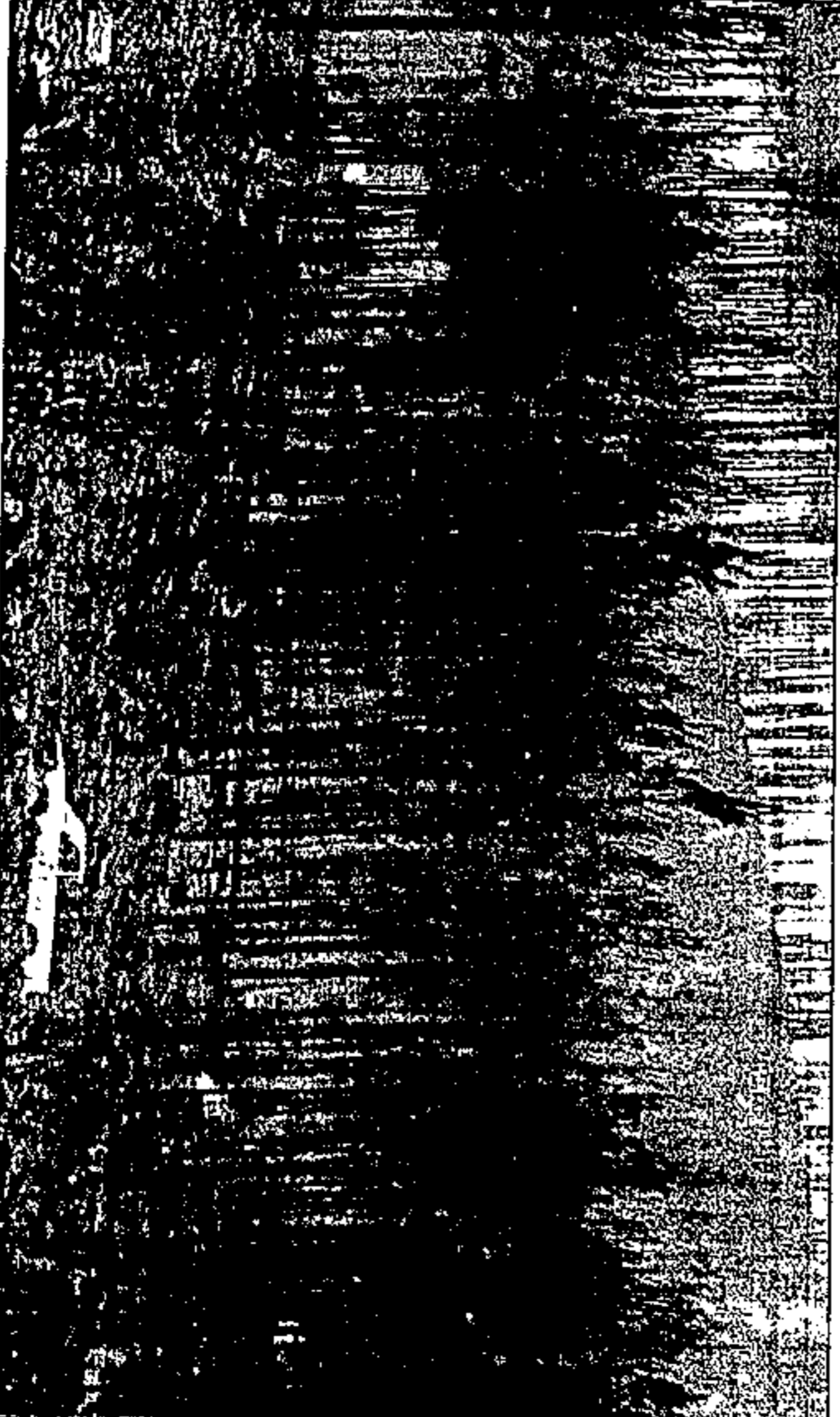
"What we're doing is creating a system of objectively measurable standards and procedures."

(91)

PHOTO 27/9/99



End of the day: the sun sets over the seas at Cape Point, which is the southern-most point of the Cape Peninsula National Park



Fire and allians: discussion issues at the September 4 meeting include the control of fires and exotic plants like these pine plantations

annual external audit."

Given the history of strong differences of opinion about the conservation of the Peninsula mountain chain, will it, in fact, prove possible to achieve a consensus vision for the park?

"I think there's a whole lot more convergence than we think," responds Ms Laros.

"People's visions for the park are not all that different."

"Most people have one key thing in mind: that they'd like to see this

benefits. And I don't think we've got into the contention of that yet in this process."

"What's interesting is that on the Cape Flats it's not a contentious issue - it's taken almost as read, I think."

"Certainly at the workshop I attended, there was lots of consensus about the necessity of that (delivering economic benefits) - it wasn't a debate."

"But I predict we will get into a position in this process where there

stomach driver than it is already, and that you can do this without wrecking its essential character."

And Mr Jackelman points out that some people argue that the opportunities can be used to help achieve conservation objectives in the park, "so you end up somewhere closer to the middle ground."

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"I think, to be fair though, one has to qualify that by saying 'the public' doesn't mean everybody out there - I'm talking about that particularly interested public."

Are ordinary people involved in the "visioning workshops" able to make the intellectual leap from their usual narrow focus on particular parochial concerns to thinking about the future of the park as a whole, the "big picture"?

"That's the big challenge," responds Ms Laros. "It's about being able to get people to recognise that their demands for, and their needs in, the park have to be balanced with a range of other interests."

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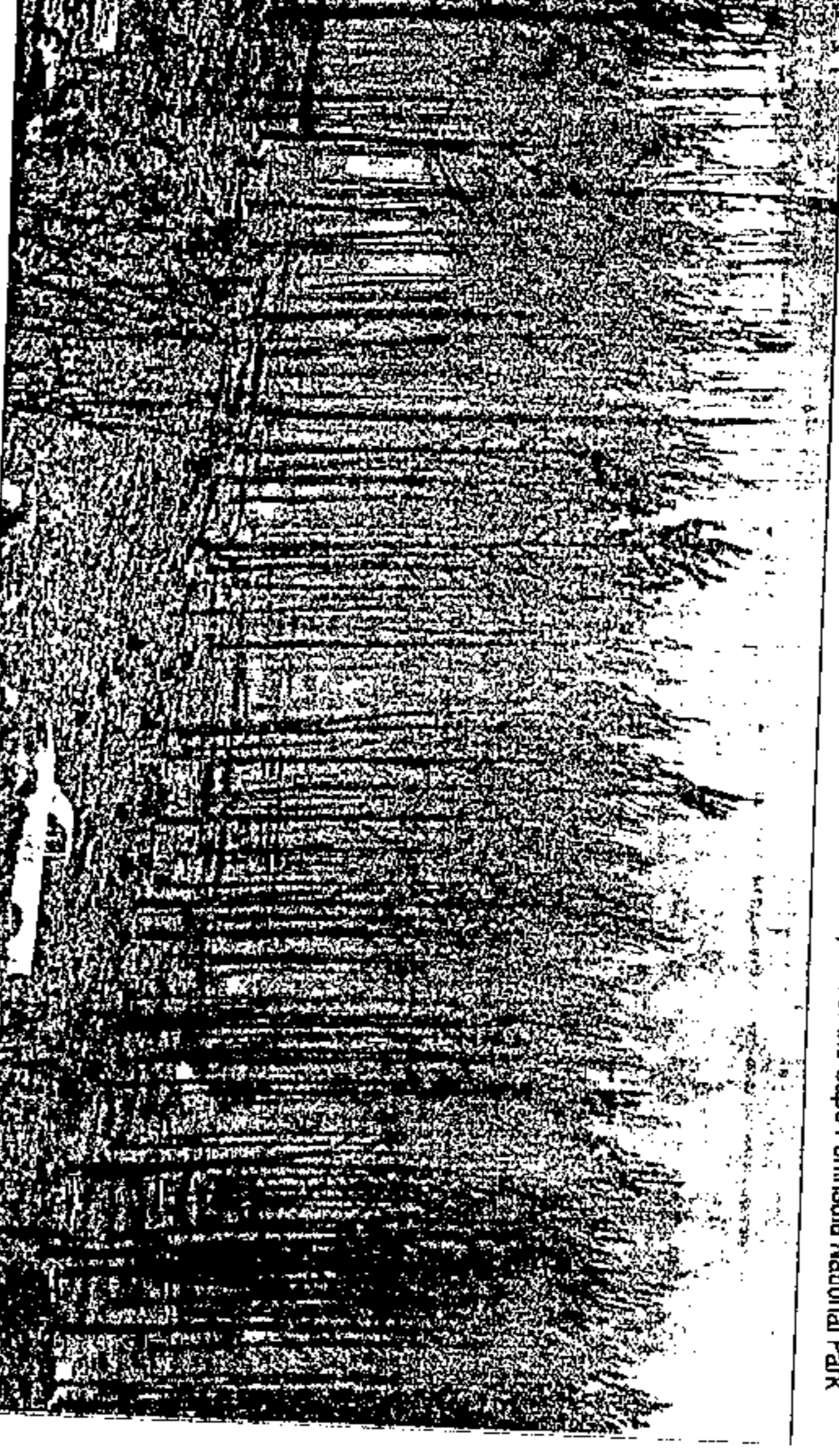
"What we're doing is creating a system of objectively measurable standards, and feedback loops for people who have got to try and achieve those standards so that they can see whether they're moving towards those goals or not."

"In other words, we're creating a system that will encourage continual improvement by management of their actions in this park."

"And another very important spin-off of such a system is that it gives an assurance to the public about the quality of what's going on here, because it's designed to be measurable and it will be open to



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"I think there's a whole lot more convergence than we think," responds Ms Laros. "People's visions for the park are not all that different."

"Most people have one key thing in mind: that they'd like to see this place around for some time, in good condition, for their children's children's children..."

"And there is a tremendous amount of convergence. It's the 'how', of course, which is the tricky part. How do we get there?"

However, Mr Daltz says there is a lack of consensus which can't be denied.

"It's specifically about the degree to which the park is a driver of the regional economy and the degree to which it can legitimately be seen as a vehicle that delivers economic

benefits. And I don't think we've got into the contention of that yet in this process."

"What's interesting is that on the Cape Flats it's not a contentious issue - it's taken almost as read, I think."

"Certainly at the workshop I attended there was lots of consensus about the necessity of that (delivering economic benefits) - it wasn't a debate."

"But I predict we will get into a position in this process where there will be some people who say 'Absolutely not!'."

"Their argument is that it is these magnificent landscapes that attract people - you don't need cableways. You don't need funiculars at Cape Point, you don't need any of those developments."

"They agree that the park is an economic driver, but argue that we don't need to do anything to make it better."

"An alternative argument is that there are huge opportunities to make it a much more powerful eco-

nomic driver than it is already, and that you can do this without wrecking its essential character."

And Mr Jackelman points out that some people argue that those opportunities can be used to help achieve conservation objectives in the park, "so you end up somewhere closer to the middle ground."

Whichever view is set to dominate, one thing is certain: the collective workshop on September 4 is bound to feature intense and highly stimulating debate.

Within the next two weeks, a review document summarising, among other things, the physical attributes of the park, its unique biodiversity and cultural features, and the current management of specific issues, will be published as a tool to help inform the policy and planning process.

Copies of the summary will be sent to all interested and affected parties, and the full document will also be posted on the park's website (www.capepeninsula.co.za) and sent to libraries.



What a view: one of the Kilspingars that have been released at Cape Point

Threatening baboon pushes angry residents to killing edge

MEANIE GOSLING
EMERSONIAN WRITER

(56)

THE battle of the baboons is hotting up in Misty Cliffs near Scarborough, where a resident is threatening to shoot Eric, the alpha male baboon. Another resident is nursing a broken foot. She hurt herself after Eric chased her along her balcony.

Residents say when they throw stones at the baboons to chase them off their property, the animals are unafraid.

Linda Dobbs, a barister from England who owns a house at Misty Cliffs, said she had chased Eric away several times one day last week, but he kept on returning.

"It felt as if I were on the ramparts of a castle keeping the enemy at bay. When I threw stones, he either ducked or jumped up to catch them."

"Then he got onto the balcony. When I saw him coming towards me, it was the first time I felt threatened rather than annoyed, and turned quickly to run inside.

That's when I broke a bone in my foot," Dobbs said.

Her foot will be strapped up for six weeks, and she says she will have to "hobble into the Old Bailey" when she returns to work in London next month.

Jorge Pringle has lived in Misty Cliffs for 10 years. Recently, her dog was savaged four times and last week Eric charged her outside her back door with his teeth bared. She fled indoors.

"I love nature, that's why I live here, but this big male has gone too

far. I can cope with the baboons trashing my house, but I can't live with them threatening my life. If I have to, I will shoot him. I'm not alone in that sentiment, but I'm probably the only one who will say it publicly," she said.

Who's responsible for the baboons? The law says the property owner is responsible for dealing with any problem animal on his land, from baboons to porcupines. But because there are so few baboons left in the Cape Peninsula, they are protected and it is ille-

gal to kill them.

Dean Ferreira, who heads the nature conservation department of South Peninsula Municipality, said the authorities realised if they left managing the baboons outside their proclaimed conservation areas up to the public, the baboons would be wiped out soon.

The baboon task team was formed last year, and research was commissioned on the Peninsula baboons to develop a management strategy to ensure their survival. Seven months ago they

employed three baboon chasers to keep the baboons away from urban areas, and have been successful in Da Gama Park, Kommetjie and Scarborough.

There are only 364 baboons left in the Peninsula, of which 150 live outside Cape Point Reserve.

"Since we've had the chasers, only three baboons have died, one of natural causes," Ferreira said.

Also, the baboons were spending 90% of their time in urban areas before we had baboon chasers, but now it is down to 30%."

CT 27/8/99

Navy in whale of a hullabaloo

BOBBY JORDAN

CONSERVATIONISTS this week expressed shock at the navy's plans to prolong controversial ammunition testing in False Bay during the whale-watching season.

Navy operations manager Capt Glen Knox confirmed yesterday that further tests would be carried out between September 27 and October 8, following a week-long testing programme earlier this month at the Simon's Town naval base.

The navy is using a 76mm OTO Melara gun mounted on the breakwater at Simon's Town harbour

and 17-pounder field guns at a battery on the coast near Glencairn to test batches of ammunition destined for the lucrative ammunition export market. The guns fire at a target mounted on a pole four metres above the water and 850m from the harbour wall.

Veteran Cape Town conservationist Nan Rice, chairperson of the Dolphin Action Group, said the tests were harmful to tourism. She said the navy had also failed to consult conservationists.

"I don't think it's appropriate to be doing this in the middle of whale season. We're trying to attract tourists to this country and this is not the way to be going

about it," Rice said.

"I do realise it's a naval base, but surely they could have delayed testing just a few months until the whales have gone. There's been a lack of consultation about this whole thing," she said.

Whales were sensitive creatures that needed to be carefully protected — not shot at, she added.

However, Knox said the tests posed no threat to whales as the shells exploded above the water, sending only a small shower of shrapnel further out into the bay. Proceedings were carefully monitored and firing was stopped if whales swam into the area.

ST (cm) 29/8/99

Pollution limits Knysna scheme

THE controversial marina development planned for Thesen's Island in the Knysna Lagoon will have to be down-scaled after studies found that 11 hectares of soil on the island was too polluted to excavate, reports **MELANIE GOSLING**, Environment Writer.

ET 30/8/99

(56)

PROJECT planner Chris Mulder said the soil had been contaminated by creosote and tanalith, which contains arsenic, both of which had been used to treat wood products over decades by the sawmill, which still operates on Thesen's island.

The sawmill plans to close down operations on the island and relocate to the mainland. Barlows, owners of the island, had planned to cut the island up into 27 smaller islands. On these they wanted to develop 640 housing units, shops and a hotel.

This pollution of the soil means that a section of the island cannot be developed.

The developers will now only be able to cut it into 16 smaller islands, instead of the proposed 27.

The housing units will have to be cut by about 170 — to about 470.

The project has been criticised as being inappropriate for the lagoon, because of its enormous size and possible pollution of the lagoon during construction.

One of the major concerns was that the pollutants in the soil from the sawmill would flow into the lagoon once excavation for the housing

and canals began.

Mulder said the heaviest soil contamination was in the sawmill's pole-yard.

Although some of the pollutants had moved towards the lagoon, detailed testing of the sediments showed that none had entered the lagoon.

Mulder said Barlows was committed to removing all contaminants when moving the sawmill to the mainland.

"This is one of the major benefits of the decision to replace the present ecologically high-impact wood-processing factory with a sensitively-planned, mainly residential development on the island," Mulder said.

Many local environmental and residents' groups disagreed, and said the studies done as part of the environmental impact assessment (EIA) for the marina development were inadequate.

Wildlife and Environmental Society spokesperson Lorna Watt said yesterday the information about the soil contamination showed that environmental groups had been justified in calling for extra studies being done before the development went ahead.

"We all said the scientific studies in the EIA were inadequate and that some had not been done at all.

"If we had not made sure that the developers did a thorough EIA, the development would have run into trouble," Watt said.

"Imagine if all that contamination had got into the lagoon."

Knysna Environmental Forum chairperson Toni Tonin said: "I'm astounded that the provincial authorities have already approved the Thesen's Island development, yet an obstacle of this magnitude (soil contamination) can come to light at this late stage."

He said the soil findings might negate the provincial authorities' approval, which had been for a specific development, not the new design.

Jim Saunders, chairperson of the Outeniqua-land Trust's Knysna branch, questioned the project's financial viability in the light of the findings.

"The developers now have to re-design the physical and financial structure of the project, because (the available land) has been cut by more than 10%," he said.

"There are still other problems, like the seawall they want to build in the Ashmead channel, right through the most populated bird area."

● The developers will hold two public meetings in Knysna about Thesen's Island tomorrow and on Wednesday.

Delays hit R100m nature tourism project

Plans for a big trans-frontier conservation project between Lesotho and South Africa are expected to attract more than R100-million in international aid for this biologically important but impoverished area.

The Maloti-Drakensberg Trans-frontier Conservation and Development Area Project involves developing nature-based tourism infrastructure with conservation programmes to preserve the area's unique natural heritage.

It extends over a huge area along more than 300km of the Drakens-



JOHN YELD
ENVIRONMENTAL WRITER

berg and Maloti mountains. These mountains stretch from the north-east Free State, through Lesotho and parts of KwaZulu Natal, to the Transkei area of the Eastern Cape.

But a bureaucratic hold-up since February has delayed the release of

a \$348 000 (R2 12-million) grant from the World Bank's global environmental facility for the compilation of a comprehensive project proposal.

This urgently required proposal must be ready by December for the project to be considered by the World Bank for funding of between \$12 million (R73.2m) and \$20 million (R122m) over five years, starting next year.

At least another \$9-million is expected to be made available to Lesotho tourism infrastructure in the form of soft loans from the World Bank's International Development

Association, if the project gets the nod from the bank.

However, these additional loans - South Africa doesn't qualify because it is considered too developed - could be as much as \$20-million, project manager Greig Stewart told Parliament's portfolio committee on environmental affairs and tourism last week.

"We're talking potentially billions of rands ... provided the regions show a commitment from their side," he said.

The project office has been set up with a \$400 000 grant to Lesotho from

SA must act swiftly to get foreign sponsorship

(56) ARU 30/8/99

JOHN YELD

For years, conservationists in South Africa, Lesotho and elsewhere have watched the beautiful Maloti-Drakensberg mountains with growing concern.

Recognised as being endowed with superb natural beauty, the mountains are also home to countless rock-art sites, and archaeological and other cultural resources.

And, because they are so ancient - they existed even before the "super-continent" of Gondwana broke up to form Africa, Antarctica, Australia, India, Madagascar and South America millions of years ago - these mountains also host plant and animal communities which are of global significance biologically.

The mountains contain large numbers of species that occur naturally only here and nowhere else.

But, like the mountains' water, wilderness and cultural resources, this biodiversity is also not adequately protected.

About 70% of the 300km-long Maloti-Drakensberg range is in the kingdom of Lesotho, while the rest is in the Free State, KwaZulu Natal and Eastern Cape.

There are some formally conserved areas, including the 216 000ha uKhahlamba Drakensberg Park, administered by the KwaZulu Natal Nature Conservation Service, and the 6 500ha Sehlabathebe National Park in Lesotho.

There are also some relatively small protected areas close to sections of the Lesotho Highlands Water Project.

But there are still extensive parts on the South African side of the international boundary which do not have any formal protection. And in Lesotho, there is, for practical purposes, no formal protection of mountain ecosystems.

Because of its communal land tenure system that gives virtually unlimited access rights to resources, Lesotho has the lowest protected area ratio of any nation in Africa - less than 0.4% (the World Conservation Union's recommend-

ed minimum is 10%).

The project area is also the most important water catchment region for the people of Lesotho and South Africa. Two of the largest civil engineering projects in southern Africa - the Tugela-Vaal scheme and the Lesotho Highlands water project - carry water from the mountains to the "megacities" of Johannesburg and surrounding cities.

Greig Stewart, project co-ordinator for the Maloti-Drakensberg Transfrontier Conservation and Development Area Project, says the mountains' unique resources are being increasingly degraded.

Major environmental problems include fires and grazing patterns. "The cultural resources of the area are also faced with extreme pressure from resource prospectors and vandals, who will stop at nothing except total destruction," he said.

"The challenge to conservationists is to conserve this exceptional and unique mountain region, while ensuring the development needs of the local populations are met."

The best way of achieving these

two objectives was through promoting nature-based tourism, said Mr Stewart.

The World Bank and Japan are willing to provide the funds, but South Africa's decision makers must hurry if the sponsors timetable is to be met. He emphasised to Parliament's environmental affairs portfolio committee last week.

"The money is for biodiversity conservation and the drafting of legislation, treaties and an application for the region to be recognised in terms of the World Heritage and Ramsar conventions, as well as the planning of community development projects and ecotourism infrastructure," he explained.

The project initially would focus attention on the unique alpine ecosystem of transfrontier areas near Botha-Bothe, Mokhotlong, Thaba Tseka and Gacha's Nek, and the adjacent areas of KwaZulu Natal.

The project has two main "products". The first is to pool all existing knowledge and to commission consultants to fill any gaps, so a comprehensive project proposal can be

Japan via the World Bank's policy and human resources development programme.

But Mr Stewart also told the portfolio committee that the release of the \$348 000 global environmental facility funding required a "very comprehensive" approval process which involved 24 steps - one of which was the committee's agreement - and that the process was running seriously late because of delays.

Pointing out that some consultants had opted to start work at their own risk on the critical biological diversity aspects of the project,

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because of the tight time constraints, he appealed for support to get the funding approved "within days".

"(The project proposal) should have started in February, but it was held up until July 9," he said.

Committee chairwoman Gwen Mahlangu told Mr Stewart that members would study the documentation on the project that he has provided and take a formal decision at their next meeting, scheduled for today.

"We are committed to the issues you are raising, but we also have to be mindful of the money involved,"

she said.

Errol Moorcroft, Democratic Party spokesman on the environment and a member of the portfolio committee, said afterwards that his party was concerned that a "golden opportunity" might be missed because of bureaucratic inertia.

"This is an opportunity to acquire a substantial amount of money for a very important biodiversity project with far-reaching benefits for both ourselves and Lesotho," he said.

"We cannot afford to lose out on opportunities of this kind."



Alpine assets: the new Maloti-Drakensberg Transfrontier Project will include some of this region's most spectacular natural areas, like the Amphibean wintur, Tugela River at the foreground.

prepared by the end of the year.

This proposal will be the basis for approving a possible five-year World Bank-funded programme to

put the necessary infrastructure in place. The second "product" will be the legislative and administrative framework for the establishment of a "Transfrontier Conservation Area" - sometimes referred to as a "peace park" - for the conservation and sustainable use of the region.

SPACE NEEDED AT KOEBERG

Nuclear waste plan delay

A PLAN to increase storage space in the fuel pools at Koeberg nuclear power station has been delayed. Environment Writer **MELANIE GOSLING** reports.

ESKOM nuclear services manager Brian Statham said the delay in the project is to "make doubly sure everything is hunky-dory" with new racks designed to contain a higher density of spent fuel in the fuel pools at Koeberg. The new racks were bought because both Koeberg's fuel pools are full.

Eskom also said the Atomic Energy Corporation, which runs Vaalputs site in the Northern Cape where radioactive waste is sent, is doing experimental drilling to see if Vaalputs would be suitable for the long-term storage of high-level radioactive waste, like the spent fuel. At present it is licensed to dispose of low and

medium-level waste only.

Statham said the nuclear industry is "naturally cautious" and needs to make sure the dimensions of Koeberg's new racks for storing the spent fuel are "absolutely spot-on".

"We need to know they're going to fit easily. We also need to ensure that the configuration of the spent fuel is such that we don't get a nuclear reaction in the fuel pools," Statham said.

The new racks were originally due to be installed early next year. Installation will now begin towards the end of next year and be completed by 2001.

In the meantime, Eskom has to remove spent fuel from the

reactors in April next year and again in January 2001. Spent fuel which has been in the pools for more than 10 years is to be taken out and stored in two enormous dry storage concrete casks to make make room in the pools to store fuel used more recently, which is higher in radioactivity.

Eskom bought four storage casks in 1996 at a cost of R5 million each. Although the 120-ton casks are licensed to transport radioactive fuel on public roads and railways, Statham said Eskom would not move offsite with the fuel but would store it at Koeberg.

"In the early 1990s the commonly accepted technology for storage of spent fuel was in casks. We ordered casks from Germany in 1996, the principle being that the spent fuel would be put into the casks and moved to a separate disposal site.

"In the meantime the technology became available which allowed us to double our spent fuel storage racks, and we decided that would be the cleverest solution of all. We could store all our spent fuel onsite during Koeberg's 40-year lifespan, which would give us a long time to watch the world and see what they come up with for long-term disposal of spent fuel," Statham said.

The spent fuel is removed from Koeberg's two nuclear reactors every 18 months and replaced with fresh fuel. Because the old fuel, in the form of rods, is hot and radioactive after removal, it is kept under water in specially designed fuel pools for at least 10 years, after which time 99% of the radioactivity has been lost.

There is no site, anywhere in the world, licensed for high-level radioactive waste disposal.

Refinery pollution levels 'acceptable'

(56)

POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

Readings of sulphur dioxide near Caltex Refinery in Milnerton were within acceptable limits by national and World Health Organisation standards, Health Minister Manto Tshabalala-Msimang has told Parliament.

In June, the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism monitored air quality through three monitors in Table View and Bothasig.

"The readings are considered to be within acceptable limits," said Dr Tshabalala-Msimang.

AACT 2/19/99

Environmental cost

of economic growth

(56) CR (MR) 6/9/99

Little of the economic growth over the past two decades has improved quality of life and most of the benefit has gone to the very wealthy says Johan Van Zyl, a consultant and part-time professor at Pretoria and Vista Universities.

He says most of the wealth has gone to the rich and the rest has been largely offset by the external costs of resource depletion, social stress, environmental health and other serious problems, caused largely by growth.

He says sustainable growth means having the capacity for continuance into the future and he believes that human ways of life are not conducive to achieving this.

Conventional wisdom dictates that adopting less resource-intensive lifestyles means going backwards and accepting a lower material standard of living.

"Given the trend towards declining rates of population growth, any apparent limits to growth will be eliminated by continuing technological advance and the operation of market mechanisms," says Van Zyl.

However, he says the new emerging wisdom is that the consumption of environmental resources by today's huge global industrial economy is already exceeding sustainable limits.

Development, he says, must focus on re-allocating the world-wide flow of sustainable resources.

"Such an effort will require that high consumers should significantly reduce their resource consumption a head. This might well reduce their standard of living but it also offers opportunities for an improved quality of personal, family and community life," says Van Zyl.

Once poor countries are on the path to sustained growth an expanding economic pie will allow them to address a wide va-

riety of needs, including poverty reduction and environmental protection.

He says poverty is the primary cause of environmental problems. Through lack of education and economic opportunities the poor have too many children and lack the sensitivity and resources to care for their environment in the same way as wealthier people and countries do.

"Environmental issues are a low priority among people whose survival is in question. They will become concerned about and invest in ecological conservation only once a certain level of income is attained," he says.

Stimulating economic growth to bolster employment opportunities and income must be the foundation of environmental protection.

Environmental issues are a low priority among people whose survival is in question.

He says there were three basic goals that economic policy should focus on: a scale of resource use consistent with ecological regenerative capacities to prevent ecological disasters; a fair distribution of resources to promote greater social justice and an efficient allocation of resources.

However, he warns that the markets allocate resources most efficiently when there is the least government interference.

"Consumers are then free allowed to express their own preferences through their purchasing decisions. The overall result is that the market reflects the value preferences of society as a whole of how scarce resources should best be allocated."

Whenever governments intervene, he says, they distort price signals and reduced allocative efficiency.

"It is indeed desirable to privatise all economic activities wherever possible and to provide incentives to private investors to create jobs and increase foreign exchange," he says.

Cape Flats greening inspires minister

RR 6/9/99

'I have this dream of leafy suburbs ...'

JOHN YELD
EMPPOWERMENT WRITER

Western Cape Environment and Cultural Affairs Minister Glen Adams has a dream - to transform Cape Flats townships like Philippi, Nyanga and Khayelitsha into leafy suburbs like Newlands and Bishop's Court.

Last week, Mr Adams was taken on a tour of Cape Flats greening projects initiated or run by the non-government organisation, Abahlali Bezekhaya ("the people who plant").

He said later he was "greatly encouraged" to begin a green streets project because of the success of those greening projects he had seen.

But he warned this would not be an easy task, as people's organisational capacity had to be developed. Also, the issue of poverty had to be tackled.

Abahlali Bezekhaya director Rob Small told Mr Adams that the organisation was formed in 1982 under the auspices of the Catholic Welfare Bureau on an urban farming base to help people survive during the apartheid era.

It was now transforming itself into an environmental and developmental agency.

Up to 11 000 township residents visited its centres each year to acquire basic training about greening and cultivation - such as trench gardening with vegetables - or to buy seedlings, manure and other garden items.

The project had also sparked neighbourhood gardening groups and community allotment gardens, which would in time develop further into community-based market gardening initiatives with important job creation implications.

"The project had positive spin-offs such as the empowerment of women, developing leadership skills and supporting community structures," Mr Small said.

"So it's not just about gardening. There are a whole lot of issues involved here."

Mr Small also told Mr Adams that between 5 000 and 8 000 trees were sold at a subsidised price, supplied at cost or given to schools and individuals each year in terms of his organisation's Cape Flats greening project. Follow-up surveys had revealed

that about 75% of these trees survived, "which is pretty good".

Mr Adams, who said his department had been offered 100 000 trees, responded: "That's very good news. I have this dream of leafy suburbs stretching from Newlands and Bishop's Court to the townships, and people tell me it's impossible."

Said Mr Small: "That's nonsense!" Mr Adams said he had been "most impressed" by the efforts of the non-government organisation sector to help poor and disadvantaged communities establish food gardens and beautify their areas.

"The recognition that poverty must be tackled in order for environmentalism to be sustainable is clearly evident."

"Notwithstanding this, I'm greatly encouraged to proceed with a 'Green Streets Project', especially in the light of the enthusiasm that people are showing for Arbor Day and gardening in general."

Mr Adams said the envisaged project would be a joint venture between local and provincial government, non-government organisations and the private sector.

Parties agree on radiation levels

CAPE TOWN - The National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) and the Chamber of Mines have reached agreement on the regulation of radiation levels in mines, opening the way for Parliament to adopt the Nuclear Regulator Bill.

Minerals and Energy deputy director-general Simunda Mokoena told Parliament's committee on minerals and energy yesterday that in terms of the agreement, the regulating authority to be created would also monitor radiation levels in the mines.

The original draft of the bill excluded the mines from the jurisdiction of the authority, leaving them to the inspectorate. This led to fears by NUM that this would result in lower standards of radiation protection. It suggested the inspectorate had not effectively dealt with the problem of dust on the mines.

Mokoena said the department agreed in principle with the amendments and would present them to the state law advisers for incorporation into the bill. Still to be resolved was the independence of the regulator, an issue for the minister.

90 7/9/99

Deadlock broken

Over atomic bills

LYNDA LORTON

PARLIAMENTARY CORRESPONDENT

Cape Town - The National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) and the Chamber of Mines had reached an initial agreement to break the deadlock over two draft bills on the regulation of nuclear energy. Simunda Mokoena, the deputy director-general in charge of energy, said yesterday.

Mokoena told the national assembly's portfolio committee on minerals and energy they had agreed that mines should be governed co-operatively by the proposed National Nuclear Regulator (the former Council for Nuclear Safety) and the department of minerals and energy's Mine, Health and Safety Inspectorate.

Most mines, especially gold mines, emit some form of radiation and the chamber has objected to the fact they have been regulated by the council under strict international guidelines more suited to nuclear power stations than to mines. The draft bills did not change this rule.

He hoped to put the proposed agreement to the committee today. The National Nuclear Regulator Bill and the Nuclear Energy Bill have been held up in parliament since the beginning of the year because of disagreements about who should regulate radioactive emissions in mines and the extent to which the regulator should be an independent body. There were also concerns about

several health and safety issues. Mokoena said the department believed the extent of the regulator's independence should be decided by the minister. Some members are believed to want the regulator to be completely independent and answerable only to the President's Office.

The bills were first considered earlier this year during the final session of parliament. Public hearings were held but because of the lack of agreement over issues, the bills were deferred until after the June elections and the convening of parliament.

Attempts by Nedlac to resolve the impasse failed, largely because it was not given enough time to hammer out a compromise before the committee wanted to consider the bills.

Duma Nkosi of the ANC has been re-elected chairman of the committee. He said yesterday it should decide on whether to recall any of the witnesses from the first set of public hearings.

Sources said it was vital the bills divided the Atomic Energy Corporation into two distinct entities: one to regulate the industry and one to undertake commercial nuclear-related activities. On reports that gas pipeline policy had been delayed, Mokoena said it had been decided this policy should be combined with a pipeline policy for the liquid fuels industry and become part of the department's integrated energy planning process.

'Economic realities' important in the asbestos debate

FROM SAPA

Cape Town - Any decision on whether to ban the use of asbestos in South Africa would have to take account of the economic realities of the country and the sub-continent, a department of environment affairs official told parliament's environment portfolio committee yesterday.

"We should not take a radical decision in resolving the question," said Muriel Dube, the department's chief director for atmospheric protection.

"Economic contribution should be taken into account."

Briefing the committee on progress made in cleaning up and making safe the dozens of asbestos mines and dumps scattered across the country's northern provinces, Dube reminded the committee that some of South Africa's neighbours still mined and exported asbestos.

Asbestos mining in South Africa would come to an end later this year when the last operating mine, at Msauli in Mpumalanga, exhausted its deposit, he said.

But local manufacturers still imported about 2 000 tons of white chrysotile a year, most of it

from Zimbabwe.

Dube said: "The approach has to take everything into account, including the economic factors ... it is a consideration and one must be aware of these facts."

The final decision rested with the minister, she said.

The total rehabilitation costs for Mpumalanga, the Northern Cape and Northern Province were estimated at more than R95 million. To date the process had cost the government R35.5 million, Dube said.

Rehabilitation involved "encapsulating" the exposed asbestos with a layer of top soil,

planting indigenous plants and trees, and fencing the site to stop access.

This process was "essentially cosmetic" and not in line with the policy of restoring the land to its original state.

The department planned to re-examine this issue with a view to improving rehabilitation techniques.

Dube said the department's law reform process needed to be accelerated to address the recommendations made at the national asbestos summit which was held in Johannesburg in November last year.

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Old mine poses danger

(56)
semetan 9/9/99

By Russel Molefe
Environment Reporter

AN environmental disaster is threatening to wipe out more than 5 000 people at an informal settlement outside Witbank in Mpumalanga.

The threat has been attributed to the bad practices of the old Transvaal and Delagoa Bay Colliery.

The colliery was closed in 1953 and mine management left without putting in place measures to prevent future problems.

As a result fires broke out underground in 1982 and are still burning today. This has made the surface warm and unstable and the ground has begun to sink with acid water running into the nearby Brugspruit stream.

This has also put squatters on the land in danger.

In 1995 a contractor was hired to extinguish the underground fires with water. The method did not work because the fires are so fierce that the water simply evaporated.

However, the Department of Mineral and Energy Affairs is developing a plan to extinguish the fires and rehabilitate the land, which has already been ruled out for any meaningful development.

At a workshop in Witbank recently concern was raised about who will fund the rehabilitation of the land.

But the department's Mr Willie van Zyl said the mine property and mineral rights belonged to the state and the taxpayer would have to foot the bill.

Poachers poison endangered birds

JOHN YELD

The Western Cape's already endangered blue crane population was dealt another blow when 13 birds were poisoned on a farm near Bredasdorp. They were probably killed by poisoned grain put out by farmworkers trying to poach guinea fowl for the pot.

But it wasn't all bad news: three of the 13 cranes found poisoned on Monday survived after being treated by a vet and were released on the outskirts of the town by conservation officials.

"They were 100% - it was really good to see them go," said Alan Wheeler of Cape Nature Conservation.

The blue crane is South Africa's

ARG 11/9/99 (fb)
national bird and the Overberg wheat belt is home to just under 10 000 of them, or about half of the total of the species, which occurs only in southern Africa and is considered critically endangered.

When conservation officials arrived at the farm where the poisoning occurred, they found nine of the cranes already dead. Another died while being treated.

"All but one of the poisoned birds were found within a 50m radius," Mr Wheeler said. "About 40 birds were feeding elsewhere on the farm and neighbouring land and it seems as if only a handful of poisoned barley was sown, probably as bait for guinea fowl."

"With such a large number of birds concentrated in the vicinity, the mortalities would have been

much higher if more laced barley had been scattered."

Organo-phosphate used by grain farmers as a pesticide was believed to have poisoned the birds because they had been frothing at the mouth and were lame.

"These poisons cause a painful death, but this cannot be confirmed in this case before the birds' crop contents have been analysed."

Mr Wheeler said there was excellent co-operation with farmers in the Overberg, to the extent that it enjoyed recognition as an "important bird area" in terms of an international classification.

"But despite this, and efforts by ourselves and the Overberg Crane Group and the Poison Working Group, the poisoning of blue cranes remains a serious threat."

ET 13/9/99

Rastafarians to the rescue

A HOST OF wild birds populate the delicate municipal wetlands inhabited by ecologically-aware Rastafarians. Environment Writer **MELANIE GOSLING** reports.

THERE is not much that's pretty in the raggedy Cape Flats suburb of Parkwood, but follow the Rastafarian around the corner of his communal wooden shack in Acacia Road and you will be pleasantly surprised.

Stretching into the distance is a seasonal wetland, sunlight twinkling on the water, yellow flowers nodding in the breeze and a host of waterbirds feeding in the shallows and preening their feathers on the little islands.

It's a glimpse of what the Cape Flats must have looked like long ago.

Fred Josephs, one of Rastafarians who lives in the shack, lifts

his battered binoculars.

"They're all here mon, Egyptian geese, African spoonbills, coots, darters. Look, there! There's the yellow-billed duck with her ducklings. Check how many there are, there should be eight. Ja, there are still eight. That is cool. Thought maybe something happened to one of them."

Like many attractive natural spots, this little wetland is under threat. Dogs chase the birds, children throw stones at them, people trample their eggs and the local authority has dumped rubble there. There is also talk of a road being built through the wetland. The Rastas are fighting to have it saved.

Led by Bernard Brown, the Rastas have been asking the authorities since 1994 for help in saving the wetland.

Said Brown: "We need the place fenced off. We had to battle with the municipality when they dumped their rubble here. Others come and dump here at night.

"The land belongs to South Peninsula Municipality, and we've liased with them and they say it's a good idea to fence it off but they don't do it."

A couple of glossy ibis fly overhead as Brown hands out fruit to a group of children that have gathered around. He founded the Burning Spear Movement some years ago. He describes it as a "religious, socio-cultural, economical development movement" which he hopes will help uplift the area.

He has started a vegetable garden project with one of the local primary schools, makes and sells arts and crafts and hopes to develop small-scale tourism.

"As shabby as it looks," he says, nodding to the wooden shack, "we've got a dance hall inside and we even had German tourists here on Saturday night. We want to start bird-watching for tourists too.

"The wetland is not ours, but we just want it protected. So far it's been all talk and promises but no action," Brown said.

Fred Josephs joins in: "Birds is also things that need to feel safe, y'know. See those ducklings? They stay close around here because they feel somebody is watching over them. These brothers have done a lot to try to save the wetland already, but we need help."

Council puts damper on Burning Spear's plea to save wetland

(B2)
ARL 13/19/99



Burning Issue: Pasia Bernard Brown and the wetland he is trying to protect
MONCE DAWANI

JOHN YELD
ENVIRONMENT WRITER

There are grey herons in the wetland, and Egyptian geese, but local kids throw stones at them or, even worse, bring their dogs to hunt them.

Some residents dump their rubbish and bulldozers' rubble into the wetland, and alien invasive plants grow around its fringes.

The wetland is an open section of Parkwood Estate near Grassy Park, one of the most lighted areas on the Cape Flats.

Bernard Brown is a resident who

wants to do something positive - to protect the wetland, educate the children about its real environmental and social value, use the least sensitive part for farming and job creation, and ultimately even attract tourists to the area, to provide some economic opportunities for the many unemployed.

But Mr Brown is finding it difficult to get support for his campaign - because he is also a self-confessed Rastafarian and member of the Burning Spear Movement, and the wetland he wants to protect is part of a proclaimed road reserve.

"People just call us 'dagga heads' but they don't know us. I see myself as a conservationist," he said.

The Burning Spear Movement has erected a substantial shack on the road reserve next to the wetland, and it is used by Mr Brown and his colleagues to host dances on Saturday nights.

They have a vegetable garden at the back, which they would like to use as a demonstration project to show neighbours how to garden effectively. Also, they would like to develop the less sensitive fringes of the wetland as an agricultural project to cultivate hemp (dagga) for their movement.

"We're not into selling (dagga)," he said. "We want to live sustainably... we want proper sustainable development, and we think the natural environment is a resource which can be sustainable."

Mr Brown said the movement wanted help from the South Peninsula Municipality to create a formal wetland reserve in order to protect the seasonal wetland, which was inundated with water for some eight months of the year.

The road reserve had been declared many years ago without proper consultation, he said. "We don't agree that they did a proper survey or an environmental impact assessment," Mr Brown said the municipality had not responded to their proposal.

Julia Wood, the municipality's environmental management officer, commented: "The intention of the Burning Spear movement to rehabilitate and conserve the wetland, while providing education and community awareness, is a good idea and I'm in full support.

Race to save 'secret' natural treasure

Hout Bay wetland rehabilitation planned

ARL 13/19/99
(B2)

One of the Peninsula's best-kept conservation secrets lies hidden in the heart of Hout Bay - and now it's time to share this secret and to explain its huge potential benefits for the wider community.

This is the attitude of the Hout Bay and Llandudno Heritage Trust, which is also concerned that the "secret" - the huge reed-covered wetland adjoining the Hout Bay River between the Victoria Road and Princess Road bridges - is being eyed by developers who want to reclaim it.

(Many people refer to the river as the Disa, but in fact the Disa is only a small tributary of the Hout Bay River.)

Already, the South Peninsula Municipality has served a warning letter on the owner of the adjacent farm, where a huge amount of spoil and rubble has been stockpiled in the river's floodplain just below Victoria Bridge.

The trust believes the wetland can be properly rehabilitated to become a tourist attraction, as well as fulfilling its ecological function of "polishing" the water in the river to improve its quality.

Its proposals for the wetland include hides and islands to attract more bird species, and the wetland is an integral part of a long-term vision which incorporates a hiking trail along the length of the Hout Bay River, from Orange Kloof in the mountains to Hout Bay beach, linking the town with the Cape Peninsula National Park.

"The Hout Bay/Disa River is the only one rising on Table Mountain that hasn't been extensively canalised in concrete," says trust chairman Dave Cowley. "We have a unique opportunity to create a corridor along the river that could



JOHN YELD
ENVIRONMENT WRITER

link up with the national park and become a world-class hiking trail. It would be a SA National Park/metropolitan open space combination, which we feel would be very beneficial for the community and the park.

"For example, there could be a one-way trail starting from Kloof Nek and going via the contour path to Kirstenbosch and Constantia Nek, then across to Orange Kloof and down the Disa River

corridor to Hout Bay's wetlands and the beach. Visitors could return to Cape Town by boat.

"Although some 60% of the river banks are publicly owned space, there are some privately owned properties along the river, where there would have to be some

guid pro quo arrangement in order to create the corridor and, at the same time, satisfy landowners.

"So, this is a long-term vision, but it could work."

The trust is a member of the recently constituted Hout Bay River catchment management committee, which is eligible for funding from the Cape Metropolitan Council.

to clean up the estuary section of the river and create a safe, clean path from the Princess Road bridge to the beach.

This project involves removing alien vegetation - already under way - and building a car park on the northern side of the bridge, as well as steps along a path under the bridge to avoid busy traffic.

But this needs to go hand-in-hand with the rehabilitation of the wetlands higher up, because of water-quality problems in the lagoon at the beach.

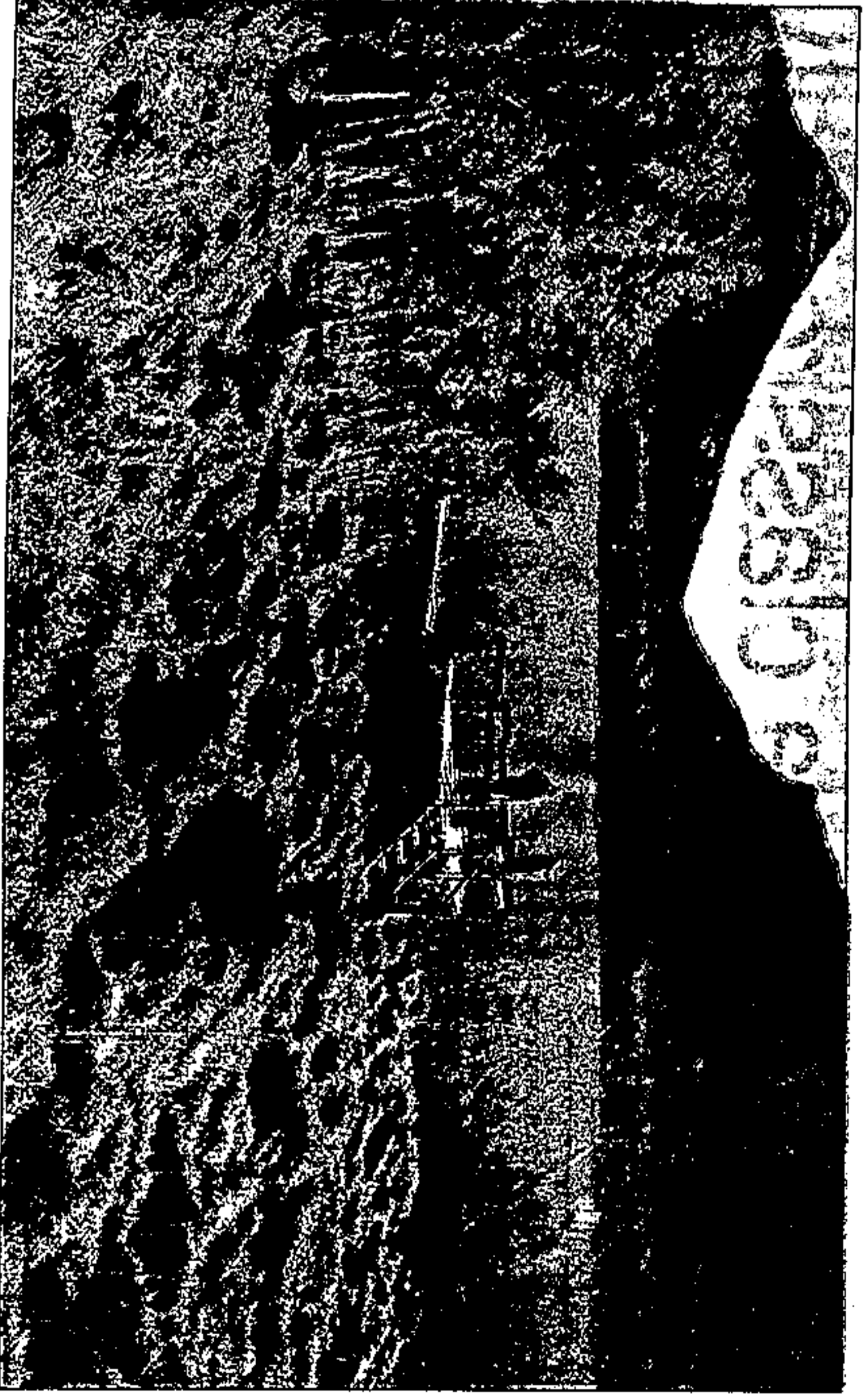
"That lagoon is one of the most polluted areas in the Peninsula and, at one point, it had the highest faecal coliform count in the Peninsula," says Mr Cowley.

"Even though it's silted up as dangerous, children play in the lagoon, and the danger of disease is very real. We're confident that further funding to restore the wetland will ultimately be forthcoming, to help improve the water quality in the estuary."

His colleague, Richard Timms, who heads the trust's natural environment committee, says the Hout Bay River became badly polluted during the huge urban expansion in the valley - particularly because the early sewerage system was septic tanks.

"So the e coli count (faecal coliforms) in the river was, and remains, very high."

Later, landowners encroaching in to the river's floodplain demanded flood control measures, so engineers deepened the main river channel and put up earth berms (walls) along its banks.



Big plans: Dave Cowley and Richard Timms look over the wetland which forms part of their proposal

"Basically, they made it into an earth canal, and now floodwaters come down with a huge velocity straight into the lagoon, which is very polluted," says Mr Timms.

Rehabilitating the wetland area by, among other things, creating gaps in the earth berm so that floodwaters could spread sideways into the reed area, would have many advantages.

"The restoration of a viable wetland could be an enormous tourism attraction, as well as a natural sponge to contain floodwaters and act as a water-purifying agent," says Mr Timms.

The trust appreciates how difficult it is to turn back the clock in attempting to

restore the river area, says Mr Cowley.

"So, this is why we have to make a statement to the community about this fantastic asset. It's a wonderful opportunity for an urban park, which can act as a catalyst for a whole lot of other opportunities as well."

"The Hout Bay River was seriously messed up during this millennium, but it's not too late - it's still saveable. Let's try to turn it around at the start of the new millennium."

'Natural assets will be W Cape's engine for growth'

Poverty is the biggest threat to environment

ARL 15/9/99

(56)

The Western Cape's natural assets will be the region's biggest engine for economic growth, through the tourism and service industries, and will indirectly create the greatest number of permanent new jobs.

This is the view of provincial Environmental Affairs and Tourism Minister Glen Adams, who was speaking at a briefing yesterday on his department's objectives for delivery during the next four years.

Pointing out that the environment was one of the provincial cabinet's stated priorities, Mr Adams said economic growth and development was vital because one of the biggest threats to the environment was poverty.

"A failure to address poverty is a failure to address the environment. We believe that poverty can only be tackled effectively through economic growth and sustainable development."

The department's economic growth projects included the "Tynbos Working for Water Programme" - the removal of "water hungry" invasive alien vegetation from water catchment areas -

JOHN YELD
Environment
Writer



which was expected to generate about 4000 jobs. An amount of R11-million for each of the 1999-2000 and 2000-2001 financial years had been budgeted for this programme.

Another growth project was to establish and resource the new Western Cape Nature Conservation Board and an environmental commissioner, to help ensure the protection and promotion of the region's natural beauty.

The R1.4-million presently allocated for this was insufficient and another R4-million was needed in the next financial year, Mr Adams said. Ecotourism had a central role to play in community upliftment, especially in the rural areas, and developing public-

private partnerships in this sector were among his department's "key measurable objectives".

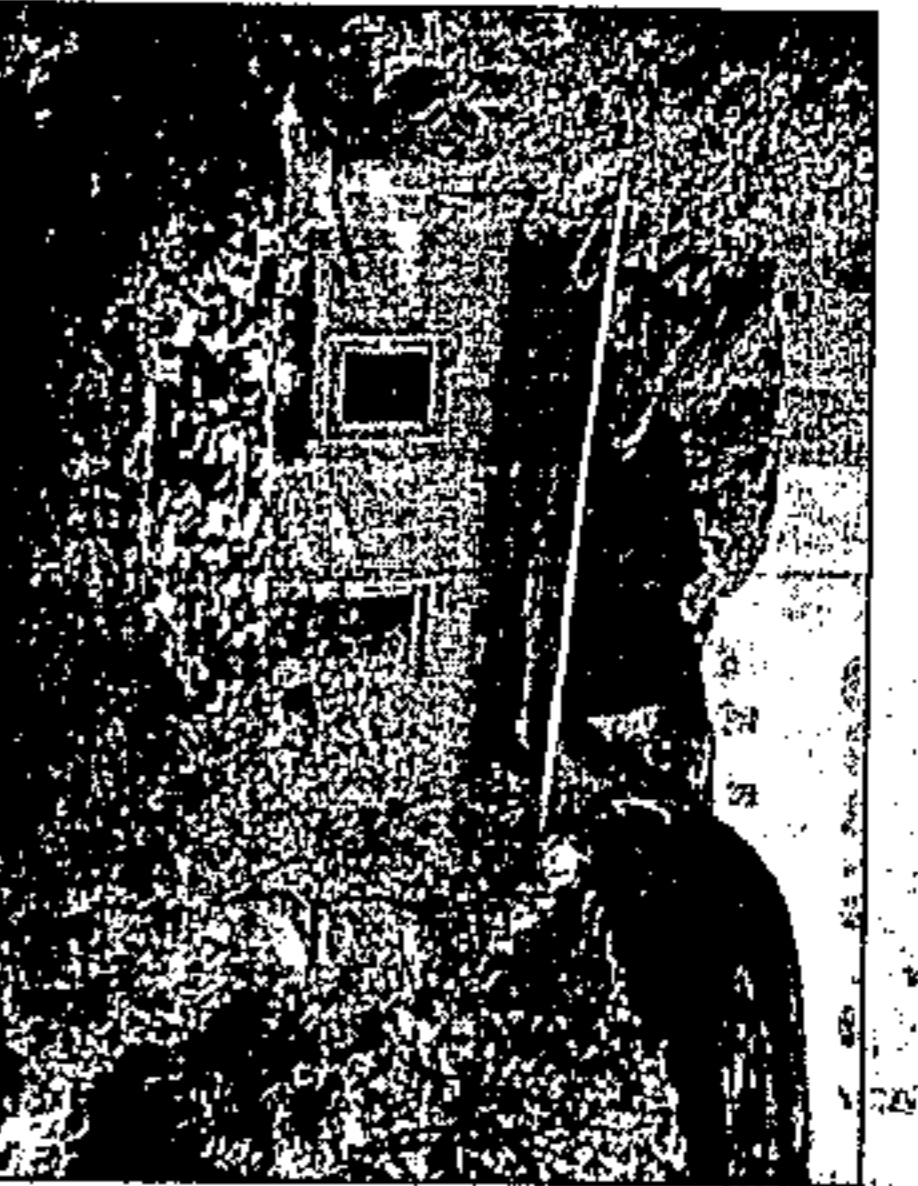
One such partnership was at Bird Island at Lambert's Bay, where R450 000 had been budgeted to complete the project which is centred on the Cape gannet colony on the island, joined to the local fishing harbour by a causeway.

Another was the development of the "Whale Trail" hiking trail along the coast of the De Hoop nature reserve, for which R500 000 had been budgeted, Mr Adams said.

The cellphone company MTN had already offered the nature conservation board R250 000 for this project.

Responding to a question, Mr Adams said this trail - which some environmentalists believe will rival the world-famous Otter Trail in popularity - was expected to be complete within two years.

Another key measurable objective was to promote cultural tourism and development in rural heritage settlements, such as the former mission sta-



Success stories: Bird Island at Lambert's Bay, the kitchen at Schroefer House - part of the Stellenbosch Museum - and the restored Tant Lemie's House in Die Hel

tions of the Western Cape like Wupperthal in the Cederberg and Elin on the Agulhas Plain.

These projects, with the help of Norwegian donor funding, would ensure social reform, economic growth, job creation and transformation, Mr Adams said.

He said R320 000 had been budgeted to start the Wupperthal project this financial year. Another R486 000 had been budgeted for next year to com-

plete this project and start planning for new projects at Elin, Goedverwacht near Piketberg and Amalienstein near Ladismith.

These would be completed over the following two years at an annual budgeted cost of R340 000.

Another objective was to promote tourism by conserving the cultural-historical assets in the Gankaskloof Nature Reserve - the southern Cape area formerly known as "Die Hel" - by

using restored facilities as accommodation for staff and visitors.

The department also aimed to organise 30 youth camps a year, each for 50 participants, where existing environmental education programmes would be expanded to include the teaching of life skills, AIDS awareness and leadership skills, and the promotion of a culture of tolerance and diversity.

"Hopefully we will help combat crime by giving the youth something to

do," Mr Adams said.

Other key measurable objectives include the building and/or upgrading of seven libraries, eight upgraded museum exhibitions a year and four new travelling exhibitions.

Mr Adams also said the greening of townships was a high priority of his department.

This involved the planting of trees, greening of neighbourhoods and establishing food gardens in vacant land.



Removal men: disposal company staff take away boxes of medical waste from the field

AZT for city kids in medical waste scare

HELEN BAMFORD
STAFF REPORTER

Tygerberg Hospital treated 48 children with AZT after some were pricked with needles and others ate potentially lethal pills they found in a field in Elsie's River.

Most of the children had jab marks from playing with syringes yesterday and others had swallowed pills, thinking they were sweets. Most of the children were between four and 12 years old. One, Regan Copeman, 14, was admitted to hospital and is in a stable condition after eating the tablets.

All the children were tested for HIV and Hepatitis B at the hospital and given follow-up treatment. The hospital is also counselling the children, who were traumatised by the incident.

The test results will be compared with fol-

low-up tests in six weeks.

The medical waste, which included 12 different types of tablets, hypodermic needles and syringes for drawing blood, was found on the corner of 15th Avenue and 18th Street, Leonsdale. Bottles of pills had the name of an Elsie's River doctor and labels from the Hanover Park Day Hospital on them.

Police, ambulance and metro emergency services were out in force to cordon off the area and identify the affected children.

Metro rescue doctor Wayne Smith said among the pills were contraceptives, painkillers, anti-depressants, anti-hypertension, anti-ulcer and iron tablets which were dangerous for children.

"HIV and Hepatitis B are both potentially fatal and most of the needles still looked fresh so they hadn't been buried at all."

Dr Smith said some of the pills, even in small doses, could be very dangerous for



LEON LESTRADE

Tears: a child pricked by a needle clings to his mother before being taken to Tygerberg Hospital

children.

He said it was about the eighth time in a year that medical waste had been dumped on the Cape Flats. "I guess some doctors think this is a cheap option for getting rid of medical waste," he said.

Talking from the ambulance before being

rushed to hospital Carlo Pedro, 6, said he and his friend Jeremy Solomons, 7, had each swallowed at least five pills before realising they weren't sweets.

Geraldine Feroa, 15, said she had been

To page 3

Children given AZT in medical waste scare

From page 1

stabbed in the bum by another child who had just thought it was a game.

Many of the children, from Elsie's River Primary and High schools, had needle marks on their hands.

Anna Williams said she found her grandson, Gershwin de Bruyn, 4, playing with a syringe in his mouth.

"Who would do something like this? It's so cruel," she said.

Police constable Wendy Jacobs said

when they arrived at the field about 3pm, the children had been reluctant to talk and didn't seem to understand the danger of what they were doing.

"We asked them if their teachers had told them about the HIV virus and they said 'no'," she said.

There was laughter and excitement when the children piled into two ambulances to go to Tygerberg but that turned to tears as the seriousness of the situation began to sink in.

Hundreds of people gathered to

watch the Metro Rescue medical crane sift through the waste which was packed into boxes and taken away.

Last week more than 12 000 pills were found in Grassy Park after children were seen digging in a drum on the corner of Klip and Linda roads.

In October last year 200 children from the Lost City and Freedom Park areas of Mitchell's Plain were tested after playing with dumped medical waste containing syringes, bloody bandages and vials.

The waste turned out to be debris from a mass circumcision conducted by a Retreat doctor and charges of illegal littering were temporarily withdrawn by the public prosecutor until the results of AIDS tests were known.

There is no law governing the disposal of medical waste, yet a survey conducted by Enviroserve Holdings Limited last year showed that up to 25% of the average 2 000 tons of medical waste produced monthly in the country was disposed of illegally.

Plastic bags are clogging Earth's arteries

JOHN YELD
Environment
Writer



South Africans use enough plastic shopping bags each year to wrap around the world more than 50 times if lined up end-to-end. Environmental Affairs and Tourism Minister Vally Moosa has been told.

He has also been advised that issuing "free" shopping bags creates a significant environmental and economic burden for South Africans and that this practice should be reviewed. Retailers should rather charge directly for the bags, instead of indirectly by adding the cost into the price of commodities.

This would give their customers a choice of either agreeing to pay for bags or making some other arrangement to carry their shopping, such as bringing their own containers. Also, the amount charged for new bags should include a levy to cover the cost of disposing of them once they've been discarded.

The advice comes from a group of scientists - Peter Ryan, Debbie Swanepoel and Guy Preston - and environmental lobbyist Nan Rice of the Dolphin Action Group. Although their recommendations were originally published as a formal paper, entitled "The 'free' shopping bag debate" in the SA Journal of Science in April 1996, Dr Ryan told the Cape Argus that their research and analysis were still relevant.

He sent a copy of their article to Mr Moosa after the minister's widely-reported remarks about the possibility of banning plastic shopping bags. In the article, the authors pointed out that in South Africa in 1998, about 34 000 tons of polyethylene was converted into plastic bags, of which 80% was high-density polyethylene used for supermarket bags.



Tourism detractor: piles of garbage lie on a street corner in the Bo-Kaap, a popular destination for international and South African visitors to Cape Town

Assuming a weight of about 4gm a medium-sized bag, this meant that in that year, South Africa alone produced almost six billion plastic bags, of which about 80% were for local use. The cost to retailers ranged from two cents to 10c a bag.

"Assuming a mean figure of five cents a bag, South African consumers are paying more than R200-million a year for the privilege of taking their shopping home in these 'free' containers. This figure does not include the costs associated with the disposal of used bags.

Large numbers of plastic shopping bags were scattered as litter, resulting in costly clean-up programmes. For example, R6 700 was spent cleaning each kilometre of freeway verges in Cape Town immediately before the 1995 Rugby World Cup.

"The most common litter removed from the verges was supermarket carrier bags. Litter collection and disposal costs up to 25 times more a unit mass than does the removal of domestic waste."

According to a survey of Western Cape shoppers, 81% agreed that plastic bags were a significant litter problem. 56% were prepared to take their

own bags when shopping; 60% said they would pay for bags; and 82% agreed there should be a levy on bags to fund clean-up programmes.

The average price consumers were prepared to pay was 7,4c a bag, and 5c a bag to help reduce littering. "There is a need to review the 'free' issuing of shopping bags in supermarkets," the authors said.

They recommended retailers charge for bags, giving customers the choice to accept or reject these costs. Also, the amount charged for bags should include a levy to cover the costs of disposing of used bags.

"Revenues generated could be employed to reduce the consumption of disposable bags, either directly - by giving rebates for re-using or supplying your own bags - or indirectly, through funding recycling initiatives and educational and clean-up programmes, or through a combination of these two approaches.

"It's up to the retail industry to devise lasting, workable solutions to the shopping-bag issue. Indeed, it is in its interest to tackle this issue. However, if the industry is unwilling to act, it may be necessary to impose regulations."

What Durban can teach Mother City about keeping clean

Cape Town's litter problem is "appalling" and we can learn lessons from Durban's metropolitan authority about keeping the city clean, says Jenny de Tolly, chief executive of the Palmiet Cape Association.

But our local authorities cannot be expected to deal with the litter problem on their own, and individual Cape Townians must take responsibility as well, she says. "Littering is the in-your-face manifestation of a lack of care. There's a mind shift that has to happen. It's the individual who must say, 'What part can I play? What can I do to make a difference?' It's not only the council."

The association is a non-profit organisation which aims to promote a cleaner and healthier environment in the Cape metropolitan area. Ms De Tolly said a good example of a callous attitude was seen during last week's protest by clothing industry workers, who left the Grand Parade covered in litter.

"That was absolutely outrageous," she said. "Littering is a people problem, and it's about people's attitudes. And the interesting thing is that it knows no class, no gender, no race barriers - I've watched a fat Mercedes drive down the road and all the containers were rolled down and all the contents from a meal were thrown out of the window."

"You've got to have individual responsibility - it's a culture that has to be inculcated, and there has to be an ongoing educational campaign." Ms De Tolly said what was being done in Durban to combat littering was "very exciting". They've appointed 13 community development workers, who are each responsible for a fairly large area, including a commercial area and a taxi rank and a vast domestic area.

"These community development workers go into those areas to identify the (littering) trouble spots and find out why they're like that. Then they try to get various people to buy into the clean-up system. They do door-to-door publicity education, they visit every house and talk to people about how they're handling their waste and where the problems are. So they facilitate between the people and the local authority. That's the bottom line. You've got to get people involved, and basically as volunteers. You've got get people who will buy in to keeping parts of the city clean."

"And I think it's a model for us, that we need to adapt for Cape Town." The "bottom line" to solving the city's litter problem is co-operation, Ms De Tolly says. "Co-operation between authorities, between groups, between individuals. And it does need a lot of money and it needs a lot of co-ordination... It's going to take a major campaign."

Let's clean up our act in SA

A major effort to remove hundreds of tons of unsightly and ecologically damaging rubbish from South Africa's urban and

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Wanted: waste dumper who put kids at risk

AR 17/9/99 (F16)

But penalty for crime is a fine

HELEN BAWDEN
Staff Reporter

Police are trying to track down whoever put children at grave risk by dumping hazardous medical waste, including pills and needles, on an open field in Elsie's River.

Children ate some of the pills and used the needles to prick each other.

All 48 children involved were given the anti-AIDS cocktail of AZT and 3TC, as well as anti-tetanus injections and a hepatitis vaccine at Tygerberg Hospital.

The name of an Elsie's River doctor and the Hanover Park day clinic were found in the waste.

The doctor, who is semi-retired and runs a small practice, told the Cape Argus he had been horrified to hear about the dumping.

He said he took his old pills to a pharmacy to be destroyed. "I work only half-days, so I buy medication in very small quantities and generally use it all up."

He had an incinerator in which he disposed of needles and syringes. He said he had a contract with Waste-Tech to remove any other waste.

Glynis Rossouw, manager of Waste-Tech sister company Sannu-Med, which specialises in waste disposal, said the medication found at the scene had been prescribed to patients by the doctor and the clinic and she did not believe they were involved in dumping it. But the needles and syringes must have come from a medical practice or clinic.

Health MEC Nic Koornhof, who went to the dumping site yesterday, said there were huge holes in the legislation governing medical-waste dumping but that

amendments were being drafted and could be implemented this year.

"But at the end of the day it's about being able to enforce the law."

Mr Koornhof said police investigation of earlier dumping cases had been inadequate and had not resulted in any prosecutions.

The extent of the problem was not really known because there could be many more instances of dumping that went unreported, especially in rural areas.

Environment and culture MEC Glen Adams said dumping medical waste was tantamount to "attempted murder" and would be treated as a criminal act.

Police confirmed they have opened a criminal case but police spokeswoman Erica Cooke said the charge would be dumping of waste in a municipal area, the penalty for which was a fine.

Metro rescue doctor Wayne Smith said paramedics visited six schools in Elsie's River yesterday to check that all children exposed to the waste had been checked by Tygerberg Hospital.

Education MEC Helen Zille said children of all ages, from pre-primary to high school, needed to be made aware of the danger of needles.

"There is something going fundamentally wrong when children don't understand that they could be exposing themselves to the HIV virus and other infectious diseases," she said.

Ms Zille said it was critically important for parents to educate their children about these dangers.

"We will be going into schools to create more awareness but teachers can only do so much, parents also have to take responsibility," she said.

Probe into dumping of waste

CR 17/9/99 (F1)

ZINE GEORGE

PROVINCIAL Health Minister Nick Koornhof is expected to account today for the steps taken by his ministry to prevent the repeated dumping of medical waste on the Cape Flats.

"Koornhof is expected to explain in the Legislature what he has done to avoid this," said Western Cape ANC media spokesperson Gert Witbooi. "This is the fourth time this has happened."

Today's planned debate comes after an Elsie's River incident in which 39 primary and high school children tampered with used syringes.

Some of them had jab wounds, while others had swallowed tablets.

Apparently they found the medical waste dumped at a nearby open field on Wednesday.

The waste bears labels of an Elsie's River general practitioner, as well as Hanover Day Hospital.

The health department has

stated that about 14% of medical personnel in the region are guilty of ignoring stipulated rules for the disposal of medical waste.

"This is very irresponsible. It's just like throwing a bomb at people," said Tygerberg Hospital superintendent Dr Abdul Rahman.

His hospital spent more than R100 000 on drugs and medicine they used to prevent the Elsie's River children from contracting viruses as a result of tampering with the waste.

"Giving AZT tablet and the 3TC syrup cost the hospital dearly," he said, but added that saving human lives was more important.

He told the Cape Times that it was shocking that high school going children tamper with medical waste.

Parents as well as the community have a responsibility to reach children about the risks involved in opening unknown parcels.



IRRESPONSIBLE: Nick Koornhof is to outline what will be done.

Parents as well as the community have a responsibility to reach children about the risks involved in opening unknown parcels.

Let's clean up our act in SA

A major effort to remove hundreds of tons of unsightly and ecologically damaging rubbish from South Africa's urban and rural environments is under way as part of a national clean-up campaign.

Clean-Up Week, sponsored by retail giant Pick 'n Pay, is bringing together organisations already actively involved in environmental campaigns with community groups at schools to "clean up" beaches, waterway parks, streets, pavements, schools and community facilities throughout the country.

Rejoice Mabudafasi, deputy minister environmental affairs and tourism, said national Clean-Up Week offered all South Africans the chance to make a difference their local environment.

"The Clean-Up Week is a community drive programme which is simple, yet effective, with volunteers working together in their own communities to carry out local clean-up activities.

"Everyone is encouraged to do something positive for his or her environment," she said.

Anyone wanting to take part in clean-up activities or to arrange their own local event can contact Pick 'n Pay's customer care helpline on 0800 11 22 88.

St Lucia sites earmarked for ecotourism development

An ambitious plan seeks to upgrade the wetland area, writes INGRID SALGADO

FIFTEEN sites earmarked for private sector development in the Greater St Lucia Wetland Park will be put out to tender in January when the Lubombo spatial development initiative (SDI) moves into high gear.

Five additional sites have been identified in Mozambique and Swaziland under the framework of the trination Lubombo SDI — an effort by the SA, Mozambican and Swazi governments to develop the region as a prime ecotourist destination.

International investors have already shown significant interest in the project, while local hotel chains and safari operators are lining up for their share of the pie.

European tourism wholesale giant TUI is understood to have expressed interest in structuring a deal with a local partner and has visited SA to develop its plans. Parties from the UK, France, Germany and the US have also shown interest.

"From November, we will start to focus strongly on the private sector investment

drive," said Andrew Zaloumis, project manager for the Lubombo SDI. "We will have one-on-one meetings with potential investors. About 75% will be focused on regional investors as we want a good mix of small, medium and big players."

The two-phase tender procedure is expected to take 10 months to complete.

Analysts said Southern Sun and Karos Hotels were possible bidders, but Sun International, which is tied up with casino ventures, was not likely to have the spare cash to plough into the resorts.

The mooted sites in the Greater St Lucia Wetland Park will comprise beach resorts, upmarket bush lodges and hotels, middle-income safari camps and a tract of land that may be developed as a private game reserve.

The park lies along a 220km stretch of land — from Kosi Bay near the Mozambican border to St Lucia Village — that encompasses pristine sandy beaches, coastal dunes, lake systems and game reserves.

In December, the park is ex-



TOURIST HORIZONS: Local communities will be reskilled to take advantage of increased tourism to the area

pected to be declared a World Heritage site, joining top international tourist attractions, such as the Great Barrier Reef in Australia and the pyramids in Egypt, which also have this status.

Due to environmental concerns, the sites mooted for private sector development will be put to tender under strict regulatory conditions.

They have been identified under an integrated development management plan conducted by SDI managers and the KwaZulu-Natal Nature Conservation Service.

"What makes this plan different is that we've costed the

whole park — from restocking wildlife, to fencing and defining the first development nodes," Zaloumis said.

"We have worked out infrastructure costs totalling R92-million. The money is not for tourism facilities, but rather for conservation and park infrastructure," he said.

This week, KwaZulu-Natal MEC for economic development and tourism Michael Mabuyakhulu said the national government had injected R30-million into the park's upgrading in the current financial year. An additional R42-million would be secured from international donors.

The park's redevelopment, he said, would increase the number of tourist beds in the region from 11 200 to 18 200 within 10 years. The projects were expected to generate R850-million a year in foreign exchange earnings and would boost the region's income by nearly R4-billion.

At least 4 000 direct new permanent jobs would be created in addition to 9 000 jobs in the construction phase.

Mabuyakhulu said a lack of skills among communities in Maputaland had "severely skewed" patterns of ownership in the region's tourism economy. Less than 3% of

tourist beds were currently owned by previously disadvantaged interests.

"If the people of the Lubombo are not to be mere sweepers but also managers and owners of the new tourism businesses, this critical shortage of local skills must be remedied," he said. Priority was being given to further skill those employed in the tourism industry and to train unemployed people to take up new opportunities.

The region's residents are set to benefit from the construction of a road linking Hluhluwe to Ponta do Ouro in Mozambique.



Playing with danger: children who found medical waste near Zeekoewiel face the possibility of having to undergo medical tests



Taking action: paramedic David Bresler rakes through some of the medical waste found near Zeekoewiel

'Deadly dumps' found at Zeekoewiel

HELEN BAMPFO
Staff Reporter

Police believe the lives of a number of children in the Pelican Park area may be in danger after they were seen drinking expired veterinary medicine which had been dumped on a field in Eagle Park, near Zeekoewiel.

More than 300 bottles of liquid animal vitamins were found on the field at Partridge Road. Two other medical waste dump sites were found yesterday, one in Zeekoewiel and another by

three children in Elsie's River. Grassy Park police sergeant Wayne Petersen said a resident, John Holland, saw children, aged about four or five, drinking the medicine and feeding it to their dogs.

"He told me the dogs later died, but we haven't found any bodies," said Sergeant Petersen. "We are still trying to find the children to make sure they are treated."

Parents are urged to contact the police, ambulance service or Metro Rescue if they believe their children may have drunk the medicine.

The name of an import and export company, Factor Four, based in Lansdowne, was found on the boxes of dumped medicine which were for cats, dogs and racing pigeons.

Metro rescue doctor Wayne Smith said the medicine contained magnesium, copper, zinc and phosphate and if drunk in large doses by children, could be very dangerous.

Medical waste from the Western Cape Ambulance Service, two general practitioners and a hospital was also found yesterday at the Strandfontein side of Zeekoewiel near a settlement.

Dr Smith said it was mostly disposable waste like drips, nebulisers and gloves, but there were also needles and bloody bandages.

It was unlikely the two doctors and the ambulance service would dump their waste in the same spot and leave incriminating evidence, he said.

Waste from the Western Cape Ambulance Service is disposed of by Saru-med. One of the doctors whose name was found on items in the dump had contracted BSL medical waste to dispose of his waste.

The operations supervisor for BSL,

Sean van der Schyff, said his company delivered the sharp and non-sharp containers to hospitals and they were later collected and incinerated. He said it was often lazy medical staff who were responsible for waste not being dealt with properly.

"We really need much stricter legislation about medical waste, as well as introducing some kind of sanctions against people who do this," he said.

Lawrence Harrison of the South Peninsula Municipality environmental health department said a lot of illegal dumping took place at Zeekoewiel

(56)
ARLS 22/9/99
settlement

because it was a large area and quiet at night, making it difficult for law enforcers to control.

An SPW official from the waste management department said: "Doctors should manage their waste properly and use reputable companies, but there are too many people just out to make a fast buck."

Last week, medical waste was dumped in Elsie's River and 45 children were taken to hospital and tested for HIV and hepatitis B after some others ate potentially lethal pills.

Heath looking to extend parks inquiry (56)

By Jimmy Seepe

THE Mpumalanga Parks Board saga is expected to take a new turn in the coming weeks with the Heath Special Investigation Unit possibly issuing summonses against more individuals than was originally thought.

The unit is on the verge of undertaking a new probe into millions of rands of funds which the province allegedly received from foreign governments and international organisations which might not have been properly accounted for.

Unit head Judge Willem Heath told *Sowetan* that investigations of the unit had uncovered more information relating to the scam which was not originally put forward at the start of the probe.

Heath said the probe of foreign donations to the province would begin in earnest soon.

The unit may call on the former Mpumalanga premier Mathews Phosa to shed light on some issues emanating from the Parks Board and foreign donations.

Heath said as a result of the probe "we are now ready to institute action against a variety

of individuals, including those not included on the original list".

Heath was not prepared to say who some of the individuals were that his unit would include in the long list of summonses.

"We conducted intensive investigation during August which has uncovered more information," he said.

"We are now looking at a variety of misappropriations emanating from this probe."

Members of the former Mpumalanga provincial executive committee who allegedly authorised the multimillion Dolphin deal with a foreign businessman are expected to be summoned.

It believed the unit has collected various correspondence with the Kenyan businessman from interviews it held with witnesses.

He said the unit was in the process of interviewing Mr Allan Gray, former chief executive officer of the Parks Board, the only remaining witness.

During his tenure at the Parks Board, Gray allegedly entered into various deals which had the potential to cripple the province's finances.

He also admitted having channelled thousands of rands into the coffers of the African National Congress Youth League (ANCYL) through various secret bank accounts and two front companies.

Bank accounts showed that a front company called Phambili Construction received R902 982 from the Parks Board for payment to the ANCYL, while former provincial secretary, James Nkambule, allegedly received R89 100. The league's organiser, Mandla Thumbathi, was reported to have received R23 900.

Sowetan has learnt that the unit recently met with former Mpumalanga Environmental Affairs and Tourism MEC Mr David Mkhwanazi, who is alleged to have given more information on the Parks Board.

The unit is understood to be satisfied with Mkhwanazi's evidence and could leave him out when summonses are sent out.

Legal counsel for Mkhwanazi, Advocate Seth Nhai, a former MEC for safety and security in the Northern Province, met with the unit and said he was confident that his client would be cleared of all allegations.

M+G 23-30/9/99 (56)

Life's a dump, but it pays

An informal conservation industry is growing — at a rubbish dump in Dobsonville. **Ann Eveleth reports**

Annamarie Luvuno was a 24-year-old mother of two when she lost her job cooking at a Durban restaurant and left her "full-of-shit husband" behind in KwaMashu to seek greener pastures in Johannesburg.

But even in 1990 jobs were scarce in the City of Gold, and it wasn't long before the relatives Luvuno stayed with in Tembisa began to complain that they already had too many mouths to feed.

A tip-off from a friend led Luvuno to the Marie-Louise rubbish dump in Dobsonville, where she has lived ever since, eking out a living from other people's rubbish.

Luvuno lives with three other women from KwaZulu-Natal in one of a string of tiny camps that dot the border of the municipal dump. The 80-odd people living there are a small part of a growing informal conservation industry.

"We stay here from Monday to Friday and collect papers, plastic and tins from the dump when it closes. During the week I collect cans for recycling to pay for food. At the end of the month I take paper and plastic to a place in Crown Mines for about R700. I'm saving that to buy a house for my children," says Luvuno, bending over to stuff more crumpled white paper into a one ton broadcloth bag "recycled" from a nearby sugar factory. One bag like this will fetch about R90, she says.

Luvuno spends the week in a metre-high zinc and plastic shack she built from materials salvaged from the dump. The bed, blankets, chairs, and even the kelim rug lining the floor were col-

lected from the mountain of municipal waste.

"I am very happy doing this. We dust things with a powder to get rid of the smell, and on the weekends we go home. I stay with my sister in Zwaledi, next to [Chris Hani] Baragwanath hospital, and then come back on Monday. I don't mind the dirt because I am making good money and there are no other jobs," she adds.

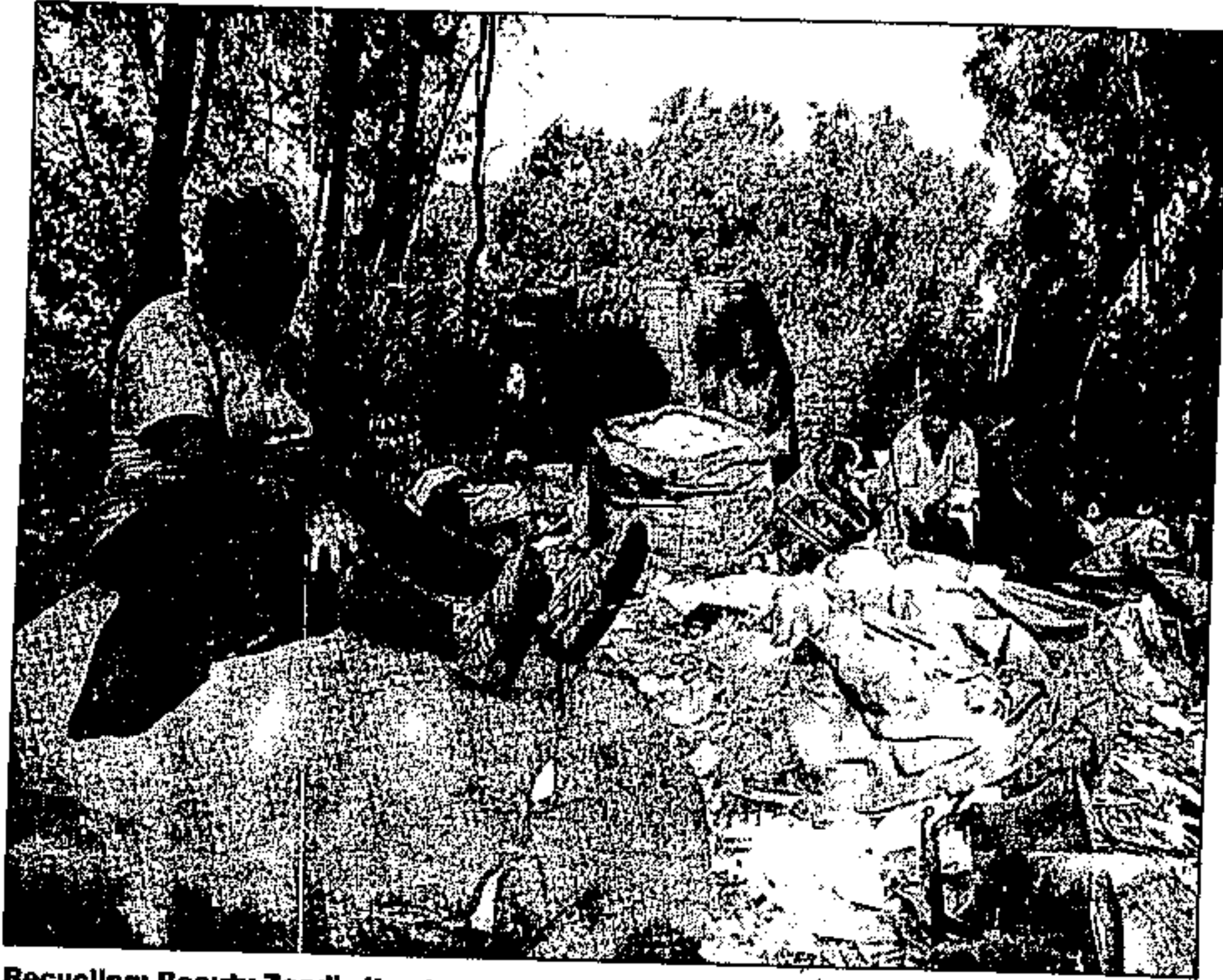
Official estimates of the extent of the burgeoning waste collection trade are hard to come by, but paper giant Mondi told the Institute for Waste Management magazine *Resource*, that the tonnage of waste paper the company sources from the small business and hawker segments of the waste collection market alone had nearly trebled in the past five years, involving more than 5 000 people.

Mondi paid out more than R9-million last year to small business and hawker recyclers. Other private companies and municipalities also pay a small fortune to people collecting a range of different waste products for recycling.

Luvuno, now 33, says the money she is saving holds the promise of a better life for her children. "When I was in Durban, my husband used to drink and swear and fight with me. I went to hospital two times, and then I decided it was time to go."

Luvuno left her children with her parents when she came to Johannesburg. She hopes she will soon be able to invite them to join her in a new home.

In the meantime, she maintains her culinary skills by cooking meals for the women in



Recycling: Beauty Zondi sits atop a one ton bag of paper which she has collected from the Marie-Louise rubbish dump. PHOTOGRAPH: RUTH MOTAU

her camp with her neighbour Beauty Zondi, another former cook.

Zondi (48) left her home in Pietermaritzburg's Gezebuso township and a job in a restaurant to follow her mother to Johannesburg. That was shortly after her husband died during the KwaZulu-Natal political violence and "just before [Nelson] Mandela was released".

'My mother came here to look for work and I decided to move with her. We didn't know anybody in Johannesburg then, but we both found jobs cooking in a house for Mrs Rose in Roodepoort," says Zondi.

"But then, before the [1994] election, my mother died and Mrs Rose said there was no more work. She said if I want to stay she would pay me R5 a day, or R10 a day. I still go there one day a month, and she pays me R50, but that's not enough, so I came here."

Zondi doesn't know how much she earns in

a month, but the R20 to R30 she gets from each bag of cans, together with the R50 or so she earns from collected paper every fortnight helps defray the costs of maintaining her weekend home in Dobsonville and keeping her four children, aged two, seven, 16 and 18 in school.

Doris Mthembu (55) came to the dump in 1994 when she lost her job as a gardener. Mthembu spends four days a week at the dump, and takes about R860 a month to her home in Roodepoort's Matholeville township, where she lives with her five children and several grandchildren. She is the main breadwinner in the house.

It's 4pm and the women can't waste any more time talking. The dump is closing and the municipal officials who chase them away from the source of their earnings are going home soon.

It's time to fold the empty bags under their arms, climb under the hole in the fence and head for the bulldozed mounds in search of more forgotten treasures.

Concern over Saldanha mining proposal

JOHN YELD
Environment
Writer



Conservationists are watching with concern as authorities prepare to rule on a limestone mining application near Saldanha Bay.

If approved, the mining - for a cement manufacturing project - will destroy a significant amount of one of the country's most critically endangered vegetation types: calcareous shrublands.

About 80% of the entire remnant of this vegetation type occurs in the mineral lease area. (Calcrete is a form of limestone.)

Three other vegetation types in this area are either already rare or expected to become rare because of mining and farming.

During a specialist botanical study as part of an environmental impact assessment of

the proposed mining, at least three previously undescribed plant species which are new to science and 16 Red Data Book plants (species in danger of extinction) were found in the mineral lease area.

The assessment found that even if mitigation measures were applied, the mining would still cause a "high" or "very high" impact on the endangered plant life depending on which of two mining options was selected.

One of the country's top botanists, Professor Richard Cowling of the Institute for Plant Conservation at the University of Cape Town, has described the threat as "very alarming".

"If this had been in Europe or the United States, they would have put an electric fence around the area," he said.

The proposed Alpha Saldanha Cement Project will supply about 700 000 tons of cement a year, about one third of which will be for the export market with the assistance of Alpha's Swiss-based holding company.

The initial proposal is to mine 85-million tons of limestone and clay - representing 40 years of quarrying - from three or four sites west and north-west of Saldanha Bay, on the hills above Jacobs Bay.

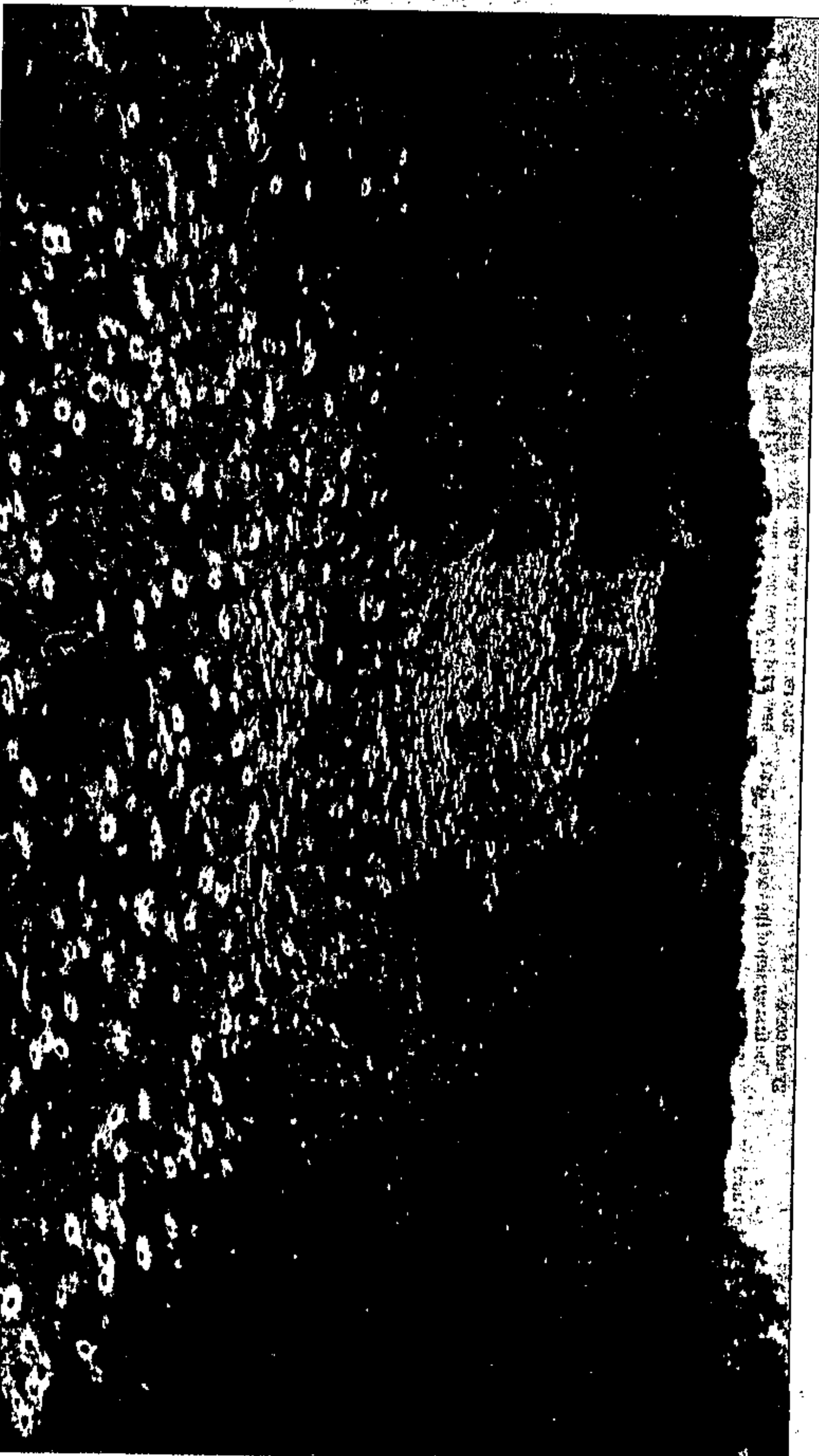
The mining could then be extended for up to another 40 years.

Alpha, which bought the mineral lease area between 1970 and 1985, has proposed managing that part of its property lying north of the Jacobs Bay-Vredenburg road, the Trekossekraal farm, as a permanent conservation area to compensate for the environmentally sensitive area lost to mining in the south.

But botanists say this property has different vegetation types, and that one feature of particular botanical importance - the transitional zone between calcareous and granite outcrops - doesn't occur on it.

Conservationists have pointed out that, apart from possibly putting South Africa in contravention of its obligations under the Biodiversity Convention, of which it is a signatory, the proposed mining could also attract some sanctions.

This is because many western countries have now adopted tough international environmental standards, the International Standards Organisation (ISO) standards, which also apply to imports.



No substitute: these spring flowers at Trekossekraal near Vredenburg are spectacular but conserving this trade-off area will not compensate for endangered plant habitat lost to mining further south.

Because the cement from Saldanha would be manufactured at a significant environmental cost, imports could be at risk of being banned by those countries applying ISO standards.

There have been rumours of political interference in the impact assessment process, with a former New National Party provincial cabinet minister allegedly insisting mining be allowed irrespective of the findings.

Professor Cowling describes the proposed mining area as "incredibly important" botanically.

"There are other calcareous deposits which they could mine elsewhere," he said. "The danger is that if they get away with this, it will set a really unfortunate precedent."

He points out that the proposed mining site is also a priority area for the proposed West Coast biosphere reserve, which will have

important implications for the tourism industry.

Also, the World Bank-funded Cape (Cape Action Plan for the Environment) Project is still under way, and two of its aims - identify conservation priorities in the Fynbos region and developing a long-term strategic vision for this region - are incomplete.

"At the very least, I would expect them to hang back until we've developed this strategic plan," Professor Cowling said.

Kristal Maze, conservation officer of the Botanical Society, which has been involved as an "interested and affected party" said both mining options proposed by Alpha would have a "very severe" impact on the botanical diversity of the area.

She questioned whether the proposed mitigation measure of setting aside conservation land at Trekossekraal was a good trade-off.

"Is this in fact a conservation priority for the region?" she asked.

"But one also has to feel for the client (Alpha) who has been kept on tenterhooks for some three years already," she added.

Alpha's application for the proposed mining was initiated as far back as January 1996. Mining is a national issue, and a final decision will be taken by the Department of Minerals and Energy Affairs.

Cape Nature Conservation has commented on the mining application as an "interested and affected party", and its initial recommendations, which excluded comment by its specialist scientists, caused deep unhappiness in some conservation quarters.

It said while mining would result in significant negative environmental impacts, it would also have positive socio-economic implications such as job opportunities.

On balance, there was no impact of such magnitude that mining should be totally prohibited, and the socio-economic benefits would compensate to a substantial degree for the negative environmental impacts.

A joint meeting between the regional Department of Minerals and Energy Affairs and Cape Nature Conservation to discuss the issue has been scheduled for October 13.

Conservationists have also expressed unhappiness at the brief given to the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), which was commissioned to conduct an independent review of the project's environmental impact assessment.

The brief did not include an assessment of either the "no mining" option, or of whether there was sufficient information in the assessment to enable informed decision-making.

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- Free Admission

AGG AUG 25/86 19199 (200) (56)

Clean up your act

Blaauwberg residents take Caltex to Human Rights Commission

WILLEM STEENKAMP

Blaauwberg residents, fed up with foul emissions from the Caltex petrol refinery and Kynoch fertiliser factory, are taking both companies to the Human Rights Commission for depriving them of their right to clean air.

Caltex near Milnerton, which refines all the petrol brands sold in the Western Cape, and Kynoch have for a long time been accused of polluting a large residential area, including Table View.

After years of frustration and anger, the people of Table View have taken their case to the commission, accusing the refinery and the fertiliser plant of generating pollution that is damaging their lungs. But the Kynoch plant may close

soon anyway - "fantastic news", according to residents - leaving Caltex to face the consequences of the row.

Neighbours of the two plants have been battling for years to get them to limit their sulphur and ammonia nitrate emissions because of health concerns.

Children in Table View, Bothasig, Edgemead, Milnerton and Richwood show a particularly high incidence of breathing problems.

The Caltex refinery processes all the fuel sold in the Western Cape and Kynoch, recently renamed Nitrogen Products, manufactures chemical fertiliser.

Andy Birkinshaw, chairman of the Table View Residency Association, said his organisation had reported the two plants to the Human Rights Commission and

appealed for their constitutional right to clean and healthy air to be upheld.

Mr Birkinshaw said a few years ago Caltex promised its neighbours it would cut sulphur emissions from 28 tons to about eight tons a day by July this year. However, it had failed to do that.

A spokesman for Caltex said the company was aware it had been reported to the commission.

Martin Burr, manager at Nitrogen Products, said the fertiliser plant would in any event probably close by November.

The holding company, AECI, was in the process of signing a joint venture agreement with a Norwegian fertiliser company, Norsk Hydro. Nitrogen Products would be "lived out" and not form part of the new venture.

"What this means is that the new joint venture company is not interested in running our fertiliser factory. Secondly, AECI is in any event withdrawing from the local fertiliser market.

"If we do not find an independent buyer to take over the factory, we will probably close the plant by November."

Mr Burr said 75 people had already been retrenched and should the plant close, the remaining 180 would also lose their jobs.

Because cheap fertiliser could be imported from Russia, the price of fertiliser had dropped substantially.

When Saturday Argus told Mr Birkinshaw about the imminent closure of the fertiliser plant, he said it was "fantastic news" for the people in Blaauwberg.

"We can only hope that Caltex will follow suit."

Caltex and the Kynoch plant have been operating in the area for more than 30 years. In the early days the closest suburb was Milnerton, but, as the city expanded, Table View, Richwood, Bothasig and Edgemead developed closer to the plants.

A spokesman for Caltex said the company had no plans to move or close. "Caltex is a strategically important installation, being the sole source of petroleum products in the region. Therefore, we believe that the continued operation of the refinery is vital to the region.

"The proposal to relocate is not practical. The cost to Caltex, the region and the country is prohibitive and not justified based on the environmental issues."

Hopes for SA world heritage site

DD 27/9/99

A fossilised skeleton found at Sterkfontein has heightened excitement, writes Pearl Sebolao (nb)

AS THE world braces itself to celebrate the dawn of a fast-paced, technological-charged new millennium, a committee of 21 nations will take a decision on celebrating millenniums of a different kind — the origins of man on earth.

The World Heritage Convention, a body established by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (Unesco), will decide whether the fossil hominid sites of Sterkfontein, Swartkrans, Kromdraai and environs — which have become known as the Cradle of Humankind — will be declared a World Heritage Site. This means that it will be protected against the threats of changing social and economic conditions and natural decay.

If the "cradle" is accepted for inscription, it will join other sites deemed to have outstanding universal value like the Great Barrier Reef in Australia, the Great Wall and the Peking Man sites in China, Ecuador's Galapagos Islands and the Pyramids of Giza in Egypt.

Already one of SA's national monuments, the Cradle of Humankind is of world significance because of its bearing on human origin, says Wits University palaeoanthropologist Prof Phillip Tobias, who is part of the team that has been excavating the site relentlessly for the past 33 years.

The site is one of the richest and most productive palaeoanthropological and archaeological sites in the world. It has yielded the remains of hominids from between two-million and 3-million years ago, the early stone age, the middle stone age, the early and late iron ages and up to the present day.

Mrs Ples, the first complete Australopithecus skull, was discovered by Dr Robert Broom at the Sterkfontein caves in 1947. In 1994 Little Foot, a set of 3.5-million-year-old hominid foot bones, was also found at the site.

During a visit to the site on the eve of SA's National Heritage Day last Thursday, Gauteng premier Mbhazima Shilowa and members of the provincial cabinet had a guided tour of the most recent discovery made at the site.

There is a veil of secrecy over this find as excavations continue. However, Tobias described it as "the most significant find of this century and since the discovery of the Taung Child in 1924... an upright citizen which the world did not want to know".

The discovery, made by a team consisting of Dr Ron Clarke, Stephen Motsumi and Nkwane Molefe in December last year, is an almost complete ape-man skeleton estimated to be about 3.3-million years old.

Once the excavation is completed, the skeleton will provide a picture of how early ape-man looked and moved. It will also add to the understanding



Wits University palaeoanthropologist Prof Phillip Tobias, left, and Gauteng's MEC for agriculture, conservation and environment, Mary Metcalfe, at the Sterkfontein Caves — one of a number of sites collectively nominated as a World Heritage Site. Picture: TREVOR SAMSON

of the origins of humankind. Shilowa said the sites were SA's and southern Africa's most important contributions to human life.

"We are able not only to speculate but to provide scientific proof on the origins of man," Shilowa said.

He pledged government's support to developing the site, so that "we can leave a legacy for others" and maybe "new species because scientifically we are not sure if we are the last species or if there are still others to come and we'll become part of the heritage".

A World Heritage Site project will be implemented to conserve and manage the Cradle of Humankind, which is more than 47 000ha in size.

The Gauteng department of agriculture, conservation and environment has had the responsibility for the project over the past year and has conducted research to develop a management

strategy and system for the area.

The department will remain responsible for the implementation of the project until the World Heritage Bill, which provides for the establishment of a management authority for a World Heritage Site, is passed.

The site is among the three that have been proposed in SA. The others are the St Lucia Wetland Park in KwaZulu-Natal and Robben Island in Western Cape.

The much awaited announcement of the inclusion of the nominated sites on the World Heritage List will be made in December at the 23rd session of the World Heritage Committee in Morocco.

As Tobias puts it: "On December 8, watch out for a hotwire of news from Marakesh, Morocco, to celebrate SA's first ever listing."

The Sterkfontein project manager, Melinda Swift, said the management plan incorporated tourism and market

strategies as well as a land use and infrastructure management strategy.

The management plan was being discussed with all the stakeholders including residents, the scientific community and ecological groups.

"The success of the World Heritage Site project will also contribute a key tourist destination to Gauteng and SA."

"It will add value to local development and job-creation strategies, as well as to the African renaissance concept, by providing a scientific basis for the importance of the continent as the cradle of humankind," Gauteng agriculture MEC Mary Metcalfe said.

The next phase of the project will involve developing an acceptable three- and 10-year business plan integrating the various proposals.

This work is under way and will be submitted to the Gauteng cabinet for approval in November.

'Don't monkey around with baboons' lives'

ET 27/9/99 (5b)

ROGER FRIEDMAN

ZOOLOGISTS working on the Cape Peninsula Baboon Project have accused the management of the Cape Peninsula National Park of "shooting first and asking questions later".

David Gaynor and Ruth Kansky were reacting yesterday to the shooting last week of three male baboons in the Cape of Good Hope Reserve.

According to park ranger Gavin Bell, the decision to shoot the three "problem animals" was not taken lightly and followed a series of "increasingly serious" attacks on people, including a couple with a new-born baby and an elderly woman with a heart complaint.

But Gaynor and Kansky believe the shooting could have been prevented by proactive management of baboons and visitors to the reserve.

"The core of the problem is that baboons continue to get food off people

The solution is to manage baboons, tourists and tourist facilities so that human food is not so freely on display and available to baboons," they said.

Proof of the effectiveness of this strategy was the Ollifantsbos troop in the reserve, which is no longer considered problematic since braai areas in their vicinity were removed.

The tourist complex at Cape Point was "ideal" for conflict between people and baboons, with the presence of a busy takeaway and free access to baboons.

While they understood the importance of attracting visitors, there was an onus on the Cape Peninsula National Park to avoid a negative impact on the flora and fauna in the area.

Ninety-five percent of baboon "incidents" occurred at the complex, Gaynor and Kansky said.

The situation at Cape Point can be sorted out. It will take money and active management.

The situation at Cape Point can be sorted out. It will take a combination of money and active management. It is quite feasible to erect a 1.4m baboon-proof fence around the complex. Using an angled design and with clever use of the terrain and vegetation, it would not be at all visible.

This would restrict access of baboons to two places, the entrance road and the walkways to the lighthouse.

"A single employee at each of these could prevent baboons from entering the complex. The one at the walkway to the lighthouse could advise people to eat their food before walking up, or to place it in their car, thus effectively solving the problem."

According to Gaynor and Kansky, these and even simpler suggestions have been put to the authorities on numerous

occasions — to no avail. All parties agreed that shooting animals was not a long-term solution. The situation was critical at a time when research was showing that a shortage of male baboons constituted a serious threat to the isolated baboon population at Cape Point. Two of seven troops in the reserve did not include an adult male, exposing these troops to infanticide should a new male join the troop.

The most serious result of the shooting of baboons was that it undermined conservation of the species outside the reserve. "How can we ask residents to bear with baboons, purchase baboon-proof dustbins, manage their lives with baboons in mind, not harass, injure or kill them when the Peninsula's premier conservation organisation does not show that level of commitment?" Gaynor and Kansky asked.

"Commitment to solving a problem is what makes the difference between a conservationist and a bureaucrat," they said.

Parks Board saga: Heath clears ex-MEC

(56) Gouweran 28/10/99

By Jimmy Seepe
Senior Political Reporter

THE African National Congress announced yesterday that its deployment committee will meet soon to consider where to deploy former Mpumalanga MEC for environmental affairs following the decision by the Heath special investigation unit to clear him of all charges.

Mr David Mkhwanazi, who was accused of irregular activities connected to the Mpumalanga Parks Board and the Dolphin deal, announced at a news conference in Johannesburg that the Heath unit had exonerated him from corruption charges.

Mkhwanazi said: "After months of intensive investigations by the Heath special investigation unit, my name has been cleared. This should close the chapter of one of the most turbulent and tormenting periods of my life."

The unit's decision follows closely on a similar one a few weeks ago when Mpumalanga's MEC for safety and security Mr Steve Mabona faced charges of corruption related to the issuing of fraudulent licences in the province.

Mkhwanazi had maintained throughout the controversy that he was innocent. "I indicated that I was framed in all irregular transactions entered into by the officials of the Mpumalanga Parks Board."

He said despite his claim of innocence "the

allegations of corruption persisted much more vigorously after the Mpumalanga Parks Board and the Dolphin group entered into a controversial agreement".

Mkhwanazi faced several inquiries by both the Heath unit and the public protector. The latter cleared him of all irregularities, including allegations of nepotism after accusations that he had given his wife a senior position in the government.

ANC national spokesman Mr Smuts Ngonyama said the Heath unit's decision was a welcome relief for his organisation as the investigation had "deprived us of one of the capable comrades".

Ngonyama said the deployment committee would soon meet to decide on Mkhwanazi's future. "The ANC will look at where Mkhwanazi will be deployed."

Mkhwanazi's lawyer Advocate Seth Nthai said they have collected a lot of information regarding the Mpumalanga Parks Board saga which they had shared with the Heath unit. They would also pass the information to the ANC leadership.

The Heath unit's legal assistant Ms Michelle Naidoo confirmed in a statement that Mkhwanazi has been cleared of all charges.

"The Heath special investigation unit has at this stage found no evidence to suggest that Mr DS Mkhwanazi has benefited financially from any irregular transactions involving the Mpumalanga Parks Board," Naidoo said.

Your park needs you!

JOHN (76) YELD
 ARLT 2919199



Environment
 Writer

"We intend to establish a fire fighting ser-

vice for the park, staffed by volunteers, capable of similarly quick response times. It's wonderful having such excellent examples here in Cape Town from which we can learn a range of lessons regarding the management of these operations."

The idea is supported by the Mountain Club.

NSRI chief executive Ian Wienburg, whose organisation is staffed by 600 volunteers countrywide, said he believed the park's fire service would attract the same calibre people.

"The type of person the NSRI attracts is basically a person who wants to help - he or she is a doer, not just a watcher," Mr Wienburg said.

"You've got to be special to be a NSRI volunteer and people have a lot of respect for someone with a NSRI card or who pulls on their NSRI jacket to help at an incident, like

a road accident or the Planet Hollywood attack, for example.

"So the fire-fighting team should not be open to anyone. It should be an elite team - membership must be something that you want to write on your CV."

Lester Coelen, co-ordinator of mountain rescue for the Cape Town section of the Mountain Club, said he considered the volunteer fire-fighting service for the park "a wonderful idea", but emphasised the need for proper training and safety.

Both organisations offered to help.

Mr Daitz said they intended learning as much as possible from various volunteer services, including that of the New South Wales Rural Fire Service in Australia, which was the best example he was aware of.

"It's been around for 100 years, consists of 2 460 brigades and a total of 71 423 volunteers, with 116 permanent staff. It is responsible for 90% of the fire suppression and prevention activities in New South Wales."

The park's first target was to have one response unit, operated by trained volunteers, operational at Kloof Nek by the beginning of December, Mr Daitz said.

He said many tasks, including manning the communication systems, did not require "macho" attributes.

■ Potential volunteers should fax a brief CV to Shayne Fuller at 762 9962.

At the start of World War I in 1914, hundreds of thousands of British volunteers responded to the patriotic call of army general Lord Kitchener, whose face and finger pointed from posters blanketing the country: "Your country needs you!"

Now, Cape Peninsula National Park managers are in the initial stages of a similar appeal. This time the volunteers are being asked to fight a different kind of enemy - Peninsula's precious mountain chain in summer.

They may also be asked to help monitor the controlled burns which are an essential part of the park's ecological management. It is hoped to have the first response unit operated by 15 trained volunteers unit opening of December.

Park manager David Daitz said the proposed volunteer fire-fighting service would be modelled on overseas examples would local emergency rescue services: the National Sea Rescue Service (NSRD) and the Mountain Club of South Africa's mountain rescue team.

Another local model was Fish Hoek's fire brigade. "These services operate entirely by volunteers with incredibly quick response times to call-outs," Mr Daitz said.

ET (MR) 6/10/99

Xerox warns on cost of wasting paper

(194) (86)

JOHN FRASER

Johannesburg - Xerox South Africa, the office equipment supplier, this week warned South African companies that they would save about R13,5 billion a year if they stopped wasting paper.

The forest of trees that would be reprieved would also help efforts to safeguard the environment.

Xerox calculated that companies habitually overproduce and discard almost 20 percent of their paper document output.

As the cost of documents amounted to about 10 percent of companies' annual expense budgets, Xerox calculated that the total waste was 2 percent of South Africa's total gross domestic product of R673 billion - that is a whopping R13,5 billion.

"By working online, rather than on paper, companies improve document quality and productivity, minimise storage and archiving expense, and save time and money," said Pierre Nothard, the general manager of Xerox South Africa. "By adopting more effective document management processes, South African companies can make substantial economies."

The Xerox survey showed more than 90 percent of firms believed that efficient document management was crucial to productivity.

Mel Powell-Rees, the industry marketing manager of Xerox, said Xerox had developed systems that could radically reduce paper wastage.

People power stops plan for nuclear plant

(b) M+G 1-7/10/99

Peter Dickson

With the prospect of a nuclear "demonstration plant" in their coastal backyard, so coveted by itinerant surfers, the good citizens of Jeffreys Bay, Humansdorp, St Francis Bay, Oyster Bay and Cape St Francis decided it was time for a showdown.

And Eskom switched off. The power parastatal, to the whoops of delight of a unique community anti-nuclear group that has galvanised the coastal resorts into a united front in less than a year, conceded defeat at a press conference in Jeffreys Bay last week.

Eskom environmental and nuclear services manager Tony Stott said the environmental impact assessment (EIA) of the Thyspunt development — 22km from Jeffreys Bay, 15km from St Francis Bay and a mere 5km from Oyster Bay — would be shelved for the time being.

Stott said work linked to the project would continue only at Koeberg and was being halted at Thyspunt, which is still owned by Eskom, and at Bantamsklip outside Hermanus in the Western Cape.

Stott said the main reason was Eskom had accepted the benefit of building where there was existing infrastructure, while the development would also need comprehensive government approval in the form of a nuclear licence that was already accorded to Koeberg.

But Eskom was also pushed by people power in the form of the Kouga Anti-Nuclear Group (Kang), a union of the Jeffreys Bay, Humansdorp and Cape St Francis town councils, ratepayers, businesses and

the Game Management Association that grew out of the small Kouga Nuclear Concern Group formed last year by locals worried about having a potential Chernobyl on their doorsteps.

Jeffreys Bay town secretary Wesels Vlok, who is also Kang's secretary, said the business community received 3 000 petition signatures alone over December last year while hundreds more were recorded during this year's annual Shell Festival in April.

By the time Kang and the tiny Jeffreys Bay town council, which already in the middle of last year had rejected Eskom's Thyspunt structure plan out of hand, were finished conscientising the masses, every resident was solidly behind them.

In the best tradition of power plays, Kang held the petition in abeyance, merely hinting at the existence of its secret weapon waiting in the wings. They didn't have to produce it, Vlok says. Eskom learnt the hard way, on the street, when 90 people in snap poll of 120 pavement strollers in town one day told them they could dump their nuclear plant in the sea.

But Vlok says Kang, which meets again in October, cannot afford to be complacent.

"We have to decide whether we are going to pursue this on another level now, or are going to relax and rest on our laurels," Vlok said this week.

"They are not proceeding with the EIA process, but that's only for the time being. They could still go ahead with it in the future — that is, if there is no resistance."

Pollution levels are set to soar by half

CT 8/10/99

(56)

MELANIE GOSLING
ENVIRONMENT WRITER

If you think Cape Town's air pollution is bad now, you won't want to be around in 10 years time — when it is predicted that it will have increased by a whopping 48% and that international pollution limits will be exceeded more often and for longer periods. This emerged yesterday at the Clean Air Conference organised by the National Association for Clean Air.

Cape Metropolitan Council (CMC) staff told delegates they were trying to control the biggest air polluters in the city, diesel vehicles, but "poor, cumbersome, outdated" legislation hampered them. While the city's biggest tourist attraction, its scenic beauty, is often

blanketed by a dirty brown haze, officials have to deal with eight separate pieces of legislation to try to control vehicle emissions, dust and smoke. In some areas of the metro-pole there are no regulations at all.

The United States announced yesterday it was drafting legislation to make emissions from diesel vehicles "as clean as if they were run on natural gas", yet SA's national pollution legislation is so outdated it does not even apply to black smoke from turbo-charged diesel vehicles.

This means more than half the country's trucks are exempt from the regulations. There are no regulations controlling emissions from petrol vehicles.

Hans Linde, head of the CMC's air pollution control, said in a keynote address that in winter

Cape Town experienced regular episodes of serious air pollution that were steadily worsening.

After "futile" attempts by local authorities to get the national government to take a leading role in implementing a study to establish the causes of the brown haze, local authorities and UCT's Energy Research Unit eventually undertook the study themselves.

The results, which were released in 1997, attributed 65% of the city's brown haze to vehicle emissions, of which nearly half was from diesel-driven vehicles. Among the emissions are tiny, soot-like particles which not only contribute to smog but can lodge in lungs and have been linked to cancer and respiratory disease. Industry accounted for 21% of the brown haze and domes-

tic wood fires for 11%.

Linde said that after these findings the CMC classified diesel vehicle emission control as a high priority and, "despite the poor, cumbersome and outdated legislation", appointed three teams to give effect to this. It was too early to say what impact they had had, but Linde said it would be evaluated. He said fuel reformulation and motor vehicle emissions could be effectively addressed only at a national level.

The CMC had petitioned "various ministers" to devise an action plan with an implementation time scale.

"The delay in implementing an action plan is of concern as there is a steady increase in vehicles and emissions. Legislation must lead the way," said Linde.



BACK TO NATURE: Scenes such as this belie the undercurrents flowing through the forest, where thousands of people are waiting to be resettled
Pictures: JACKIE CLAUSEN

TIME is running out for Dukuduku, South Africa's biggest and most valuable coastal forest, which is being devastated by land invaders. A network of sandy paths that link thousands of homesteads in Dukuduku belies the Zulu word from which the forest derives its name.

It was once easy to get hopelessly lost, or "duka", in the 6 000ha forest on the eastern shores of Lake St Lucia in northern KwaZulu-Natal.

Now cars can find their way through rows of alien pine and gum trees, past a concrete spaza shop and a school, one of five, where the children strain to see a blackboard propped against a tree trunk.

The state-owned Dukuduku Forest Reserve is an important part of plans to redevelop the Greater St Lucia Wetland Park to harness the region's ecotourism potential.

The government is negotiating with tribal authorities to resettle forest-dwellers on two highly profitable farms on the reserve's southern boundary, bought this year for R10,5-million. But the talks have been slow. Each month, an estimated 100 people are flouting a government moratorium on new arrivals.

Thousands of people have flocked to the forest in the past 20 years. The government conservatively puts the number of dwellers at 5 000. But residents, conservationists and police say it is nearer 15 000.

Michael Peter, KwaZulu-Natal conservation forestry manager, said this week the government was "upbeat" that a deal to resettle the forest-dwellers would soon be finalised.

But while the talks are going on, the forest is dying. Almost half of the dense bush has been burnt and slashed. The gaboon viper that flourished in Dukuduku is endangered and several bird species are threatened.

"Something needs to be done fast," said Keith Cooper, conservation director of the Wildlife and Environment Society of SA. "The forest can be saved if dwellers move within a year, provided no more clearing is done."

But a band of residents is adamant they will not leave. Some are allegedly stockpiling weapons in the event of a confrontation.

"Nobody controls the area and people do as they want," said Siphso Zungu, chairman of the Dukuduku steering committee that is dealing with the resettlement issue. Zungu, 48, speaking in his personal capacity, said: "There is one guy who fetches weapons from Mozambique to assist those who say they are not going."

Locals also talk about the "fancy" cars, bearing Gauteng and Durban number-plates, spotted in the forest late at night, and of gunshots that ring out in the dark.

Apart from arms trafficking, the government is aware of a fraudulent SA identity document scam operating in the forest, of land being sold illegally and of dagga dealing.

Jabulani Mjwara, conservation forestry director in the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry, said the

Circles in the forest

Arms smuggling and illegal occupation are just two of the problems threatening to destroy Dukuduku, writes INGRID SALGADO, ST 10/10/99 (56)



FRUITS OF THE LAND: Jaconia Mswell, who has farmed in the forest all his life

government did not want to "rock the boat". Officials recall the conflict that left one policeman and at least two residents dead in the early '90s when half the forest-dwellers were moved to a nearby eucalyptus farm.

Said Mjwara: "There is the criminal element who do not want to move out of the forest, but they are in the minority. There are also innocent people and we do not want to compromise their situation."

One such person is maMkhwanazi Buthelezi, a forest-dweller for 20 years who is in her mid-50s. "The resettlement is a severe blow. My worry is that I may not be able to lead the same life on the farms. I plant here and these crops help me to raise my family," she said, shaking her head.

Among the pockets of remaining

indigenous growth in the forest is a rich variety of fruit and vegetables including mangoes, bananas, pawpaws, sugar cane and sweet potatoes.

Jaconia Mswell, 57, a councillor appointed by a former induna of nkosi Mineas Mkhwanazi, was adamant that the nkosi could not tell his people to resettle. Striding through a massive garden that feeds his 37 children from three wives, Mswell said: "Nkosi does not have overall power over us. We inform nkosi what we want."

"The government are unreasonably forcing us to move. If King Goodwill Zwelithini, IFP president Mangosuthu Buthelezi and President Thabo Mbeki want us to go, they must come and tell us themselves."

Mswell's family is one of 20 in the forest identified by the Land Claims

Commission as having a legitimate claim to the land.

Their appeal, still outstanding, is regarded as a separate issue to the plight of those who set up home in the forest more recently.

Zungu, a tourist guide, is sad at the prospect of leaving the forest he has called home for seven years. "But we can't leave the forest to die. Tourists like to see indigenous trees and we need tourists to support our kids. We can't be stupid and kill that."

Ronnie Kasrils, the Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry, said the government had developed a close working relationship with traditional authorities in the area. "As soon as we have resolved the issue with them, we will talk to the media," said Kasrils' spokesman.

Poachers win war

Police are powerless as armed syndicates plunder Cape's crayfish and perlemoen

BOBBY JORDAN

THE fight against marine poachers in the Western Cape has virtually collapsed and perlemoen could be extinct within five years.

That's the desperate message this week from conservationists who claim police are powerless against several armed poaching syndicates operating freely along the coast, plundering the country's valuable perlemoen and crayfish resources, much of which ends up for sale in the East.

In the latest series of setbacks in the war against poachers:

● The police anti-poaching operation on the south coast, dubbed Operation Neptune, has been scaled down due to funding shortages;

● Poachers are running riot in Kleinmond, where inspectors have confiscated hundreds of kilograms of poached perlemoen over the past 10 days;

● Poachers broke into the Sea Point headquarters of the Department of Marine and Coastal Management on Wednesday night and walked off with over 1 000kg of confiscated perlemoen and crayfish worth over R350 000.

Department officials have warned that the stolen perlemoen contained potentially lethal toxins caused by red tide.

Police say they are investigating a Table Bay poaching syndicate that may have an "operational link" on Robben Island.

Poachers have removed more than 90 percent of the (perlemoen) breeding stock," said Mike Tannett, co-ordinator of south coast marine conservation group Sea Watch.

In the 2½ years since we were formed we have confiscated 14 500 perlemoen. The government's coastal management policy has clearly failed," Tannett said.

"The sea is suffering — we're losing the battle hand over fist. He said young perlemoen had disappeared from the Betty's Bay area, raising fears that the resource was close to extinction.

Members of the police water wing, many of whom recently pulled out of the south coast area, had faced constant intimidation from poachers — some of them armed. The worst areas were Hawston, Gansbaai and Buffeljags.

ST (Cm) 17/110/99 (3) FISHING (56)

Investigators had also been unable to secure convictions against poachers who were well organised and hired expensive lawyers.

Sources in the Department of Marine and Coastal Management said this week investigators were unable to compete with high-tech poaching syndicates, one of which had been plundering a "goldmine" of perlemoen around Robben Island.

The island poachers, who operated at night, allegedly used underwater torches mounted on helmets and custom-made poaching baskets to collect the lucrative shellfish.

Police said last week's arrest of a 42-year-old skipper 100m off the island — caught with four bags of perlemoen — suggests lawmakers have gained the upper hand. But the divers had "disappeared" — apparently onto the island.

A senior police officer investigating the syndicate, who wished to remain anonymous, said there was "a strong possibility" of links between poachers and island personnel.

"They launch from Cape Town, Hout Bay or Sea Point and go to the island at night. It's difficult to catch

them because we don't know where they come out — so we can't wait for them. They are careful not to stick to one spot."

Director of the Robben Island museum, Professor Andre Odendaal, said undercover police operations on the island had so far been unable to uncover a poaching syndicate.

He said island administration had also teamed up with the National Intelligence Agency in an attempt to crack the case.

The island was considering applying for its own perlemoen quota "to

enable us to manage the island in an integrated way", Odendaal said.

Conservation spokesman for the Kleinmond/Hangklip municipality, Johan Erasmus, said it was virtually impossible to halt the carnage along the coast. Poachers were operating with near impunity.

"The frustrating thing is we know who the guys are. There's one who has a boat with radar on it and a GPS system — he can track other boats as they approach. We haven't been able to catch him once.

"He goes in with divers, they dive

up their catch and just leave it there — and then go back and fetch it later. There's virtually nothing we can do to stop that," Erasmus said.

Tannett said the crisis prompted a meeting between conservationists and police top brass at Hermanus last week, attended by Community Safety MEC Mark Wiley.

"Wiley said he would speak to Environmental Affairs Minister Vali Moosa and we are hoping to bring Operation Neptune back at a national level. How long it will take we don't know," Tannett said.

Govt urged to get tough over medical waste

By **Waghied Mischach**
Political Correspondent

(5)

NATIONAL Government has been called on to introduce tough new measures to deal with medical companies that are not properly disposing of their contaminated medical waste.

This comes in the wake of increased dumping of medical waste, such as used syringe needles, close to suburban areas in the Western Cape. Recently a

number of children on the Cape Flats were found playing with used syringe needles. There have been 165 instances of medical waste dumping in the Western Cape over the past year.

Ashoek Adhikari, a lawyer working for the Western Cape Health MEC, said that there had been increasing calls on national government to institute regulations concerning the dumping of medical waste. Currently, regulations do not distinguish between different types

of waste disposal. The normal littering and dumping rules apply.

"At the moment waste disposal companies are not at fault. They seem to do a fairly good job of sorting out medical waste. It seems that private medical practitioners are the cause of the problem," he said.

About 75 percent of doctors do not make use of waste companies, either because they do not want to pay, think it is a nuisance or are simply negligent.

Adhikari said the problem seemed to be peculiar to the Western Cape. Last week nine provincial Health MECs had met and none, other than the Western Cape, had raised the problem.

Although enforcing waste disposal regulations is a local government function, the framework for any new regulations must come from national government. The Western Cape MEC had already started drafting proposals in this regard, said Adhikari.

The legislation was important because of the danger of children contracting HIV/Aids or other diseases.

Although none of the children had tested positive for any disease, there was usually a lag time of about a year, before a disease could be detected, Adhikari said.

There was also the increasing costs for provincial government of testing and treating people who had come into contact with contaminated waste.

A viable alternative to Koeberg II

ET 20/10/99

(55) (56)

TONY ROBINSON

A new gas-fired power station would mean cleaner air and a boost for the Western Cape

THE recent announcement by Eskom that it intends building a second nuclear reactor at the Koeberg power station appears to be an attempt to block an imaginative project to pipe natural gas to the Western Cape from the Kudu gas fields off the Namibian coast and then to use the gas to generate an abundant supply of electricity.

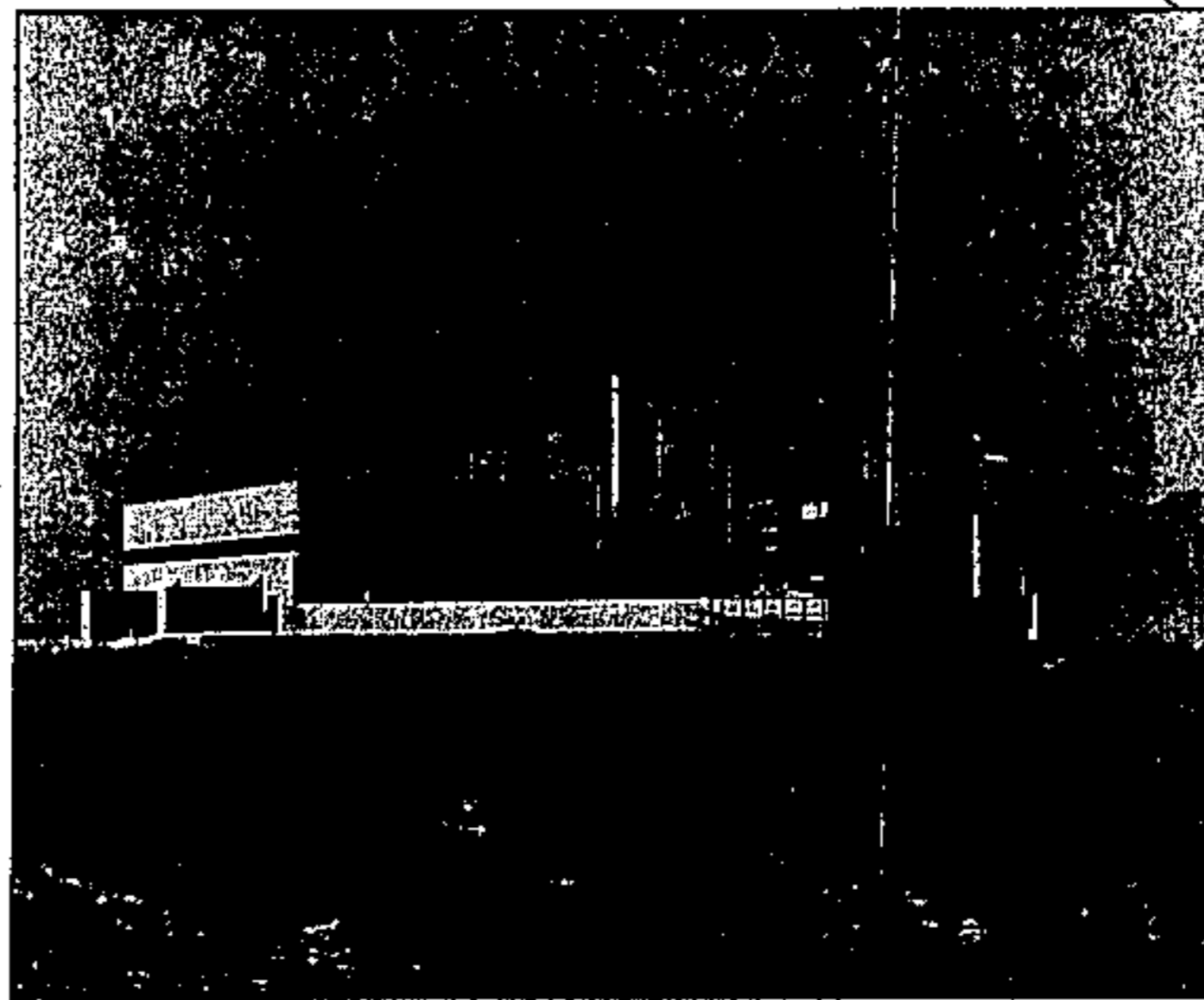
The beauty of the scheme is that the new combined cycle gas power stations produce very little pollution and are extremely efficient, so much so that they are now preferred to nuclear power plants in Europe.

In addition, the gas plants produce huge quantities of steam for industrial use.

Eskom's decision to increase its nuclear capacity also runs against the trend overseas where atomic power is out of favour, and will probably remain so until a new generation of fail-safe fusion plants is developed. This is evidenced by the fact that in wide-scale privatisations in Europe, no commercial enterprise has been prepared to take over a single nuclear power station, mainly because the economics of nuclear power have been disappointing and the cost of decommissioning the power stations at the end of their lifespan is prohibitive.

And if that isn't enough, there is a widespread distrust of the nuclear industry since Three Mile Island and Chernobyl.

In these circumstances it was not surprising that Europe set about finding ways to generate power efficiently



NUCLEAR POWER PLAY: It is time that South Africa realised that Koeberg had more to do with plutonium and its military potential than electricity.

from the vast reserves of natural gas under the North Sea. They were spectacularly successful, achieving efficiency rates of 55%, and there are now claims of up to 65% in some new plants. Compare this with the 27% thermal efficiency of the old Athlone power station and the 40% achieved by the best of Eskom's giant coal-fired plants in Mpumalanga.

All this means that the Western Cape, with its proximity to the Kudu gas field, is in a unique position to take advantage of the new technology, hence the plan to form a partnership between Shell, which controls the gas field, and the seven local authorities in the metropolitan Cape Town to build a gas-fired power station or to convert

the Athlone plant from coal to gas.

With the power station as the base customer, it would then be viable for Shell to build the 700km pipeline to the Western Cape and to supply surplus gas to industry, including the Iscor plant at Saldanha, where pollution from coal is a major environmental concern.

Another big advantage would be that the Western Cape would be alone in its ability to offer industrialists the choice of electricity or gas as well as steam. This would give the area a competitive edge and, at the same time, the reduced pollution would help to ensure that our scenic beauty and tourist appeal is preserved.

It is difficult to know what Eskom

and the nuclear industry have in mind, but we do know that they would like to win export orders for their new pebble-bed reactors and to do this they need to demonstrate their viability. Siting the first reactor at Koeberg could be simply a matter of convenience. Or could there be more to it?

Advocates of natural gas, however, believe the new reactors should be tested in another part of the country where gas is not a viable alternative to coal.

It is also time that South Africa came to terms with the truth about Koeberg, for it is clear that the power station was built with ulterior motives. We now know there was an atomic bomb programme in the dark days of apartheid, so is it not unreasonable to assume that Koeberg had more to do with plutonium and its military potential than electricity? South Africa has turned its back on the nuclear weapons programme and it will soon be time to turn its back on Koeberg as well.

If Eskom does go ahead with its new reactor it will argue vigorously that there is no need for an independent power producer to challenge its monopoly in the Western Cape. This would be a great disservice to the country as a whole, for there is no doubt that competition from an independent power producer would be healthy, especially if it comes from non-polluting power plants. The initial studies by an international consortium of engineering consultants found that a 1 000 megawatt combined cycle gas power station would be viable and would be more than adequate to meet the needs of the Western Cape for the foreseeable future. It would even be in a position to feed about 40% of its potential power into the national grid. No wonder Eskom's nose is out of joint.

Conservation nails smugglers

MELANIE GOSLING
ENVIRONMENT WRITER

ET 20/10/99

TWO foreigners have been convicted of smuggling rare plants and animals out of the country.

Cape Nature Conservation said yesterday that Hartmut Möhr of Germany had been found guilty of shipping angulate tortoises overseas without permits.

Möhr was arrested last week after an investigation by the SA Endangered Species Protection Unit and the conservation authorities in the Western and Northern Cape. The team followed him and his accomplices for days and arrested Möhr and a second man at Vloosdrift when they tried to cross the border into Namibia. A third suspect was arrested at Clanwilliam.

Möhr's address, handwriting and credit card payment for the postage of the parcels linked him to the tortoise incident. He was sentenced to 18 months' imprisonment or a R10 000 fine.

□ Turn to Page 3



STOLEN: Cape Nature Conservation's Claude van Leeve examines some rare Namaqualand succulents confiscated from a Czech national who was smuggling them out of South Africa.

PICTURE: CAPE NATURE CONSERVATION

Drive to save Chapman's Peak

BUNTY WEST

PRIVATE enterprise is coming to the rescue of Chapman's Peak Drive, while the provincial authorities can do little but stave off its permanent closure, with piecemeal repairs.

Old Mutual, a major life insurance group, concerned about the deteriorating state of Cape Town's most scenic route, has established the Save Chapman's Peak Fund and donated R100 000 to kickstart the process.

Managing director Gerhard van Niekerk, who yesterday announced a three-year sponsorship of the Old Mutual Two Oceans Marathon, said the company was aware of the public's concern about the future of the road and its importance to tourism.

"We are calling on corporate South Africa, as well as the public, to join us in restoring Chapman's

Peak Drive," Van Niekerk said.

The road, which makes up about 9km of the Two Oceans Marathon's 56km route, needs R800 000 immediately so that emergency repair work can be completed before the holiday season begins.

No money has been provided in the 1999/2000 South Peninsula budget for "substantial capital work" on Chapman's Peak.

Dave Ramsey, the director of engineering services, admitted recently that a permanent solution to Chapman's Peak Drive's problems — including the rock falls — would cost a small fortune.

The road is in state of crisis because of the failure of anchoring systems, bridges and retaining work due to corrosion.

Donations to the Save Chapman's Peak Fund can be made at any branch of Nedbank, account number 145 200 9244.

Smugglers

□ From Page 1

His companions could not be prosecuted because of lack of evidence.

In 1997 the authorities confiscated two parcels addressed to Möhr at Cape Town Airport, which contained 15 girdled lizards and five angulate tortoises. Möhr had left the country by the time the parcels were discovered.

In a separate incident, Czech citizen Petr Pavelka, was caught with 149 protected succulents that he had collected illegally on the Knersvlakte in Namaqualand. Some of the plants in his possession occur nowhere else in the world and have only recently been described by botanists.

Pavelka's case was originally postponed to allow investigation of parcels of succulents he had posted overseas. On September 29 he was sentenced to R3 000 or eight months' in jail. He paid the fine.

ET 20/10/99

Poachers' have no choice, study finds

By MELANIE GOSLING

(A6)

ST 20/10/99

MELANIE GOSLING
ENVIRONMENT WRITER

ALL along the South African coast there are large numbers of poor people who knowingly poach marine resources because the current "bag limits" prevent them from feeding their families.

This was the picture that emerged from a draft report commissioned by Marine and Coastal Management, formerly Sea Fisheries, which aims to provide information on the needs of "subsistence fishers" to help the authorities manage the country's scarce marine resources.

Many poachers use destructive implements like spades and pangas to hack off shellfish, or pour on vinegar or bleach to force mussel worms — used for bait — from behind the mussels. In many regions law enforcement is non-existent.

Most of the "poachers" are poorly-educated and 40% are unemployed — higher than the national unem-

ployment figure of 29%.

In the apartheid era, these people were classed as poachers, but the Marine Living Resources Act, passed last year, aims to give equitable access to marine resources to all citizens, and recognises subsistence use of the sea for the first time.

The report highlighted the poor level of communication between the authorities and the subsistence fishers, which should "ring alarm bells for those responsible for marine resource management".

Most subsistence fishers are not bothered about being arrested. They are more concerned about the weather, tides and availability of resources which may impede their harvest.

The report states: "It appears that there is no effective enforcement, and little by way of local involvement in co-management of marine resources. This could be seen as 'the worst of all possible situations'."

It says these fishers have in the past

been "criminalised" by the law, which has left many with "deep emotional scars". They have become used to operating on the margins of society and have low status.

The study looked at sample subsistence fisher communities along the coast, which was divided into West Coast, South Coast, East Coast and KwaZulu-Natal.

Fish was the most commonly harvested resource (81%), of which just over half (56%) was sold. Mussels were the second most commonly harvested resource (58%).

Generally, poorer households exploited the inter-tidal resources like mussels, limpets, oysters, alikwekel and crabs. Despite the high prices for perlemoen, the study found that subsistence fishers are most of the perlemoen they caught selling only 31%.

"Subsistence users were quite adamant that their needs were in excess of the current bag limits for recreational fishers, and that it was unreasonable to

expect them to meet the needs of their families on the basis of these quotas."

Of the households studied, 39% believed all marine resources belonged to God, 28% believed they belonged to the government and only 12% believed they belonged to the locals.

The average subsistence fisher household consisted of five people and the education levels of two thirds of adults was "some" primary school training or nothing at all.

Using international standards, the report classed 40% of them as poor and 20% as "ultra-poor". A quarter of households said there was never enough food to go around.

The study also found that the poverty of the subsistence fishers was worse in the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal, which showed "rather bleak scenarios". About half the households had at least one member who was employed, most of them as labourers. Other income was from old-age pensions and disability grants.

Golden Copper to come a cropper?

MTC 15 - 21/10/99 (56)

Fiona Macleod

A campaign similar to the one which saved the Brenton Blue butterfly from extinction is being mounted to protect a rare butterfly species in Gauteng's pre-1994 nature reserve complex.

The Heidelberg Copper, so named because of the golden metallic sheen of its wings and its discovery at Heidelberg in 1959, is threatened by a proposed low-cost housing development.

Research shows it is so fragile that even smoke from fires burnt for cooking food would have a disastrous impact on its prospects for survival.

A precedent was set in 1997 when former minister of environmental affairs and tourism Pallo Jordan used Section 31A of the Environment Conservation Act to halt a development project at Brenton-on-Sea near Knysna, and a state reserve was established to protect the Brenton Blue.

It was the first time this law was used to conserve an endangered species. The move was widely hailed as an indication that the South African government takes its international obligations to preserve biodiversity seriously — even where there are no direct economic incentives.

Now the Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa (Wessa), one of the initiators of the Brenton Blue campaign, is calling on the Gaut-

eng government to relocate the proposed development at Heidelberg, south of Johannesburg.

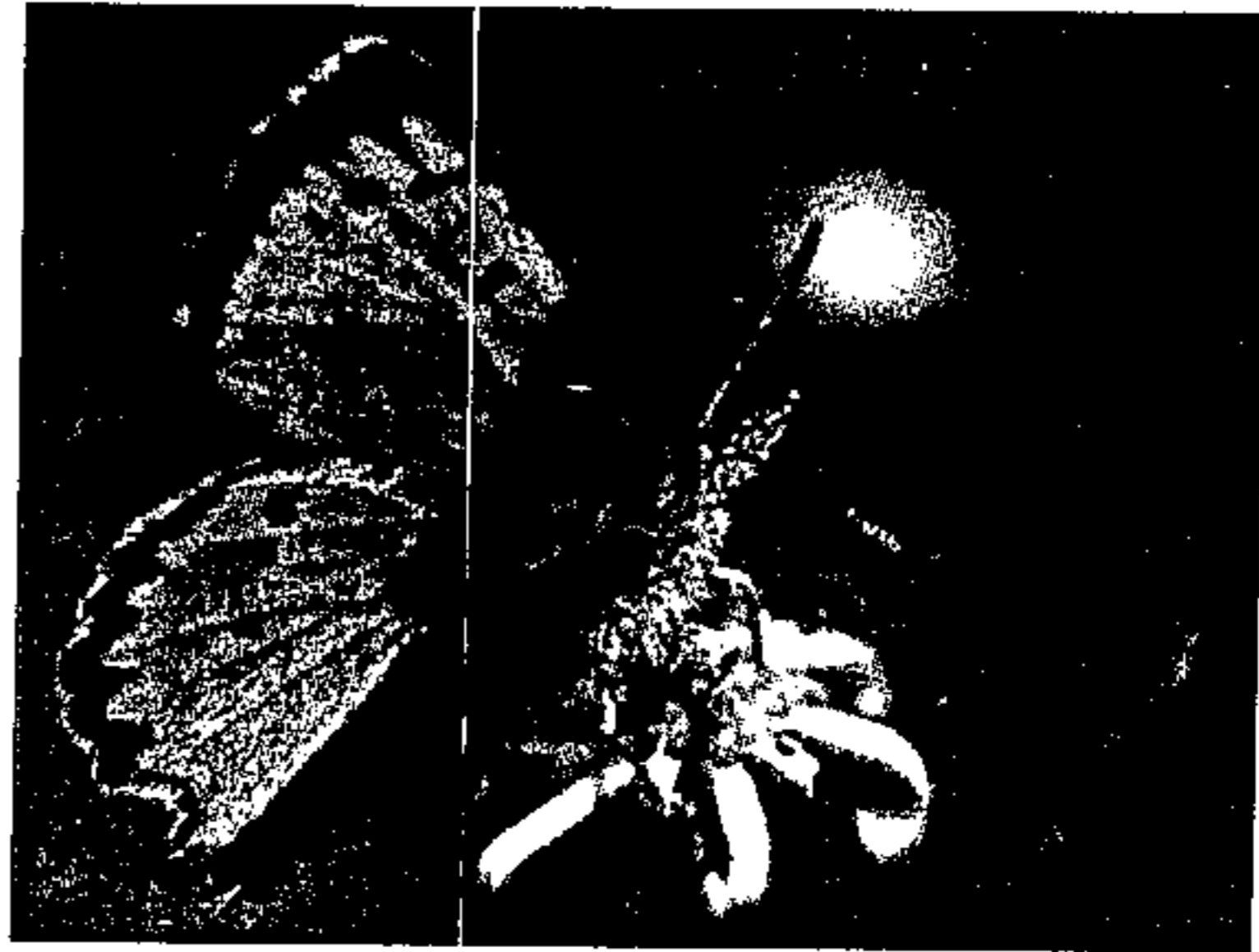
The society says this will be in the interest of preserving not only the Heidelberg Copper butterfly, but also other insects and at least 22 plant species listed in the *Red Data Book* as rare or endangered.

"We recognise the dire need for housing and services provision, and our intention is not to stand in the way of delivery," says Lyn Brown, conservation ecologist (northern areas region) at Wessa. "But an alternative site needs to be found, taking into account the broader environmental importance of the area."

The site earmarked for development falls between the Suikerbosrand Nature Reserve and the Alice Glockner Reserve, run by the Gauteng Directorate of Nature Conservation.

Wessa and a group called the Friends of Suikerbosrand would like to see the two reserves become the core of a biosphere reserve to be used for conservation, research and recreation for Johannesburg's stressed-out city slickers and low-impact agricultural activities.

Instead, the Heidelberg Town Council has plans to settle about 14 000 people in a 130ha informal settlement between the two reserves. The council does not have the funds to provide electricity and piped water so, at least initially, it plans to simply identify stands for residents



On the road to extinction: The Heidelberg Copper butterfly, only found at two South African locations, could perish in the face of development pressures. PHOTO: WILDLIFE/ G HENNING

to occupy and to provide "bucket night soil" sanitation services and taps in the streets.

Wessa's fear is that the future residents will burn fossil fuels for cooking and warmth.

A recent study of the Heidelberg Copper by scientists Peter Roos and Graham Henning points out that the butterflies are particularly susceptible to air-borne pollutants. They communicate by means of pheromones, and an increase in smoke pollution could quickly disrupt their communication systems.

The Alice Glockner Reserve has been identified by Roos and Henning as one of only two sites in South Africa where the Heidelberg Copper butterfly has any hope of a future. The other site is a small private game ranch in Mpumalanga.

"The unexpected threat of human settlement such as that proposed at Heidelberg brings potentially catastrophic dangers to the Alice

Glockner reserve," say Roos and Henning.

Trish Hanekom, head of Gauteng's Department of Agriculture, Conservation and the Environment, is not unsympathetic to Wessa's stance: "The public sector has a responsibility to ensure that the survival of species is not threatened by unsustainable development," she says.

"But we don't know enough about the Heidelberg Copper butterfly yet. Saying no to the housing development may not be the only way to handle it; we need to make absolutely sure there are no other viable populations of the Heidelberg Coppers."

The campaign to save the Brenton Blue took about four years to realise its goal. Brown is not sure the Heidelberg Copper has that much time to spare: "I'm very worried," she says, "that the authorities aren't taking their possible extinction seriously enough."

Last-ditch bid to save peak drive

Council set to shut scenic road

ARG 21/10/99 (56)

PETER GOUSEN
STAFF REPORTER

Chapman's Peak Drive, now considered dangerous to motorists even in good weather, will be closed to all traffic unless a last-ditch compromise can be thrashed out between the province and the South Peninsula Municipality.

As the agent of the provincial government, the municipality is responsible for the scenic route.

The chairman of the council's executive committee, Deon Kruse, said yesterday the council was determined to close the road until major reconstruction work had been carried out to make it safe.

"But the provincial government has told us

that we can't legally close the road, and the decision must be theirs.

"We have in turn told them that if that is the case, then we must be indemnified against the results of any accidents on the road."

Dave Buerger, executive director of engineering services for the council, says in his latest report: "If it were not for the fact that any road slip or structural failures are likely to be gradual rather than catastrophic, especially in drier weather, I would recommend closure of Chapman's Peak immediately."

A committee, consisting of councillors Nicki Holderness, Graham Lawrence, Ishmael Jones and Demetri Qually, will meet the provincial government as soon as possible to discuss Chapman's Peak and the desperately needed but expensive repair work.

One of the most scenic routes in Africa, the road is heavily used, especially by tourists, and the tourist season is about to peak.

Even more visitors than usual, estimated at an additional million, will be here for the millennium celebrations.

The latest report says the road has deteriorated to the point where it must be repaired to stop further disintegration. An investigation showed severe corrosion at three sites.

An investigation into the bridges, culverts and pipes, surfacing and embankments also showed severe corrosion and inherent shortcomings which had been accumulating.

Earlier this week Old Mutual, sponsors of the Two Oceans Marathon, which incorporates Chapman's Peak Drive, launched a Save Chapman's Peak Fund with R100 000.

Workshops outline how curbing pollution will assist companies

(56)

BD 22/10/99

Iija Graulich

SA companies are poised to gain a significant competitive advantage over their global counterparts if they are able to market environmental credits successfully and utilise the spin-offs to their advantage.

Environmental credits can be gained through various mechanisms, one of which is by emitting less toxic waste in the atmosphere than prescribed under various agreements.

The gains for SA companies could stem from changes on the global stage following agreements under the Kyoto Protocol, which has called for a capping of emission levels among member countries around the world.

Global advisory firm KPMG has held workshops for SA companies in which the firm has highlighted what advantages there are in emission trading and

clean development mechanisms.

The firm says that for SA companies, the mechanisms present direct financial, technological and environmental opportunities. SA firms stand to benefit from the implementation of state-of-the-art technology from foreign firms, while those partners could receive emission credits in return for the technology.

While the ideas have yet to take off on a grand scale, KPMG says there have been some successful projects, particularly in the steel industry.

Other big players in the mining front have also expressed interest. The modest take-up has been a result of the need for legal clarification to ensure that both sides gained maximum benefit.

While SA is supportive of the Kyoto agreement — which is an agreement between governments and not companies — it is the private sector, not only in SA, but around the world, that is driv-

ing the advances. Locally, Shell and Eskom have already entered into a pioneering project which would supply low-cost solar energy to remote regions.

On a global scale, companies such as Volvo will in future no longer accept parts from sub-contractors who do not adhere to an environmentally friendly policy, while international banks are starting to tighten the loan chest for projects that could be environmentally damaging.

This applies to private banks, as well as the World Bank and the International Finance Corporation.

KPMG is involved worldwide as advisers and auditors to various projects.

The company is also looking at tax planning for companies, as this could have a real bottom line effect on organisations that use the various mechanics on offer to their advantage.

Superpark breaks frontiers

(56) ST (PT) 24/10/99
SA, Zimbabwe and Mozambique
are in talks on a huge transfrontier
park, writes SVEN LUNSCHE

TOURISM ministers from Mozambique, South Africa and Zimbabwe met yesterday in Maputo to discuss the formation of a transfrontier conservation area including the Kruger National Park.

Speaking ahead of the meeting, Environmental Affairs & Tourism Minister Mohammed Valli Moosa said it was the first at ministerial level to discuss the ambitious frontier park, which has been championed by environmentalists for years.

The meeting arises from earlier discussions held by President Thabo Mbeki, Zimbabwe's Robert Mugabe and Joaquim Chissano of Mozambique, which backed talks on joint tourism projects.

The proposed superpark is one of a broad range of transfrontier wildlife initiatives being backed by the government. Early next year the Kgalagadi Park will be opened officially, unifying the Kalahari Gemsbok Park and the Botswana Gemsbok National Park.

Moosa revealed that earlier this month he had signed a draft agreement with his Mozambican and Swazi coun-

terparts to jointly develop a Maputaland national park.

Other so-called transfrontier conservation areas (TFCA) on the drawing board include a Drakensberg/Maloti Park, involving SA and Lesotho, a Namibian-SA initiative around the Ai-Ais/Richtersveld area and the Limpopo Valley Peace Park between Botswana and South Africa.

To date the transfrontier concept has been championed by key officials in the National and KwaZulu-Natal Parks Boards and supported by the private sector Peace Parks Foundation, chaired by Rembrandt's Anton Rupert.

But the initiative has picked up considerable momentum since President Mbeki's government has taken office and identified tourism as a key element in its economic growth strategy.

The most ambitious project is to amalgamate the Kruger

National Park with the Banhine and Zinave National Parks in Mozambique and Gonarezhou National Park in Zimbabwe into a megapark of 36 000 square miles.

Moosa said yesterday's meeting would serve to draw up the guidelines and establish a "trilateral committee of experts". He is aware that the project is an ambitious one and could take years to come to fruition.

The Mozambican parks were severely depleted of wildlife during the civil war of the 1980s and early 1990s, while Zimbabwe's parks have been plagued by economic neglect.

Furthermore issues such as the flood of illegal immigrants from Mozambique to SA could prove to be tough obstacles to overcome.

Moosa was upbeat about the development of a TCFA in Maputaland, a region renowned for its plant diversity, unspoilt

coastline and game reserves. Plans are to form the Futi Corridor, an ambitious project intended to link the Maputo Elephant Reserve with KwaZulu-Natal's Ndumo Game Reserve and Tembe Elephant Park.

"In the long term the reserves could also be linked to the St Lucia Wetland Reserve, which in itself is a prime ecotourism venture," said Moosa.

The venture is one of the major initiatives under the Lubombo spatial development initiative, a project, similar to the Maputo Development Corridor, aimed at promoting economic development in the region.

Moosa, whose department is responsible for co-ordinating the Lubombo SDI, said by February next year the government would invite bidders for 19 tourism projects in the area.

He also announced the three governments in the area had launched a R40-million initiative to combat malaria. "We have already received R4.5-million from the Business Trust and I am confident we will wipe out malaria in the area over the next couple of years." — *I-Net Bridge*

ST 24/10/99 (56)

The SA sun is far more dangerous than you think

BOBBY JORDAN

A NEW report shows that millions of South Africans are being bombarded with potentially lethal levels of ultraviolet radiation — strong enough to break down plastic — and are breathing air 10 times more polluted than recommended international standards.

These are some of the startling facts in the first comprehensive State of the Environment report, a government document that warns of a "catastrophe" unless SA protects its natural resources.

The report says figures from Pretoria, Cape Town and Durban show ultraviolet-B radiation reached "extremely dan-

gerous" levels last summer.

"The worrying thing is that the radiation levels are in the 'very dangerous' level for between two and six months of the year," said Dr Rudi Pretorius, director of information for the Department of Environmental Affairs.

According to the report, air pollution in many industrial and residential suburbs within the country's major metropolitan areas was more than double the World Health Organization's recommendations.

Figures in the report include the following:

- About 17 million hectares of cultivated soil are affected by erosion;

- Only 8,6 percent of annual rainfall is available as surface water — a lower conversion

ratio than Australia, which is predominantly desert;

- The demand for fresh water will double in the next 30 years;

- South Africans produce about 42 million cubic metres of solid waste annually — 700g a person a day — roughly the same as Britain;

- Half of SA's wetlands have been taken over by human settlement, industry or agricultural activity; and

- Only six percent of the habitable land is formally protected — well below the international benchmark of 10 percent.

Environmental Affairs Minister Valli Moosa said the report showed the urgent need for public awareness about environmental issues.

New parks board has skills to face challenges

(56)

CP 24/10/99

Business Reporter

THE minister of environmental affairs and tourism, Mohammed Valli Moosa this week appointed the chairperson of the finance and fiscal commission, Murphy Morobe, to head the new South African National Parks (SANP) Board.

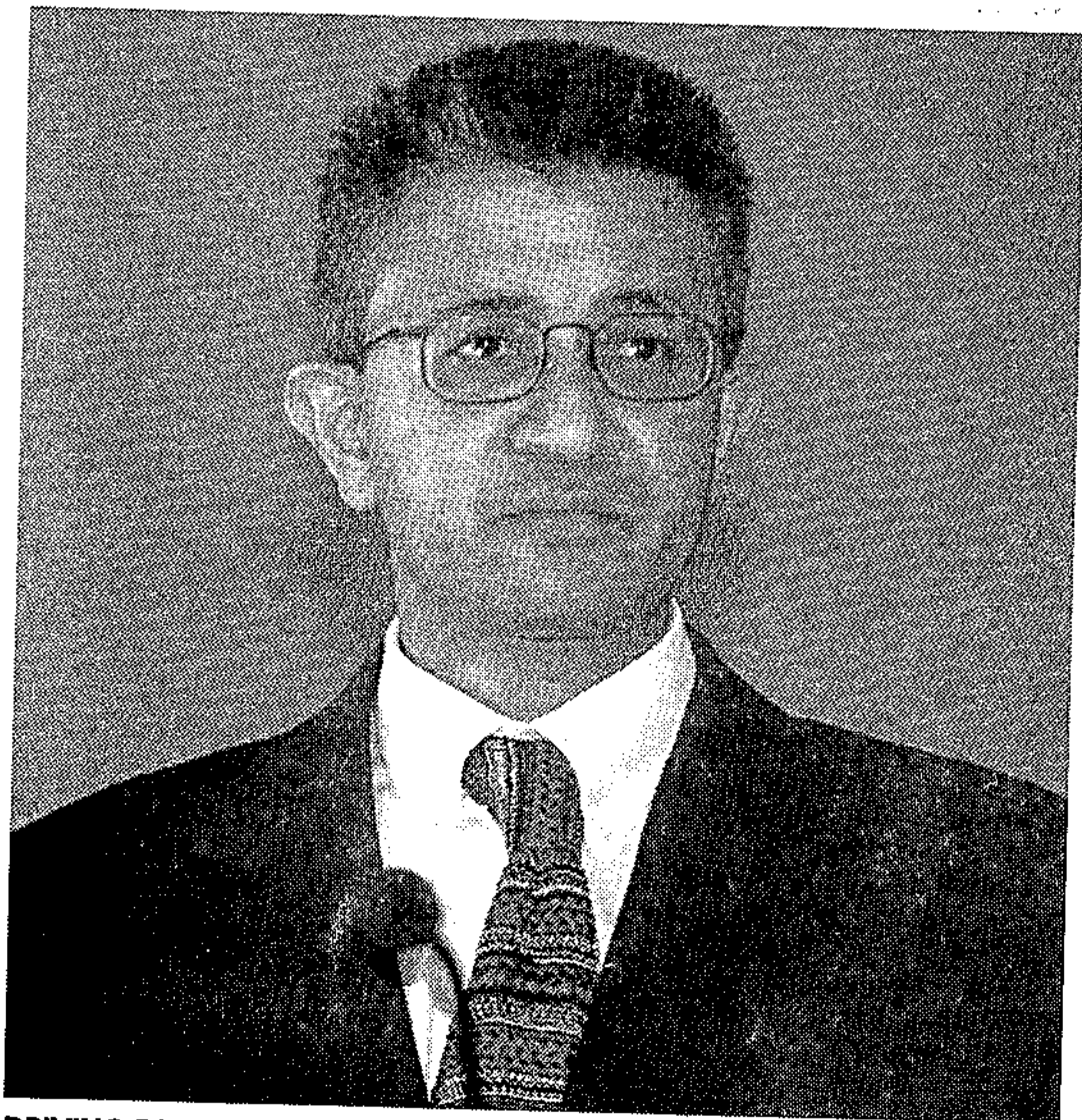
Morobe will chair the new 17-member board whose appointments were accepted by Cabinet after the term of the current board expired at the end of last month.

Moosa said he was confident the new board had the experience and the skill to tackle the challenges facing SANP.

"From land acquisitions that will increase the size of many parks to out-sourcing to the private sector non-conservation activities, the new board will have all the necessary skills required to guide the SANP as it gets down to its core business which is the conservation of the largest single asset this country has."

The members of the new board, who have a three-year mandate to determine policy and oversee its implementation by the SANP directorate, are:

- Praful Bhawan – a mechanical engineer from Cape Town.
- Jackie Brown – a rural development consultant from Johannesburg.
- Nomsa Canca – a business-woman and member of the Katz Commission on women's taxation from Johannesburg.
- T Khumbane – a rural women's activist in the Northern Province.
- Tumelo Lobelo-Ratefane – a social work lecturer involved in AIDS issues from the North-West Province.
- R Maruma – a conservationist and immediate past SANP board member.
- Professor Sue Milton from the



DRIVING FORCE ... Environmental affairs and tourism minister, Valli Moosa

Western Cape.

- Nthobi Moahloli – a corporate affairs director in Cape Town.
- JK Modise from the Northern Cape province.
- Sisa Njekelane from the Eastern Cape.
- Ntuli from Mpumalanga.
- Dr Ian Player from KwaZulu-Natal.
- Josie Rowe-Setz – a tourism development consultant from Johannesburg.
- Z J Sithole from Gauteng.
- Professor Willem van Riet – a

conservationist and immediate past SANP board member and Clive Walker.

Moosa said a key feature of the new board was the combination of conservation, eco-tourism, business, finance, and community development skills – reflecting his ministry's commitment to both sustainable conservation and the growth of tourism as a driving force in the economy.

The names of the board members will go to Parliament for ratification.

Biggest game park almost reality

ET 25/10/199 (56)

MELANIE GOSLING
ENVIRONMENT WRITER

THE proposed "peace park" which will link the Kruger National Park with conservation areas in Zimbabwe and Mozambique — to create one of the biggest game reserves in the world — came one step closer to reality at the weekend, when the three countries signed a memorandum of understanding in Maputo.

The agreement supports the establishment of what is known as a trans-frontier conservation area, which will join Kruger Park with Gonarezhou National Park in Zimbabwe and Gaza National Park in Mozambique.

The agreement established a ministerial committee and an international technical committee to oversee the implementation of the agreement.

It states that "ecosystems transcend national boundaries", and recognises the need for "trans-

border co-operation in the conservation and management of the shared natural resources, for the benefit of the people of the region".

The trans-frontier park will promote both the conservation of bio-diversity and socio-economic development in the region.

The technical committee, made up of officials from all three countries, will submit a concept plan and draft agreement by the end of January next year, and the final management plan will be completed by the end of 2001.

Earlier this year, Parliament gave its stamp of approval to the formation of Southern Africa's first trans-frontier national park, the Kgalagadi Trans-frontier Park, which joins the Gemsbok National Park in Botswana with the Kalahari Gemsbok National Park in South Africa.

The National Assembly and National Council of Provinces this month endorsed the agreement protocol. The park will be formally opened by the presidents of the two countries in February next year. A one-stop border post will be

Parks' staff jobs secure

Pule Molebeledi (56)

DURBAN — The SA National Parks Board said yesterday that the decision to outsource and privatise its "nonconservation activities" did not mean that some of its 4 600 staff complement would lose their jobs.

Spokesman Salifou Siddo said that the organisation had not decided on which formula it would use to privatise its camps, accommodation and restaurants.

Environmental Affairs and Tourism Minister Mohammed Valli Moosa was quoted in weekend reports as saying that he intended to privatise restaurants and a significant number of camps in SA's national parks.

BD 25/10/199

Game parks sign cross border pact

(56) 25/10/199

Johannesburg — South Africa, Mozambique and Zimbabwe signed a cross border co-operation agreement at the weekend to create one of the biggest conservation areas in the world.

The Transfrontier Conservation Areas agreement signed in Maputo confirms the joint management of Gaza Park in Mozambique, Kruger National Park and Gonarezhou in Zimbabwe, the department of Environmental Affairs said yesterday.

This agreement follows a similar one between Botswana and SA. — Sapa

Wetlands

Key to sale

of forests

ALR 26/10/99
5/6
3/10/99

JOHN YELD
EMMONKEN REFORMER

Moves to ensure proper wetland conservation in commercial forests are expected to feature strongly during detailed negotiations between the Government and bidders for South Africa's state-owned forests.

The cost of rehabilitating wetlands which were planted with trees in earlier years, before wetland conservation was taken seriously, and the resulting reduction in the area available for planting new timber, will have an impact on the price bidders are willing to pay the state for the forests, say some sources.

Also, the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism is understood to have been insisting that wetlands get appropriate recognition during moves to privatise the forests.

But these claims have been played down by Lael Bethlehem, chief director of forestry in the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry.

"I don't think it's a new issue - wetlands have always been around," she said.

Ms Bethlehem, who has won praise for her commitment to the sound environmental management of state forests, also said figures bandied around which put the value of the state's forestry assets at between R1.5-billion and R1.5-billion, were "very old".

"These were based on very early evaluations." She did not give a new estimate.

The Government had invited bids for 330 000 hectares of plantations and associated processing plants in seven areas - either as a whole or for any one "package".

This included forests managed by Sateco, the parastatal forestry company which was established in 1992, and forests owned by the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry that were inherited from the former homeland governments of Ciskei and Transkei.

The Government has shortlisted five bidders for the acquisition of forests in Mpumalanga, KwaZulu Natal, eastern Cape (north), eastern Cape (south) and the southern Cape.

All five are consortia which include black empowerment and/or community interests, as well as South Africa's "big two" timber companies, Sappi and Mondi.

There were no bidders for the package as a whole or for the state's forestry assets in the Western Cape (1776ha) or the Northern Province (1882ha).

In a joint statement, Public Enterprises Minister Jief Radebe and Water Affairs and Forestry Minister Ronnie Kasrils said detailed discussions and negotiations with the five bidders would now begin.

The new emphasis on wetland conservation in forests comes from two sources: South Africa's new Water Act, and field guidelines for wetland conservation being developed by the forestry industry itself.

In terms of the act, there are restrictions on any activities which reduce "stream flow" - the amount of water in natural systems such as rivers and wetlands - and which have an impact on the quality of water.

Planting trees in wetlands reduces both the water flow, because the trees use significant amounts of water, and the natural ability of wetlands to filter and cleanse water.

ASBESTOSIS VICTIMS

The bitter battle for justice is drawn out

ALR 26/10/99
5/6
2/12

RONNIE MORRIS

The law cannot be distanced from justice and morally without losing its claim to legitimacy... (it) must be seen to be fair in its impact on the life of the humblest citizen in search of protection against justice."

These words, spoken by Chief Justice Ismail Mahomed at the Bram Fischer Memorial lecture at the old House of Assembly on February 3 last year, are cold comfort to about 3 000 South Africans who are seeking justice in a British court against Cape Plc, formerly one of the world's largest asbestos mining companies.

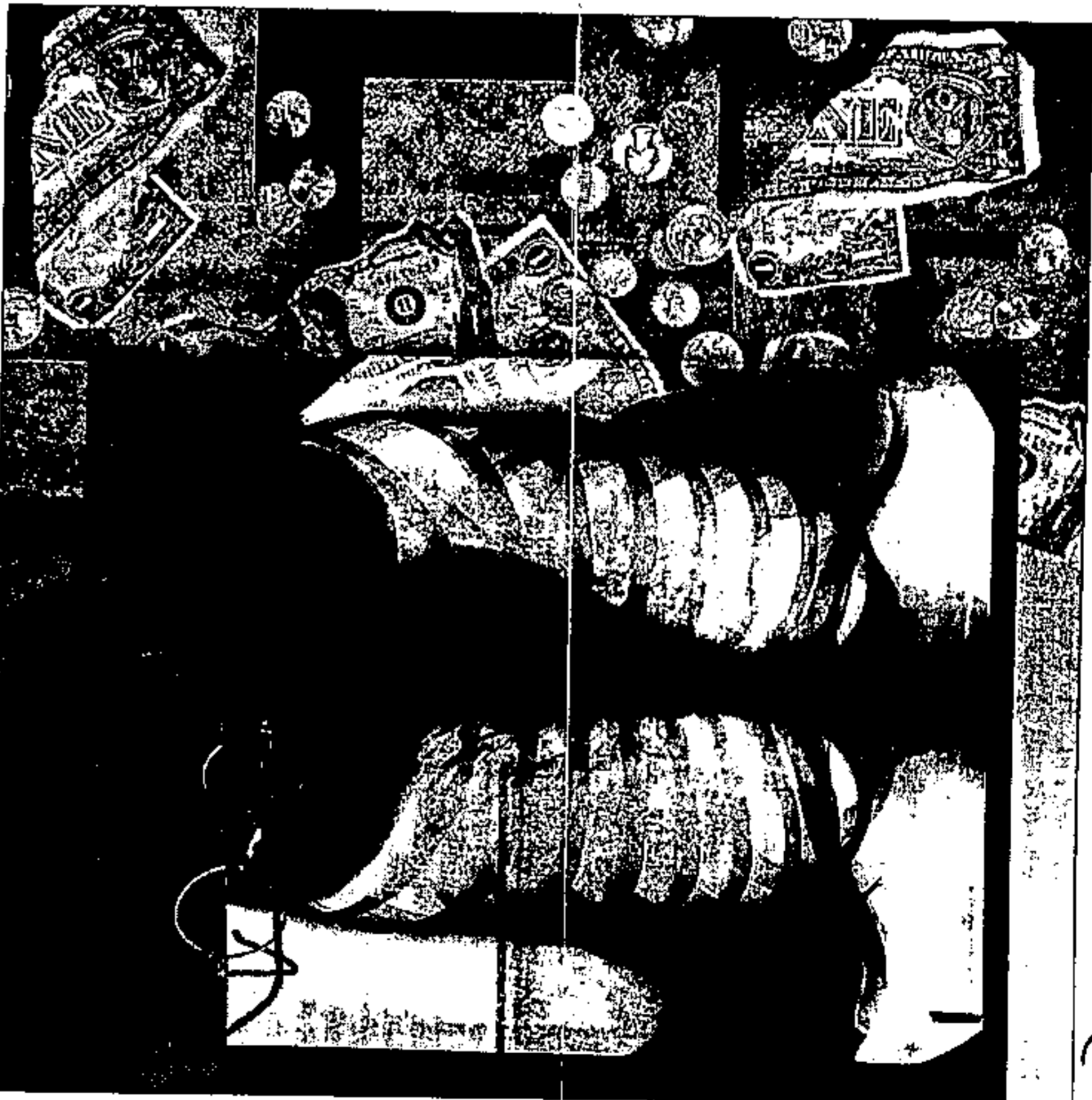
These claimants, who worked at asbestos plants all over South Africa, and their families are seeking compensation, reputed to be worth about R1 billion, from Cape after they contracted asbestosis, a stiffening of the lungs caused by irritating asbestos needles, or mesothelioma, a painful cancer, related to asbestos.

From an original five claimants in 1997 the number has grown to almost 3 000, of whom 400 are dependents of people who have already died. South African law does not permit the latter to sue on behalf of an estate because claims cannot pass to next of kin.

The claimants allege they have suffered personal injuries or damages as a result of Cape's negligence or breach of duty in supervising, controlling, extracting, producing, processing or distributing asbestos and related products.

They maintain that multinational companies which undertake hazardous operations overseas in breach of known health, safety and environmental standards should be held legally responsible for any resulting injuries.

The company operated asbestos mines in Prieska and Koeegas in the Northern Cape, Pomfret in the North West, Penge in the Northern Province and had factories or plants at Benoni, Gauteng and elsewhere from 1930 onwards. It sold out in 1979, leaving thousands of



asbestosis victims penniless and uninsured.

Contaminated and abandoned mines and asbestos dumps are now being rehabilitated by the South African government because of the health hazards they pose. The rehabilitation costs of Mpumalanga, the Northern Province and Northern Cape alone are estimated at R95 million.

On July 30 this year in what could only be seen as a legal roller coaster, the London High Court again granted Cape a stay of proceedings on the ground that the case of the 3 000 ought to be dealt with in South African courts. The judge said it would be against public policy for Cape to be held accountable in a British court for damages suffered by South African victims of asbestosis.

The judge said he "took comfort" from a New York district court decision which, as a

matter of public policy (because of the burden it would pose on US taxpayers), had stayed proceedings in a damages suit by Indian Bhopal victims against Union Carbide, the US chemicals company.

The matter was taken on appeal and, after hearing arguments for eight days, the court of appeal judges, without giving reasons, upheld the judge's ruling. The judges took eight minutes to reach that decision.

Brian Dooley QC, the counsel for Cape, told the court that the South African Legal Aid Board had announced that when legal aid for personal injury claims was withdrawn from November 1, applicants could use the Contingency Fees Act.

Under this system, claimants who had no money to finance litigation could only bring claims which were considered by their lawyers to be worth bringing. This meant that

substantial justice could be done because good claims would be litigated, he said.

There was no reason to believe, and no " cogent evidence," before the court, that if these claimants had a good case they would not get legal assistance in South Africa for their claims.

It would be inappropriate in the circumstances for the British court to make adverse findings about the South African civil justice system, he said.

It would also be wrong and contrary to the evidence presented for the court to find that the South African legal profession would wholly fail to ensure that deserving indigent claimants had access to justice, Doctor said.

Gilbert Marcus SC, who as South African senior counsel has taken three cases on contingency basis in recent months, said he had no reason to assume that the South African legal profession

would "turn its back on the claimants... if there are reasonable prospects of success".

However, Jeremy Gauntlett SC, an eminent South African advocate and the chairman of the General Council of the Bar (the national umbrella advocates' body), said Judge Mohamed Nwasa, the chairman of the Legal Aid Board (LAB), had admitted the fund was in "crisis" and was "technically insolvent".

The budget for the department of justice had been slashed from R3.5 billion to R2.7 billion and there was virtually no prospect of the current level of available legal aid being materially improved, Gauntlett said.

A judicial review or a constitutional challenge to the LAB decision were unlikely to be completed for many months and it was not clear how these actions were likely to set free funding in respect of specific instances, let alone extensive litigation such as the asbestosis matter, he said.

The suggestion that the Contingency Fee system may to some extent alleviate the devastating consequences of the withdrawal of legal aid from civil litigation in South Africa was insupportable, Gauntlett said.

There was no US-style entitlement to a share in the prospective damages award.

Litigation by the 3 000 claimants in South Africa would be protracted and complicated and attorneys and advocates could well wait years before being paid, he said.

So, will the 3 000 get justice? Many lay people believe they have made a compelling case for the case to be heard in the UK.

It is, after all, where Cape is located and where, for the moment at least, access to funding is available.

Should they fail in the House of Lords, they may well approach the European Court of Justice for a ruling that the UK abide by the provisions of the Brussels Convention which provides that a defendant should be sued in the country of his home base.

New man to oversee (76) SA's parks

Sowetan 26/10/99

By Russel Molefe
Environment Reporter

FORMER United Democratic Front activist Mr Murphy Morobe has been appointed chairman of the South African National Parks board of trustees with a mandate to determine policy and oversee its implementation within the next three years.

Morobe, who is currently chairman of the financial and fiscal commission in Parliament, will chair the new 17-member board of trustees, which includes seven women with strong backgrounds in their respective fields of expertise.

The South African National Parks (SANP) is a parastatal controlling 19 national parks around the country, including the world-acclaimed Kruger National Park, covering four million hectares.

Environmental Affairs and Tourism Minister Valli Moosa said a key feature of the new board was the combination of conservation, eco-tourism, business, finance and community development skills.

SANP chief executive Mr Mavuso Msimang said: "The leadership of the members of the outgoing board will be remembered for the far-reaching transformation programme they set, the historically significant settlements reached in land claims against some of the parks and the important community involvement programmes they helped the organisation to develop," Msimang said.

Members of the new board are: Mr Praful Bhawan, Ms Jackie Brown, Ms Nomsa Canca, Ms T Khumbane, Ms Tumelo Lobelo-Ratefane, Mr Rufus Maruma, Professor Sue Milton, Ms Thobi Moahloli, Mr JK Modise, Mr Sisa Njekelane, Mr O Ntuli, Dr Ian Player, Ms Josie Röye-Setz, Mr ZJ Sithole, Professor Willem van Riet and Mr Clive Walker.

UV ray shock for Cape Town sun worshippers

JOHN YELD
ENVIRONMENT WRITER

Midrand - Ultraviolet radiation is in the "dangerous" to "very dangerous" categories for almost half of the year in Cape Town, Durban and Pretoria. And while the levels of sulphur dioxide, nitric oxide and ozone in South Africa's air are, on average, within guidelines for human

health, the concentration of smoke particles in the air in many urban areas, particularly near industrial zones, is higher than desirable and even up to twice the annual guideline.

These are some of the statistics in South Africa's first *State of the Environment Report* published by the national department of environmental affairs and tourism.

The five-volume report, which details the state of the environment nationally and in the

major metropolitan areas of Cape Town, Durban, Johannesburg and Pretoria, has been posted on the internet and on CD-Rom, and is also available in print in English, Afrikaans and Xhosa, with Zulu and Tswana to follow.

The report, co-ordinated by the department and the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, with funding and technical support from Norway and the United Nations environment programme, was produced in accor-

(56) ARG 27/10/99
dance with the international Agenda 21 strategy for sustainable development adopted by the 1992 earth summit in Rio de Janeiro.

The summit called for improved environmental information for decision-making, and "state of the environment" reporting has become the globally accepted means of reporting on environmental issues, and of measuring

To page 3

UV ray shock for Cape Town sun-lovers

From page 56
ARG 27/10/99 (56)
progress towards the sustainable development that can be achieved.

Information in the South African report, a pilot project that will be constantly updated, will be used by all levels of Government, decision makers, environmental managers and planners who need to know the state of the environment and what the consequences of any policies, projects or actions will be.

Environmental Affairs and Tourism Minister Valli Moosa said at a function held at Midrand to introduce the report that the Government was fulfilling a constitutional obligation with its publication.

"For far too long, vital environmental information has been kept a secret from citizens and this has led to their disempowerment," he said.

The national report was available on www.ngo.gridsa.no/soesa

In the dongas, a threat to SA's future water supply ⁽¹²³⁾ ⁽⁷⁶⁾

Wetlands project aims to reclaim areas that once teemed with life

MONTROSE — In a valley in the former Qwa Qwa homeland near Harismith, cattle and sheep huddle in a narrow, lush strip of land, remnants of a once vast wetland rich in bird life and reeds. Deep dongas, caused by soil that erodes easily, litter the landscape.

Morris Sebela, 75, a former school principal who lives in Monontsa village alongside the wetland, remembers a time when the area was teeming with life.

"When I was a young boy, there was a lot more water, reeds for our huts and nesting birds. Now it has vanished through our carelessness because people graze their cattle and burn the land too often."

While the destruction of the wetland has had a notable impact on the village, this seemingly insignificant 10km stretch of land has far-reaching implications for the supply of water in SA in the next century.

Conservationists are in a race to save and rehabilitate wetlands such as this one in order to ensure that the country has water for future generations. The water affairs and forestry department estimates that at current supply and demand, SA will run out of water by 2030.

Gauteng has already depleted its water supply and depends on water from other provinces for private and industrial use.

The tributary from the Monontsa district, near Phuthaditjhaba, feeds into the Wilge river, an important supply of water for the Vaal Dam, which in turn supplies Gauteng and parts of Mpumalanga, Free State, North West and the Northern Province.

Wetlands in nature reserves are protected, but little thought has been given to wetlands situated on tribal or privately owned land.

These wetlands are rapidly disappearing, taking with them a unique ability to prevent flooding and act as a natural filter, trapping

pollutants, sediment and even disease-causing bacteria. Wetland vegetation traps water like a sponge, allowing for the slow release of this water in dry spells.

A R2,6m project funded by Rand Water and the agriculture department, and co-ordinated by Rennie Wetland Project and the Free State department of environmental affairs and tourism, has been set up to rehabilitate private wetlands at Monontsa and on four farms in the upper Wilge river area.

The project, which ended last month, took five months to complete and employed 212 people.

According to Rennie Wetland project co-ordinator David Lindley, this is the largest amount ever spent on a SA wetland rehabilitation project.

"The country has already lost an estimated 50% of its wetlands. Entire ecosystems with thousands of species have been destroyed."

Wetlands are often drained to provide land for crops or "reclaimed" for industry and residential areas.

Timber plantations encroach on these areas and roads are built through wetlands, causing erosion or halting the flow of water, drying and eventually destroying the area.

The project aimed to resilt and reclaim dongas in the wetland caused by water flowing over the highly erosive soil. The gullies create a large channel that drains water rapidly.

Structures of hay or rocks have been set up at the head of the gully and at intervals along the dongas to stop the erosion.

Lindley said working on private land presented a challenge.

Farmer Rudolph Coetzee, whose farm Skeurklip was used as one of the rehabilitation sites, said the project had helped to make farmers more aware of the importance of preserving wetlands.

"I can see the long-term benefits

of protecting and restoring wetlands and ensuring a steady supply of water during the dry months."

He said farmers were naturally concerned about erosion but were sceptical at first about the project. "They will become more enthusiastic after the summer rains when the full effect of the rehabilitation project can be seen."

It was hoped farmers in the area would begin implementing their own rehabilitation programmes once they had seen the benefits of the project.

The project is also more economical than the outlay involved in the building of a new dam, which would cost more than R1bn.

Lindley said the restoration of privately owned wetlands would be a long-term process involving the continued co-operation of groups like Rand Water, the agriculture department and the department of environmental affairs and tourism.

"The forestry industry has worked hard to introduce guidelines to ensure trees are not planted in wetlands areas, but conservationists are still having trouble convincing farmers, especially sugar cane farmers, about the importance of wetlands."

Lindley said the importance of wetland conservation was not obvious to the average person: "It isn't an emotive issue like saving the rhino or elephant, but it can no longer be ignored. The rest of the developed world has realised the importance of these areas."

"A conservative estimate shows that wetlands earn or save about R26,86bn in disease prevention and tourism enhancement, as well as an additional R21bn saved in drought and flood damage."

For chief Mapeka Mopeli of the Monontsa district, who along with his council watches the sky eagerly for a sign of rain, the barren land is proof enough. — Sapa.

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SA leads in environment Africa study

By Russel Molefe
Environment Reporter

SOUTH AFRICA is striving to empower people through enhanced access to information which is a tool to improve the quality of their environment and lives, Environmental Affairs and Tourism Minister Valli Moosa said this week.

"The benefits for imparting the information extend beyond the country's borders as we can assist in global monitoring of environmental change and the development of global and regional environmental management strategies," Moosa said.

He was speaking in Midrand on Tuesday at the launch of the State of Environment Reporting Programme in South Africa aimed at making information on the status or condition of the environment nationally and in four metropolitan areas - Cape Town, Durban, Johannesburg and Pretoria - available to the public in a user-friendly format.

These reports were the result of the first year of a pilot project with technical assistance from the United Nations' Environment Programme.

The information is also available on the internet, making South Africa the first country in Africa to have completed its reports for the International City Environment Reports Programme on the web.

The gloomy picture painted in the national report shows that South Africa's available freshwater resources are already almost fully utilised and under stress. And the concentrations of sulphur dioxide, nitric oxide, ozone and smoke particles may lead to serious problems for people with respiratory ailments.

The report also found that the present-day environment of Greater Johannesburg was created by the city's history of rapid development and urbanisation.

But Moosa warned that the state of environment reporting goes further than describing the environment.

"It tells us what is causing change, how environmental change impacts on the quality of life and our ability to improve it, and what we can do to mitigate negative environmental changes.

"In this way it is an effective tool for individuals, communities, organisations and governments to implement effective environmental management," he explained.

to raise loans with the Industrial Development Corporation.

He said 80% of the board's assets were not realisable.

However, the board has denied the DP's claims.

"We did experience some cash flow problems at the beginning of the year during our low tourism season, but the situation has turned around," it said.

"Our annual financial statements, audited by PricewaterhouseCoopers, are ... available. The board of the Industrial Development Corporation has recently approved a loan ... for R137m."

Moorcroft said the walk-out, which included the financial manager and the financial controller, came against the backdrop of accusations of constructive dis-

missal, nepotism and financial and administrative mismanagement.

Allegations have also been made that senior members of staff were involved in private contracts, "outsourced" on tender for a computer system and for the security at the Kruger National Park, Moorcroft said.

He called on Environmental Affairs and Tourism Minister Valli Moosa to appoint a judicial commission of inquiry and to meet the DP to discuss the allegations.

Sources close to the parks department said the trigger for yesterday's resignations was senior financial staff being told that they had to relocate to Pretoria or leave the department.

They also said the new computer booking system was faulty.

Parks Board under attack

'Forced removals' for staff

MURRAY WILLIAMS
TOURISM REPORTER

The Democratic Party has called for national Environmental Affairs and Tourism Minister Valli Moosa to appoint a commission of inquiry into allegations of "gross mismanagement" against the National Parks Board.

This comes after nine board finance managers and staff walked out of their Long Street offices on Tuesday.

The board has announced that it is to "consolidate", closing its Cape Town office. Premises will be found for a new reservations and media office. Technical services are to be moved to the various national parks.

But finance department staff have been told they must move to head office in Pretoria. The staff alleged that the decision to "consolidate" was taken without sufficient consultation, and that managers were given no alternatives other than move to Pretoria or resign. The group has lodged an appeal with the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration.

DP environmental affairs spokesman Errol Moorcroft said that although the staffers "may well have an axe to grind, there seems to be a case for an inquiry to either refute or verify (their) allegations".

He described the board as "technically bankrupt" after allegations that the board's new computerised booking system had caused chaos and a 90% drop in bookings. This had apparently amounted to more than R15-million in lost revenue.

But board spokesman Salifou Siddo yesterday laughed off allegations that the board was bankrupt. "The Industrial Development Corporation has just made a R134-million loan facility available to us," he said. "The corporation does not lend money to bankrupt organisations."

Commenting on the staffers' walk-out, Dr Siddo said they had chosen to decline the offer of transfers to Pretoria. He said there was no longer any need for financial managers in both Cape Town and Pretoria. "They shouldn't have aired their dirty laundry in public."

But Dr Siddo admitted the computerised booking system, installed two years ago, had "teething problems" and had indeed "created chaos".

The system, developed in-house, had often indicated that the board's camps were fully booked, when they still had room. He challenged the DP to explain how the financial managers had come up with the figure of R15-million in lost revenue, which he said was impossible to calculate.

'Parks board finances in chaos'

Wyndham Hartley

CAPE TOWN — Advance bookings at the National Parks Board (NPB) were down by 90%, causing losses of more than R15m in two months and dealing a blow to SA tourism, parks department and Democratic Party sources said yesterday.

DP environment and tourism spokesman Errol Moorcroft told a news briefing that his party was concerned that "the financial situation of the ... department is such that it has resulted in the walk-out of seven key financial personnel in the Cape Town office of the NPB".

He said the board was "technically bankrupt" because it had financial obligations that could not be met, was having difficulties with its cash flow and had not been able

New booking rules for parks

TOURISM REPORTER

The South African National Parks Board has announced that visitors to its 19 parks will now have to pay in full within 30 days of booking.

The board says at least one in 10 people cancel bookings without giving sufficient notice, leaving beds empty and depriving the board of much-needed income.

Under the new system, visitors will still get a full refund if they cancel 30 days or longer before their booking, but refunds will diminish on a sliding scale the closer to their holiday they cancel. Visitors will be charged a R50 cancellation fee.

The board also announced the introduction of "high season/low season" tariffs at three Kruger National Park rest camps, Satara, Skukuza and Lower Sabie.

Giving nature a helping hand in the Cape

(5b)

ARL 28/10/99

From page 15
About 72 000 dwellings in Cape Town don't have any drains and standing water is a common problem in informal settlements.

When this water is contaminated, it can cause diarrhoea.
Responses by the CMC include a number of studies to look at water quality, increasing the number and distribution of air-quality monitoring stations, and developing a strategy to implement the recommendations of the Brown Haze Study.

■ Biological diversity: Cape Town is in the Cape Floral Kingdom, one of six floral kingdoms in the world, and has world-class conservation value.
More than 30 000ha of land within the metropolitan area has some conservation status, several veld types and ecosystems are not well protected.

This land constitutes about 14% of the total area.
Less than 1% of the sandplain fynbos veld type remains, and less than 3% of renoster veld. The 32% remaining strandveld is decreasing rapidly because of developments on the West Coast and near Muizenberg.

■ The loss of low-lying wetlands, which breed essential pollinators for fynbos, is also worrying.
Responses by the CMC include initiatives to declare nature reserves and protected natural environments, including at Riverval, the False Bay Coastal Park and Blaauwberg.

A joint initiative has been established with the Botanical Society to ensure the conservation and management of botanical sites.
■ Marine and coastal habitats: Very little of Cape Town's 300km coastline is protected. The value of the remaining area for tourism and economic growth is being diminished by inappropriate development and over-exploitation.

About 2% of the coastline is protected through the proclamation of marine protected areas in False Bay.
However, these are too small to protect mobile fish species effectively.

A number of "single species" marine protected areas in Table Bay to help conserve rock lobster are ineffective because of their narrow focus.

At least four species or groups of marine species in these protected areas are rated as "critically endangered". Included in this group is the African Black Oystercatcher.
Responses include the new national Coastal Management Policy, and the establishment of the Cape Peninsula National Park, which will create a single conservation management unit from the mountain tops to the ocean floor in some areas.

■ Transportation and road traffic safety: The increasing use of private vehicles has led to traffic congestion and air pollution.
In rush hour, certain roads reach peak capacity, and areas are close to capacity.
In 1997, there were 62 561 recorded accidents in greater Cape Town at a cost of R1,4 billion.

The fatality rate in the area is higher than the national average and three-to-five times higher than international levels.
In 1998, there were 724 road deaths, of which 404 (54%) were pedestrians.
There is a high level of alcohol abuse among drivers and pedestrians alike.

The lack of capacity in the road system is a result of a lack of investment in road and public transport systems.
Urban sprawl increases the distance between work and home, and people's reluctance to use public transport because it is seen as unpleasant, unsafe and unreliable, means more people drive.

Responses by the CMC include the development of the "Moving Ahead" metropolitan transport plan.
Also, the Metropolitan Spatial Development Framework has been developed to direct and contain patterns of urban growth to reduce distances between home and work.

Red alert for SA natural resources

(5b)

ARL 28/10/99

JOHN YELD



Environment writer

South Africa is at a critical environmental crossroads, and sufficient financial and human resources must be committed to reverse the trend towards unsustainability. Otherwise, the country will experience an eventual ecological, social and economic collapse.

This is the blunt warning contained in the country's first "National State of the Environment Report", released here by the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism yesterday.

The project has been co-ordinated jointly by the department and the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research's Environmental and Industrial Research's Environment Programme.
It stems from a call at the 1992 "Earth Summit" in Rio de Janeiro for improved environmental information to help decision-making.

The full document - the national state of the environment report and four similar reports for the major metropolitan areas of Cape Town, Johannesburg, Durban and Pretoria - consists of hundreds of pages of information posted on the Internet and on CD-Rom.

A 42-page overview report is available as a printed copy, as well as on CD-Rom.
According to the overview, South Africa must have properly functioning ecosystems in order to meet national goals like the provision of basic needs, equity, employment, economic growth, and improved quality of life.

But many of the country's ecosystems have been degraded and are unable to meet the needs of the population.
Also, the rapid population growth - an estimated 2% a year from 40.6 million in 1996 - means these ecosystems are under even greater pressure, both to continue functioning and to support an ever increasing number of people.

The report details numerous ecological problems currently afflicting South Africa.
These include:
■ About 17-million hectares of cultivated soil is affected by erosion, and soil is being lost eight times faster than it can regenerate naturally.
■ About 25% of land habitat in South Africa and 60% of wetlands have been lost or transformed.
■ UVB radiation exposure levels, which cause skin cancer, are dangerously high for half the year.
■ Large areas of farmland in Mpumalanga and on the eastern highveld are showing reduced productivity because of the acidification of the soil (caused by high levels of sulphur dioxide and nitric oxide pollutants in the air).
■ More than 42 million cubic metres of solid waste is generated each year, and five of the nine provinces will have a shortage of landfill sites within the next 10 years.

■ More than five million tons of hazardous waste is produced annually, of which only 5% can be accounted for in proper waste disposal sites.
■ About 15% of South Africa's plant species, 37% of its mammal species, 14% of birds, 24% of reptiles, 18% of amphibians, and 22% of butterfly species are threatened or endangered.
■ Damage to some coastal ecosystems is already so severe that they can never recover.
■ Only 8.6% of annual rainfall is available as surface water (very low by international standards).
■ The demand for water is expected to increase by more than 50% in the next 30 years, and all the country's major rivers have already been dammed or modified to meet this demand.

The report states: "Radical intervention is required in order to prevent further ecosystem degradation, and rehabilitate and restore degraded ecosystems so that they are more able to meet the needs of present and future human generations."
Some of the statistics relating to South Africa's social environment are equally horrifying.
■ Only 45% of households have a tap in their home, and just 60% have a central electricity supply.
■ Although the extent of HIV infection and AIDS is not accurately known, the disease may reduce South Africa's average life expectancy to only about 40 years and reduce the workforce by 20% over the next six-to-seven years.
■ Poverty rates are still high and 20% of households have monthly incomes of less than R500, and
■ Although the education system is being transformed and all South Africans now have access to education, some 7.5-million people (or 16% of the population) are still functionally illiterate.

The report notes that political reform in South Africa since 1994 has laid the foundations for sustainable development.
And, it said there have been many positive steps.
But although many new policies have been developed to replace those which previously encouraged the wasteful use of resources and the uncontrolled generation of pollution and waste, it would take some time to make these policies fully operational.
"We are now at a crossroads," it concludes.
"South Africa is well endowed with natural resources for development and food security."
"In addition, all the right policies are in place or nearly in place to put the country firmly on a sustainable development trajectory and to reverse the current trend towards unsustainability."
"Political and social commitment to sacrifice short-term consumption for long-term sustainability and to ensure enhanced quality of life for future generations is required over the foreseeable future. If we are to see these policies bear fruit."
Access the report by visiting the website at www.ago.gridsa.nov/soesa

'Radical intervention is required to restore degraded ecosystems'

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Plans to doctor air and water pollution in Cape

ARLT 28/10/99 (5b)

JOHN YELD
Environment
writer



Cape Town's air quality is deteriorating, and safety levels for air pollution are being reached and occasionally exceeded in some parts of the metropolitan area.

Also, this trend could accelerate unless there is corrective action against a host of air pollution sources that include vehicles, industry, and the burning of wood and coal fuel by poor residents.

This is one of the key findings in the "State of the Environment Report for the Cape Metropolitan Area - Year One 1998", which was released as part of the national environmental reporting initiative.

The 233-page report, produced by the Cape Metropolitan Council, contains a host of information about the state of the urban, social, physical, ecological and economic components of the metropolitan environment.

It will help with the setting up of environmental management priorities and policy options for the Cape metropolitan area. Because the report identifies prior-

ity issues which need to be addressed, it is seen as the first step in the development of a comprehensive system for managing the metropolitan area on an environmentally sustainable basis in the future.

Work on the report started in July last year when specialist baseline studies were commissioned for land and marine ecosystems, air quality, water resources, waste, health, urbanisation, economic activity, and the built-up environment.

Where possible, 1998 was used as the baseline year for collecting data, but some of the information is older. The report notes that data about some issues like noise pollution, occupational health and safety, and soil erosion was not available.

Residents and local authorities are encouraged to comment on the report, which has been posted on the Internet, and to make submissions for possible inclusion in future annual reports.

The website address is www.cmc.gov.za/soe

Topics in the report include:

■ Air quality: there are many air pollution sources in the metropolitan area and include industry, road traffic, power generation and the burning of wood and coal by a large section of the population.

There are 80% more vehicles on the road than there were 20 years ago, and legislative measures to control air pollution from industry and

vehicles are inadequate.

Present air-pollution legislation does not cover all air pollutants, nor does it deal with the problem of smells.

In 1998, there were 303 complaints about air pollution to the authorities, and although 70 notices were issued, there were no prosecutions.

Present responses by the CMC include diesel vehicle testing and emissions control, strict controls being enforced on industry, the rev-

Rapid urban growth is causing an increase in all forms of waste

sion of the Cape Metropolitan Transport Plan "Moving Ahead", and pressure on the Government to replace outdated national air pollution legislation.

■ Water: the health of rivers, vleis and wetlands in Cape Town is under threat, mainly because of deteriorating water quality and the increasing population. Of the 10 major catchments in the metropolitan area, six get effluent from sewage treatment works.

Last year, most rivers in Cape Town were regarded as having only between 40% and 59% of their poten-

tial ecological value, while nine needed rehabilitation.

Faecal coliform levels (a universal measure of the level of pollution) exceeded European Union guidelines in the Black River, Vyekestral River below the Athlone wastewater treatment plant, and the Big Lotus River.

Responses by the CMC include adopting "integrated catchment management" as a policy, establishing a catchment management department, and establishing catchment management forums for the Khayalitsha wetlands, Noordhoek Valley (Wildevoelievlei), Kulis River, Salt River, Sand River, Disa River and Zeekoewal catchments.

■ Waste: rapid urban growth is causing an increase in hazardous and non-hazardous waste in the Cape metropole, and almost a million tons - or about 1kg of waste a person a day - goes to the six landfill sites.

Only two of these sites have operating permits from the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry. Cape Town does not have an integrated waste management strategy.

An estimated 30% of all medical waste is not disposed of at the two permitted medical waste incinerators, and 14% is disposed of unsafely. At least four million pieces of litter - about half of which are plastic - are found in Cape Town every day, and "significant" financial resources are being committed to this problem.

Direct discharges from industry

and sewage works are contributing to the pollution of rivers, vleis and the sea.

There are 21 sewage treatment plants in greater Cape Town. Of the 528 megalitres (one megalitre equals one million litres) of effluent produced each day, only 9% is re-used for industrial purposes.

An estimated 12 000 megalitres of wastewater is disposed of in the sea each year via three long deep-sea pipelines.

Initiatives by the Cape Metropolitan Council to deal with waste include an integrated waste management project being undertaken in support of the national waste management strategy. A solid waste feasibility study and a wastewater re-use study are being done.

■ Health risks: Increasing air pollution levels are exposing people to health risks.

Exposure to polluted water increases the risk of contracting a range of serious diseases.

Rapid urbanisation has placed pressure on attempts to redress backlog in infrastructure and service provision.

Up to 80% of dwellings in one informal settlement had indoor pollution levels "well in excess" of World Health Organisation standards, and there has been a marked increase in the number of cases of tuberculosis, particularly in over-crowded areas.

To page 16

In the dongas, a threat to SA's future water supply

Wetlands project aims to reclaim areas that once teemed with life

MONTROSE — In a valley in the former Qwa Qwa homeland near Harrismith, cattle and sheep huddle in a narrow, lush strip of land, remnants of a once vast wetland rich in bird life and reeds. Deep dongas, caused by soil that erodes easily, litter the landscape.

Morris Sebela, 75, a former school principal who lives in Monontsa village alongside the wetland, remembers a time when the area was teeming with life.

"When I was a young boy, there was a lot more water, reeds for our huts and nesting birds. Now it has vanished through our carelessness because people graze their cattle and burn the land too often."

While the destruction of the wetland has had a notable impact on the village, this seemingly insignificant 10km stretch of land has far-reaching implications for the supply of water in SA in the next century.

Conservationists are in a race to save and rehabilitate wetlands such as this one in order to ensure that the country has water for future generations. The water affairs and forestry department estimates that at current supply and demand, SA will run out of water by 2030.

Gauteng has already depleted its water supply and depends on water from other provinces for private and industrial use.

The tributary from the Monontsa district, near Phuthaditjhaba, feeds into the Wilge river, an important supply of water for the Vaal Dam, which in turn supplies Gauteng and parts of Mpumalanga, Free State, North West and the Northern Province.

Wetlands in nature reserves are protected, but little thought has been given to wetlands situated on tribal or privately owned land.

These wetlands are rapidly disappearing, taking with them a unique ability to prevent flooding and act as a natural filter, trapping

pollutants, sediment and even disease-causing bacteria. Wetland vegetation traps water like a sponge, allowing for the slow release of this water in dry spells.

A R2,6m project funded by Rand Water and the agriculture department, and co-ordinated by Rennie's Wetland Project and the Free State department of environmental affairs and tourism, has been set up to rehabilitate private wetlands at Monontsa and on four farms in the upper Wilge river area.

The project, which ended last month, took five months to complete and employed 212 people.

According to Rennie's Wetland project co-ordinator David Lindley, this is the largest amount ever spent on a SA wetland rehabilitation project.

"The country has already lost an estimated 50% of its wetlands. Entire ecosystems with thousands of species have been destroyed."

Wetlands are often drained to provide land for crops or "reclaimed" for industry and residential areas.

Timber plantations encroach on these areas and roads are built through wetlands, causing erosion or halting the flow of water, drying and eventually destroying the area.

The project aimed to resilt and reclaim dongas in the wetland caused by water flowing over the highly erosive soil. The gullies create a large channel that drains water rapidly.

Structures of hay or rocks have been set up at the head of the gully and at intervals along the dongas to stop the erosion.

Lindley said working on private land presented a challenge.

Farmer Rudolph Coetzee, whose farm Skeurklip was used as one of the rehabilitation sites, said the project had helped to make farmers more aware of the importance of preserving wetlands.

"I can see the long-term benefits

of protecting and restoring wetlands and ensuring a steady supply of water during the dry months."

He said farmers were naturally concerned about erosion but were sceptical at first about the project. "They will become more enthusiastic after the summer rains when the full effect of the rehabilitation project can be seen."

It was hoped farmers in the area would begin implementing their own rehabilitation programmes once they had seen the benefits of the project.

The project is also more economical than the outlay involved in the building of a new dam, which would cost more than R1bn.

Lindley said the restoration of privately owned wetlands would be a long-term process involving the continued co-operation of groups like Rand Water, the agriculture department and the department of environmental affairs and tourism.

"The forestry industry has worked hard to introduce guidelines to ensure trees are not planted in wetlands areas, but conservationists are still having trouble convincing farmers, especially sugar cane farmers, about the importance of wetlands."

Lindley said the importance of wetland conservation was not obvious to the average person: "It isn't an emotive issue like saving the rhino or elephant, but it can no longer be ignored. The rest of the developed world has realised the importance of these areas."

"A conservative estimate shows that wetlands earn or save about R26,86bn in disease prevention and tourism enhancement, as well as an additional R21bn saved in drought and flood damage."

For chief Mapeka Mopeli of the Monontsa district, who along with his council watches the sky eagerly for a sign of rain, the barren land is proof enough. — Sapa.

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Thousands missing from environment organisation

mtg 29/10-4/11/99 (56)

*Rural community-oriented NGO EcoLink
will not be defeated by the alleged
misappropriation of R200 000 of its funds,
write Clive Lloyd and Fiona Macleod*

(34)

EcoLink, one of the country's oldest and largest environmental NGOs working with rural communities, says it will lay charges against its former administrator following the disappearance of more than R200 000 of its funds.

Sue Hart, EcoLink's founder and executive director, recently returned to work fighting fit after two years of serious illness — only to find that during her absence hundreds of thousands of rands had gone missing.

She immediately called for a forensic audit, which provided evidence of misappropriation of funds by the former administrator.

A Nelspruit-based lawyer has volunteered to handle the case for free because he wants to say "thank you" to EcoLink for what it has done for rural communities in Mpumalanga, where the NGO is based.

The lawyer, who does not want to be named, said this week: "The forensic audit is still being conducted, but legal proceedings will be instituted in the very near future."

Donors have been informed of the misappropriation and, says Hart, have unreservedly pledged their ongoing support.

"It is really heart-warming to know that this theft isn't going to tarnish the reputation we've gained over the past 15 years for strict economy and honesty," she says.

Hart built a strong reputation for herself as a veterinarian and environmental educator in East Africa, Malawi and Zimbabwe in the early 1970s.

In 1978 she was asked to launch a completely new type of environmental awareness programme for trainee teachers at Ngwenya College in the former KaNgwane homeland.

David Mabunda, the current director of the Kruger National Park, was one of her students, and he still refers to Hart as one

of his most important mentors.

She launched EcoLink in 1985, to "bring back the love of the Earth to our people" by helping rural communities improve their standard of living while conserving their natural environment.

The NGO has since trained more than 40 rural communities to grow food gardens without using harmful fertilisers or pesticides.

Its highly successful trench-gardening system has been adopted by more than 5 000 families in Mpumalanga and neighbouring Swaziland.

At the busy EcoLink centre near White River, where business starts each day with a prayer meeting, courses on offer include water management, sewing skills, artisan skills, basic business and money management and a self-help project for the disabled.

Many of the workshops conducted at the centre take place under EcoLink's sacred tree, an ancient Natal mahogany which would have germinated long before white settlement and environmental destruction took place.

An example of EcoLink's work is the construction of 5 000 litre ferro-cement watertanks that are provided to store water for communities, vegetable gardens and rural schools.

Minister of Education Kader Asmal recently visited the centre with a view to incorporating some of its community empowerment projects and environmental training programmes in national policy recommendations.

Says Hart, who suffered a stroke two years ago: "You can tell the world we will not be defeated, that we're coming back into the ring with renewed energy."

"We're not only going to survive, but are determined to turn this terrible thing around and move EcoLink into a new phase of its development."

State set to get tough on industrial pollution

Prosecutions in the pipeline, says Valli Moosa

JOHN YEU
ENVIRONMENT WRITER

The Government is to get tough on pollution caused by big industry and the Director of Public Prosecutions has been asked to consider legal action.

One of the first industries in line for investigation was the much-criticised Caltex refinery at Milnerton, Environmental Affairs and Tourism Minister Valli Moosa said in an address to the

Cape Town Press Club last week.

Mr Moosa also said that he hoped to declare Walker Bay the country's first whale sanctuary in time for next year's whale season - from about July to November - and that for critical periods boats would be prevented from entering the bay altogether.

Walker Bay would be the first of several such sanctuaries along the coast.

Responding to a question about severe air pollution at Milnerton, Mr

Moosa said the Caltex refinery "has been brought to my attention" and he had asked officials in his department to give him an opinion on it.

He had also held discussions with National Director of Public Prosecutions Bulelani Ngcuka about the issue of polluters.

"Because my view is that there are grounds for us to prosecute some people in this country, and he's (Mr Ngcuka) very keen to look at that. We can't allow industries to pollute with

impunity."

Mr Moosa said he was certain that his department could make progress with Mr Ngcuka's help, although it would take some time "to get our ducks in row".

Referring to the whales, Mr Moosa said South Africa marketed itself as a "Big Five" destination where visitors could see lion, leopard, elephant, rhino and buffalo, but whales were another key species for tourists.

"In fact we're a 'Big Six' destination, and I don't think we've maximised the potential of that from either a conservation or a tourism point of view."

He told the Cape Argus later there would be close consultation with local fishing communities and the licensed boat-based whale watching operators before Walker Bay was closed.

Mr Moosa, who made an immediate impact on assuming his new portfolio some months ago by suggesting that plastic shopping bags could be banned because of the litter problem, also told

the press club he was now often asked whether he was backtracking on his remarks. However, he remained firmly committed to tackling this issue.

His department would soon release a white paper on waste management, and hopefully there would be a detailed national waste management strategy in a short space of time.

Mr Moosa announced that at the World Heritage Convention's meeting in Paris last week, the 157 signatory countries had voted South Africa to fill

one of seven vacant posts on the World Heritage Committee.

His department's deputy director-general, Tanza Abrahamse, would serve on the committee as South Africa's representative.

He said he was confident that the country's first three applications for World Heritage Site status - Robben Island, Greater St Lucia and the hominid sites at Sterkfontein - would be approved by the committee in December.

Activist Morobe takes fight to the parks

New Parks Board chairman plans to raise public awareness of environment and its benefits, writes Drew Forrest

NEW SA National Parks Board chairman Murphy Morobe attributes some of his enthusiasm for the great outdoors to the years he spent inside the "cold concrete" of apartheid's jails.

Certainly, his love of nature and keen interest in conservation are rather unexpected in a hardened township activist who cut his political teeth at the age of 19 in the 1976 Soweto student upheavals.

He is a keen hiker who recently completed the Other Trail in the southern Cape and nurses the ambition of walking the foothills of the Himalayas.

Now 43, Morobe was born in Orlando East in Soweto and schooled at Morris Isaacson High, the seedbed of student dissent, where he shared a classroom with student leader Tsietshi Mashinini.

With other Sowetans of his generation, including Frank Chikane, Tokyo Sexwale and Popo Molele, he is the classic apartheid-era outlaw whom SA's revolution has turned into a pillar of the establishment.

Safety and security secretary Azhar Cachalia, a friend and former political associate in the United Democratic Front (UDF), describes him as quiet and thoughtful. "He thinks through issues and rarely jumps into things." A colleague at the Financial and Fiscal Commission (FFC), which Morobe has headed since 1994, said he had the "classical profile to be a chairman". "He has the persuasiveness, patience and diplomacy to control



Newsmaker

Murphy Morobe

New chairman of the National Parks Board

meetings, and the political legitimacy to command respect. On occasions he consults too widely - in some situations he might be seen as indecisive."

But there is clearly a leathery, cussed side to him that enabled him to survive 18 months in solitary confinement, detention under the state of emergency, six months of rock-breaking in Johannesburg's Leeuwkop Prison and three years on Robben Island.

His cautiousness seems to be counterbalanced by an audacious streak. With Environment Minister Valli Moosa and Vusi Khanzile now These Investment Corporation head, he escaped from detention in 1988 and took refuge in the US consulate in Johannesburg, sparking a serious diplomatic incident.

It was Morobe, as UDF publicity secretary, who played the part of lightning conductor during the UDF's public denunciation of Winnie Madikizela-Mandela's "football club". Unlike other notables - businessman Aubrey Mokoena springs to mind - he avoided soft-peddling on Madikizela-Mandela's brutal antics when he appeared before the truth commission.

Comments Cachalia: "He's quite a principled person. If an organisation devotes something, he's happy to go out in front."

Some suggest Morobe's political career was damaged by his stand on the "mother of the nation", who set out to smear him as the lap-dog of Indians in the UDF by tagging him "Murphy Patel". It is seen as significant that he was not a member of the post-1994 democratic Parliament.

He denies this. "I was on the election list in '94, but just couldn't conceive of myself as a full-time politician - I felt there were other ways I could contribute."

He points out that he sat with Cyril Ramaphosa on the committee which laid the ground for the release of African National Congress leaders, and was in charge of creating an infrastructure for Codesa. One of his "defining moments" was the raising of the new flag after the elections in Gauteng, a ceremony he organised as the province's provincial secretary.

The FFC, set up by the consti-

tution to mediate between the different tiers of government on financial matters, has been a low-profile body, but Morobe insists it has made an important contribution.

"We designed the revenue-sharing formula used by government, albeit in an amended form. One of our early proposals was for a multi-year budget cycle, which has now been accepted. We were quite pivotal in formulating budget meetings between the finance minister and provincial MECs into the current budget council."

Finance Minister Trevor Manuel has controversially suggested that the commission has outlived its usefulness in a context where the centre and the provinces have learnt to co-operate.

Morobe does not rule out change, conceding that the 22-member commission is too large and unwieldy. But he says: "As long as we have a three-tier system there will be contestation over the



Murphy Morobe ... a love of nature

allocation of revenues, and a need for a mechanism which removes this from the political arena.

"How the system evolves depends on how the tiers renegotiate their relationship from time to time. But you don't throw away an umbrella because it stops raining."

writes Drew Forrest

Morobe sees no conflict between his new parks board job and his full-time responsibilities at the commission. "The parks post is non-executive. The buck stops with me, but I want to install a good support team and to work towards collective decision-making."

He is reluctant to be drawn on Democratic Party claims that the parks department is groaning under mismanagement and nepotism, insisting he needs first to separate fact from fiction. However, he suggests that cost-cutting and moves to rationalise staff - nine Cape Town staffers have quit rather than relocate to Pretoria - lie at the root of the controversy.

Given the many interests contending over national parks, Morobe's diplomatic skills and independent profile at the FFC are seen as well suited to his new post. But, as one colleague put it, he remains an "activist to the core".

He considers conservation a national concern, and parks policy an element of broader political change.

"Everything that grows in the townships has been flattened by bulldozers or cut down for firewood. And blacks were historically defined out of the parks," he says.

"One of my priorities will be to create a consciousness of the environment and conservation among the many, not just the few, which will be integrated into social development."

Helen finds it's so easy to vandalise schools

LYNNETTE JOHNS
Education Reporter

The window opened easily - too easily. Standing in a dimly lit school, with a look of concern, provincial education MEC Helen Zille learned through the window and into the classroom.

She was showing how simple it would be for vandals to break into the school and cause damage which would cost thousands of rands to put right.

The Manenberg school, situated in an area frequented by gangsters, is one of the most vulnerable in the province and is frequently vandalised.

Departmental security guards were not on duty as they should have been. Minutes earlier, Rashied Krotz, a security inspector, had been flagged down by the intrepid Ms Zille as he was leaving the school. He had left the school gates open after checking to see if the security guards were on duty.

A register, which Ms Zille had often asked about but was told did not exist, was produced. It showed the two security guards had not been on duty the entire weekend. Neither were they on duty a few months ago when three of the classrooms were torched in an arson attack.

Ms Zille had been told by department managers there was no money for petrol to allow inspectors to go from school to school.

Yet Mr Krotz was diligently doing his job. Surprised to meet Ms Zille in Manenberg on a Sunday evening, he said he had left the gates open for the police who he assumed would do a routine patrol later the night. In any case, Mr Krotz did not have a key.

Was the department doing the right thing in giving the go-ahead to spend R200 000 on a new fence for the school to keep gangsters and vandals out if the gates were not going to be locked, Ms Zille wanted to know.

The money could instead be spent on a books, teacher support programmes or pre-primary classes.

"If there is a culture of leaving gates open, it's hopeless," she said.

A Cape Argus news team accompanied Ms Zille and Eugene Daniels of the Safer Schools Programme to several schools in the Atteridgeville area last night.

peace to the schools. "This kind of activity is destroying the educational fabric of the Manenberg schools," she said.

The key to stopping the violence in schools was to charge people for assaulting and trespassing. In her capacity as provincial education minister, she would act on behalf of the Manenberg school.

Racked by gang violence, schools in Manenberg had spent R44 million on security during the past four years.

"But nothing has changed," Mr Daniels said. "The money could have been used for development projects instead."

He said the security guards could not help to curb abuse and rape, only a mindset change could. Spending money on security was not going to do that.

At Heidelberg High, guards Eric Fortuin and Faizel Isaacs were on duty, but it was easy to get into the school. The gate was shut but not locked. Had we been armed gangsters, the guards would have been powerless.

With tears in his eyes, Mr Fortuin spoke about the rumours he had heard that the department was seriously considering getting rid of security guards.

"I have a wife and three children - what about them?"

For him, the permanent night shift job meant being able to feed his family.

Last year the department cancelled contracts with several security companies. They were spending R1 million a month and often thieves and vandals got away without the guards doing anything.

The money saved was diverted to the Safer Schools Programme. The dividends were starting to pay off as many schools had alarms and armed reaction companies at a fraction of the cost.

Communities at a number of schools were slowly starting to take responsibility and crime in and around the school was showing a downward trend.

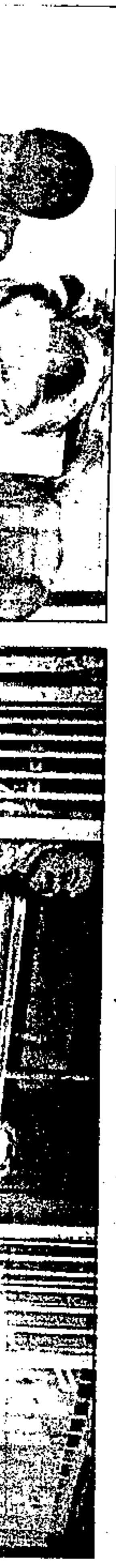
We went on to Spes Bona High, where windows worth R18 000 were smashed recently.

Not only were the front and side gates open, but a huge metal gate, which protected an impressive glass

ART 1/11/99
(56)



Hands-on experience of school crime: provincial Education Minister Helen Zille 'breaks' into a classroom, to show how easy it's



ROY WINGLER

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Communities at a number of schools were slowly starting to take responsibility and crime in and around the school was showing a downward trend. We went on to Spes Bona High, where windows worth R18 000 were smashed recently. Not only were the front and side gates open, but a huge metal gate, which protected an impressive glass entrance door, was ajar. A leisurely walk around the school, in the dark, showed how easy it would be if we had been bent on causing destruction.

"If there is a culture of leaving gates open, it's hopeless," she said.

Mr Daniels phoned the armed response company contracted to the school. Within 10 minutes a heavily armed Fernando Williams and his two colleagues arrived. Their patrol van had been in Khayelitsha doing routine patrols when they were called to respond to Spes Bona.

A Cape Argus news team accompanied Ms Zille and Eugene Daniels of the Safer Schools Programme to several schools in the Athlone area last night.

Mr Williams's views on locked gates were very different from Ms Zille's. He said if vandals wanted to get in they would break the fence. Ms Zille said if the gates were locked, they stood a smaller chance of walking off with valuable equipment. Ms Zille had Mr Williams' good night and dropped the news team at the Manenberg police station.

Her first port of call was the Manenberg police station where senior superintendent Dirk Mentoor was on hand to take down her statement. She was laying a charge of assault and trespassing against a gangster.

About 10 days ago a primary school pupil had been beaten up by the gangster in the classroom. The boy, fearing for his life, ran to the principal's office. The gangster pursued him and severely assaulted the boy in the administration block.

Afraid, the principal and the rest of the school community failed to report the incident.

Senior Superintendent Mentoor said they had a 2% prosecution rate in cases involving theft and damage to schools. But he said vandalism and theft at schools were declining. Ms Zille is determined to bring



Hands-on experience of school crime: provincial Education Minister Helen Zille 'breaks' into a classroom, to show how easy it is

ROY WHEAT



Action: Ms Zille gets the go-ahead to lay a charge of assault against a gangster.



Security? Eugene Daniels of the Safer Schools Programme and Ms Zille at the gate meant to keep vandals out of Spes Bona

Food law may be delayed

New legislation will address consumer concerns over genetically modified foods

Louise Cook

INDICATIONS are that the implementation of a key new food safety law may suffer delays.

This comes at a time when South African consumers are becoming increasingly concerned about genetically modified foods and their possible long-term effects.

Chain store Woolworths has reportedly instructed its suppliers to identify food types which contain any genetically modified organisms. Other chain stores are expected to follow suit soon.

The Genetically Modified Organisms Act was passed by Parliament two years ago, but sources in the food industry said on Friday they would be "surprised" if government was ready to implement it by December.

Cheaper systems were available

By 2/11/99 (56)
Myndham Hartley

CAPE TOWN — At least two computer companies from different parts of the country have claimed that they unsuccessfully offered the National Parks Board computer booking systems that would have cost a fraction of the R8m they claim has been spent on a new "in-house" system.

A representative of one firm, who declined to be named, said his company had successfully installed booking systems similar to what the board would have needed and it would have cost about R200 000.

He claimed that once all the work on the board's Reservations and Front Office System (Rafos) was tied up, it came to between R6m and R8m.

Democratic Party environmental affairs spokesman Errol Moorcroft said he had received similar calls from computer companies.

One of them, not based in Gauteng, claimed experience in nature conservation booking systems with successful installations elsewhere in southern Africa.

His source claimed that he could have installed a successful product for R20 000, Moorcroft said.

Board spokesman Salifu Siddo said the Rafos system was developed in-house and when all was faltering over the two years of work, it would have cost between R6m and R7m.

Because the system was developed by the board's information and technology department, the work had not been put out to tender.

He stressed that Rafos had been online and operated for a year and had been fully debugged. "It works perfectly," he said.

Moorcroft said he had received calls from other sources, who declined to be named, but who insisted that the board was experiencing financial difficulties with a R2m surplus likely to end up as a R6m to R12m deficit at the end of the financial year.

The act would regulate local commercial plantings of engineered crops and would be administered by the agriculture department. Imported food that contains engineered organisms is currently controlled by the health department.

Land and Agriculture minister Thoko Diza was unavailable for comment. However, agriculture department assistant director, Kele Lekoape, insisted that preparations to implement the act on time, were being done.

Environmentalists have also accused government of a lack of transparency and consultation, alleging that the new law failed to protect the environment and favoured technology.

The technology entails adding and removing specific genes to boost desired traits, like resistance to droughts and pests in plants. Fears exist about the long-term impact on the environment and food safety.

In SA, commercial plantings of yellow maize and cotton started last year for the first time, but large parts of different US crops, particularly maize, soya and cotton, were engineered.

Local scientists emphasised that the technology held benefits for developing nations and would boost Africa's ability to feed itself. A scientist from a food company said it was impossible to tell which imported food contained genetically modified organisms.

Unified management

There are a number of factors that make it difficult to implement effective natural resource management.

Tobias Schmitz explains why

By 2/11/99 (56)

THE move towards more sustainable forms of living is a key policy principle in the new South Africa. For instance, the right of every individual to effective environmental governance was given firm anchoring in the new Constitution, and sustainability was one of the six key principles underlying the Reconstruction and Development Programme.

But the actual implementation of effective natural resource management is difficult to achieve, mainly because "nature" and "society" operate according to such different sets of rules.

For one thing, the parceling off of government into neat and discrete administrative units dealing with land, water or forests does not correspond to the intricate linkages between land, water and forests from the point of view of nature.

The solution, according to new environmental management philosophies, is "integration". All the knowledge that we have about the natural and social environment in our various scientific disciplines, various government departments and different geographical locations should be integrated into a single, unified management plan that provides the strategic vision for environmental management in a given area.

The concept is scientifically sound — and it has been launched in South Africa in recent years — but so far the history of integration here is rather sad, with each government department launching its own unique plans, rather than integrating with each other.

In the 1995 White Paper on agriculture, the Department of Agriculture (DOA) launched integrated land-use planning, which it implemented through the provincial offices to ensure optimum management and utilisation of the natural resources.

Land and water conservation efforts sometimes took place at farm level and other times at an aggregate level such as a sub-catchment, but in all cases water sources were left untouched, as these belong to the domain of the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry (DWAF).

Water was only managed once it flowed over farmland. From 1996 onwards it was the turn of the DWAF to launch its version of integrated catchment management.

In its (justified) view, catchments were natural units for natural resource management and socio-economic planning because they capture all human activities and natural events in one management unit. But this contained some obstacles. For instance, planning at catchment level would make many provincial and local environmental planning functions redundant; for many ministers, it would be tantamount to redrawing the political map of the country.



Scientists and government departments must pool their knowledge about the natural and social environment into a single, unified management plan to provide a strategic vision for the management of the environment.

As a result, the DWAF opted for a more incremental approach, launching the more limited concept of "integrated water resource management" as a first stage in the movement towards integrated catchment management.

However, integrated water resource management is fundamentally flawed if it cannot influence the land use practices which so strongly influence water flow patterns. To be effective, it must encroach on other competencies such as agriculture.

Turning to the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT), the question can be asked how its central mission can be achieved when key resources such as water, land and forests fall within the competencies of other line departments. In January the National Environmental Management Act was promulgated, giving the DEAT powers to implement integrated environmental management through the committee for environmental coordination.

Among other things, this framework requires all national departments involved in the management of the environment to submit environmental management plans to this committee for approval. Apparently this Act evoked some resistance — from the DWAF among others — particularly because of the idea that the National Environmental Management Act would be superior in status to the Water Act. Acting independently from the other ministers, the DOA has embarked on the drafting of the Sustainable Utilisation of Agricultural Resources Bill.

which aims to update the Conservation of Agricultural Resources Act of 1983.

Essentially it continues the 1983 Act's recognition of the deterioration of South Africa's agricultural resources and focuses on enhancing sustainability of natural resource management on farms.

However, it cannot do this without for instance tackling the issue of bio-diversity, which is central to the policies of the DEAT. Apparently, therefore, rather than creating structures for the integrated planning of natural resource management in South Africa, each department has used the rhetoric of integration independently to establish structures located within their particular domain of reference.

The reality of natural resource management is that these resources cannot be managed independently of one another, but on the other hand the reality of governance is that functional divisions between ministers are both necessary for effective management and their boundaries are defended by the ministers in question. The new culture of public participation in governance has led to structures being created for stakeholder input on the one hand and government review of this input on the other hand.

The problem with this kind of thinking is that the line ministers themselves are stakeholders, and processes of institutional design need to take this into account.

(The writer is a policy analyst at the Centre for Policy Studies, Johannesburg.)

R1 000 A MONTH FEES

Tariff plan draws ire of lagoon residents

ET 3/11/99.
(76)

THE Langebaan community is up in arms over proposed plans by the National Parks Board to levy exorbitant tariffs for the use of the popular lagoon in the West Coast National Park. Consumer Writer **GUSTAV THIEL** reports.

THE Mayor of Langebaan, Willem Malherbe, has organised a public meeting about the tariffs for tonight to protest against what he termed "the unilateral decision by the parks board without consulting local residents".

One proposal that has particularly irked residents is that sailing vessels will in future have to pay R1 000 a month to moor in Kraal Bay, which falls within the boundaries of the park. Previously there was no mooring tariff. Even canoes and rowing dinghies will have to pay tariffs.

Malherbe says the community is "dik die moer in" (extremely angry), about the proposed tariffs, which will compel all users of water-going vessels to pay for the right to use the highly popular lagoon.

Malherbe was supported by several members of the community who said one of the reasons they had bought property in the area was for its ready access to the lagoon. They spoke on condition of anonymity because Malherbe feels the meeting might force the parks board to change its stance.

"The proposals by the parks board will force some people to move and sell their property because it will simply become too expensive to use the lagoon, one homeowner said."

Om von Kaschke, park manager of the West Coast National Park, says the proposed tariff "is perfectly legal in terms of the National Parks Act and at this stage we do not plan to change the proposals. We will also not be attending the public meeting because it was organised by the mayor".

Von Kaschke says, however, that there will be an opportunity for members of the public to comment on the proposals, "but we don't know when this will be".

Von Kaschke published the original proposals in the *Langebaan Gazette* on October 7, and specified that concerned parties could comment before October 18.

Malherbe said the time given for comment "is absolutely ridiculous".

"Surely this is an attempt by the parks board to try and get their proposals approved without consulting the people in the area?"

Von Kaschke denies this. "There is nothing wrong with what we are doing. The main reason we are imposing the tariffs is to make sure that all the vessels using the lagoon are seaworthy. The tariffs will also make it easier to regulate activities on the water."

Von Kaschke added that subsequent to the publication of the intention to impose tariffs on October 7, another notice was

published to inform the public that further comment would be possible at a later stage. "This does not automatically mean that we will change the tariffs."

The categories of vessels on which the tariffs will be levied include twin- and single-engined ski boats and inflatable boats, canoes, rowing dinghies, houseboats, passenger launches and sailing vessels.

All sailing vessels which are not permanently moored will have to pay R65 a month and R250 a year if they are shorter than six metres. Sailing vessels longer than six metres will pay R500 a year.

Passenger launches will be charged R200 a month and R1 000 a year. Houseboats will be charged R1 000 a month for mooring rights.

The parks board has also set other conditions for using the lagoon which did not exist before. These include the stipulation that vessels may operate in designated areas only and that annual permits are to be issued for the period April 1 to March 31 of the following year. Permits are to be issued only after inspection of the vessel.

Rowing boats, dinghies, canoes and inflatable rubber boats will not be allowed to use the lagoon between sunset and sunrise.

Malherbe says residents "are not going to accept the proposed tariffs because some of them are simply not reasonable".

He hoped that tonight's meeting, which starts at 6.30 pm, will force the board to listen to alternative proposals.

Mining threatens Macassar dunes

ANDRÉ KOOPMAN
POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

THE ANC yesterday called for urgent action to be taken on "uncontrolled sand mining" at the Olympic Sand Mine near Macassar, saying it was dangerous and environmentally unsound.

ANC Western Cape spokesperson on environment and development planning Max Ozinsky, MPL has launched an investigation at the request of the Macassar and District Environment Forum.

Ozinsky said the mine posed a danger to children and adults.

"This mine is situated on an environmentally sensitive and important sand dune which is home to at least two endangered plant species. This sand dune is said

to be the highest in the Western Cape," Ozinsky said.

Investigations have shown the mine to have a licence, but the land is not zoned for mining, he charged, and added: "Although there is an environmental management plan formulated for the mine, it is not being implemented."

Ozinsky said that the mining company was not rehabilitating the dune as they were supposed to, and had dug a huge hole about 30m deep and 100m wide.

The sand being mined is used in building construction.

The mining company could not be reached for comment.

There is also the danger that someone walking from the beach could fall into the mine as it is difficult to spot, Ozinsky said.

Part of the mine is about 200m from the high-water mark.

"There are no access controls or safety measures at the mine. It is very close to a large residential area, but there is not even a fence around it.

"There are no warning signs in place. Anyone can enter the area, even by chance, and there is the danger of an accident taking place."

Ozinsky said he had contacted the Minister of Mineral and Energy Affairs, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka and that she had launched a departmental investigation into the matter.

"We believe that the Macassar dunes must be protected and managed as an important environmental asset for the whole of the Western Cape," he said.

Alarm over threat to forests in Cape

(hb) CT (M) 4/11/99

STEWART BAILEY

Johannesburg - Converting Safcol assets in the Western Cape for alternative uses would be a blow to the forestry industry in the region, Mike Edwards, the chief executive of the Forest Owners Association, said yesterday.

It emerged last month that no acceptable offers had been received for the Northern Province and Western Cape packages of Safcol.

Lael Bethlehem, the chief director of water affairs and forestry, said the "only offer received for the Western Cape package had suggested alternative land use.

"That is certainly an indication of the market's perception of forestry in the area."

Bethlehem said tourism, fruit farming and wine growing were only some of the alternatives to forestry.

"As the plantations in question belong to Safcol, this is a matter for the department of public enterprises," said Bethlehem.

She said that there would be no question of an "overnight change" to another activity on the land and that a thorough evaluation would be conducted based on market forces and sustainability.

At stake in the Western Cape are 18 827ha of Safcol plantations, which provide direct employment to 541 people and are the lifeblood of six fixed sawmills

and a number of mobile mills in the area.

Edwards said private plantations, which totalled only 7 399ha, would be insufficient on their own to allow the industry to function at current levels.

"The forests in the area are a prime asset and are close to Cape Town's port, which enhances export potential.

"There is no rationale for conversion from one crop to another.

"If there was such a strong dynamic within the viticulture or fruit farming sectors, surely market forces would have allowed them to displace forestry by now," said Edwards.

Bethlehem said, however, that market forces had never been allowed to play a role on the land as it had always been owned by the state.

"There is no reason why certain areas will not be retained as forest plantations, but in areas where soil conditions and rainfall are not conducive to favourable mean annual growth, other land use may be more profitable," she said.

Zaid Nordien, a spokesman for the department of public enterprise, said the appraisal of the interministerial Cabinet committee on restructuring would take all options into account.

The final decision would be in the "best interests of industry as a whole".

**At stake are
18 000ha of
Safcol forests,
541 jobs and
the lifeblood
of sawmills**

Moosa to get tough on polluters

(56) M+G 5-11/11/99

Barry Streek

The government has given notice that it is going to get tough on industrial polluters, including multinational oil company Caltex, whose Milnerton, Cape Town, refinery has been criticised by local residents.

Environmental Affairs and Tourism Minister Valli Moosa disclosed that he has already been in consultation with the National Director of Public Prosecutions, Bulelani Ngcuka, about the enforcement of the environmental provisions of the Constitution.

In an address to the Cape Town Press Club, Moosa also unveiled plans to declare a whale sanctuary at Hermanus, and establish an Antarctic institute in Cape Town.

He also expressed confidence that South Africa's first three applications for World Heritage Site status — Robben Island, Greater St Lucia and the hominid sites at Sterkfontein — would be approved by the World Heritage Committee in December.

He said he would continue his campaign against the use of plastic bags, if necessary by passing legislation.

Moosa was asked what he would do about the air pollution caused by the Caltex refinery at Milnerton. He said the Caltex refinery had been "brought to my attention" and he had asked officials in his department to give him an opinion on it.

He was certain his department would make progress with Ngcuka's help but "it will take some time for us to get our ducks in a row".

The South African Constitution provides that "everyone has the right to an environment that is not harmful to their health or well-being; and to have the environment protected ..."

No cases have yet been brought under the environmental provisions of the Constitution, but Moosa was clearly hinting that his department is looking carefully at these provisions to take legal action against industrial polluters.

He said he was often asked whether he was backtracking on his remarks, made shortly after he took office in June, that he would consider banning plastic bags. He reiterated that he remained firmly committed to tackling this issue and his department would soon release a white paper on waste management and hopefully there would be a detailed national waste management strategy in a short space of time.

"Plastic bags are a symbol of pollution and waste in our country. There is no reason why we should be so dependent on plastic bags. The ultimate goal is not to use plastic. I am prepared to introduce legislation on plastic bags, if need be."

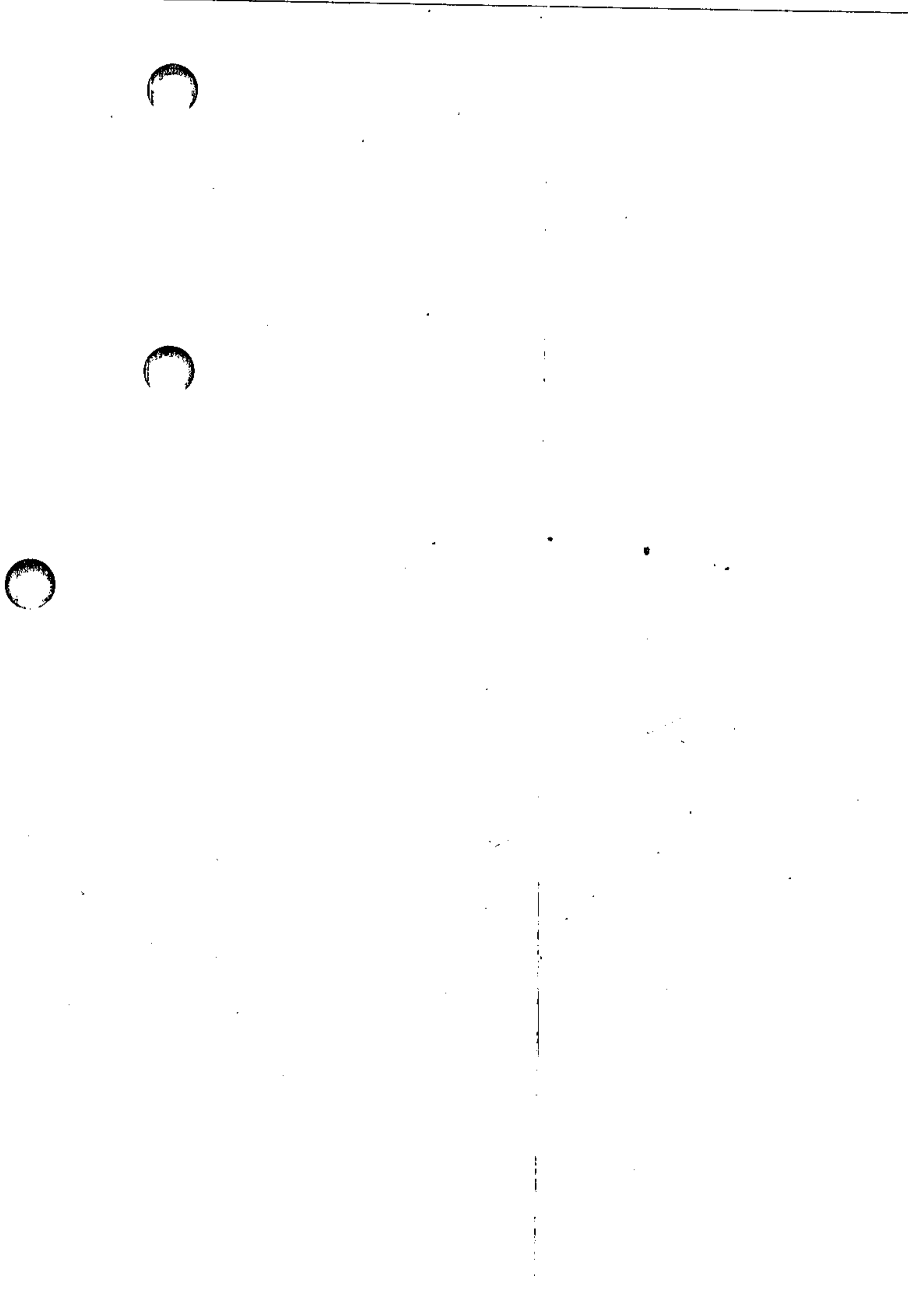
Moosa said he hoped to declare

Walker Bay at Hermanus the country's first whale sanctuary in time for next year's whale season from about July to November and for that critical period boats would be prevented from entering the bay.

He said Cape Town was being used as the base operation more and

more by boats and researchers going to the Antarctic and this had spin-offs for tourism, although he stressed that he was not talking about taking business to Antarctica because South Africa was at the forefront of combating pollution on the continent's highly sensitive ecosystem.

He proposed that an Antarctic Institute should be established in Cape Town. It would be wholly-owned by the government. This institute would "become a must-see centre for every South African and every tourist. It will give the exposure of being on Antarctica without actually being there."



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Are we ready for the food revolution?

56
m+G 5-11/11/99

The consequences of growing and eating genetically modified organisms could hit South Africans before we've had a chance to debate the issue, writes Ann Eveleth

The growing international debate over genetically modified organisms (GMOs) is finally filtering into the public domain in South Africa. But information about the pros and cons of this "food revolution" is leaking into the country more slowly than the controversial produce.

If you eat meat fed on maize, if you are a vegetarian, or if you like sushi, you have probably already eaten the fruits of science's most controversial offering: genetic engineering. And thanks to globalisation and the slow development of government -- and global -- policy on the matter, you had no way of knowing it.

According to FW Jansen van Rijssen, Deputy Director of Food Control in the Department of Health: "The only genetically modified crops currently being grown [commercially in South Africa] are yellow maize for animal feed and cotton seeds. Cotton oil from these crops may appear in foodstuffs later this year. Genetically modified soybeans are internationally available and may find their way into processed food imported by South Africa."

Other GMO crops currently in the testing phase in South Africa include soybeans, canola, apples,

tomatoes and potatoes, according to Professor Jennifer Thompson of the South African Committee on Gene Experimentation (Sagene), which currently advises the government on proposed new GMO trials.

Yet the Departments of Health and Agriculture, Jansen van Rijssen adds, are still consulting "stakeholders" about whether and when foods containing GMOs should be labelled. Jansen van Rijssen was speaking at the "Gene Technology -- Food for Thought" conference hosted in Johannesburg on October 29 by the Consumer Institute of South Africa in a bid to open public debate on the issue.

The conference brought together government officials, scientists, agrochemical producers and consumer and environmental activists in an often heated exchange between proponents and opponents of the new technology.

Genetically-modified organisms are the products of a new kind of biotechnology. Normal breeding practices can cross-breed similar organisms to create a hybrid. But genetic engineering can potentially splice the DNA of a fish into an onion, a cockroach into a tomato, or vice-versa. DNA can be exchanged between plants, animals and micro-organisms.

The aim of this new technology is to give the recipient species a new trait, such as the ability to resist herbicides and pesticides, to grow in abnormal

climates, or to be more nutritious.

Proponents of GMO technology, including many scientists, agro-input producers and food suppliers, say GMOs could help defeat world hunger and cure diseases and malnutrition. Opponents, including many other scientists, environmentalists, and consumer activists, say GMOs can destroy the environment, make people sick, and further concentrate control of world food production in the hands of an ever-shrinking number of multinational corporations.

The promise of gene technology is the stuff of *Star Trek*: bananas that vaccinate your child against the measles; maize that can grow in Africa's parched soils and survive drought conditions; and maybe even an orange that can prevent cancer.

The problem, say critics like environmental lawyer Miriam Mayet, is that GMOs have been channelled into the food chain at a pace that has outstripped the ability of governments to either regulate them, or address the concerns of opponents.

GMOs have not, for example, been subjected to environmental impact assessments in South Africa.

"This means that one of the most important ecological safeguards to protect

the environment and enforce our constitutional rights has been sacrificed in favour of expediting the application of this technology," says Mayet.

Apart from the environmental concerns, GMOs raise a number of health concerns.

Dr Harris Steinman of the SA Allergen Society says that chief among these is the effect the new foods will have on the nature and extent of allergic reactions among consumers.

Steinberg says that the past decade has seen a 300% increase in allergies around the world.

Exposure to new foods can reveal new allergies, and the combination of genetic material can lead to "cross-allergenicity" where people allergic to one thing may be allergic to the genetic material that has been added to an item they once ate safely.

Allergic reactions can be extremely mild, or deadly.

An easy, though expensive, way to reduce unexpected allergic reactions would be to label foods containing GMOs, and to test the products as rigorously as are new medicines.

But in the United States, where most GMO products originate, many GMO foods have escaped the labelling requirement through the claim that they are "substantially equivalent" to their natural predecessors.

Vocal environmental and consumer lobbies oppose GMOs in the

US and the European Union. But attempts to make labelling internationally mandatory have been bedeviled by US government and producer opposition in the United Nations' food safety agency, the Codex Alimentarius Commission.

South Africa adopted legislation -- the Genetically Modified Organisms Bill -- in 1997 to govern GMOs through a council that will oversee safety and other concerns.

The Bill is only scheduled to take effect on December 1, but even this will not make GMO labelling mandatory.

While Sagene currently oversees the application process for local GMO experimentation and the general release of GMO products, South Africa currently has no means of forcing international producers to disclose when they are importing foods containing GMOs.

This policy gap, say consumer critics, opens the way for GMO producers in the global north to seek new markets in the global south as northern consumers increase their demands for GMO-free food.

Michael Hansen, of the US-based Consumer Policy Institute, says the products are being allowed on to the market ahead of appropriate policy platforms around the world because they are being pushed by powerful corporate interests.

"The major actors in the development of genetic engineering in agriculture are the large transnational [pesticide] corporations ... There are five major transnational corporations, the so-called 'Gene Giants', that are collectively responsible for virtually 100% of the global acreage in transgenic [GMO] crops," he says.

"Their goal is to maximise profits by controlling the farmer's choice of seed variety, in effect to lock a farm operation into a particular pest management system that, among other things, includes reliance on proprietary pesticides and on biotechnologies," adds Hansen.

Most GMOs are bred for resistance to a particular herbicide or pesticide, usually the one produced by the same company.



Fears of 'Frankenfood': Greenpeace members protest against genetically modified soya at a Greek soya mill

In spite of this, South Africa's agriculture specialists are excited about the new technology. Dr Johan Brink of the South African Agricultural Research Council says GMO "is not a silver bullet for achieving food security", but adds that the new technology "used in conjunction with traditional and conventional agricultural research methods may be a powerful tool in the fight against poverty".

Brink says Africa missed out on the benefits of the so-called Green Revolution of the 1960s and 1970s -- the introduction of modern hybrids and industrial-scale farming methods into the Third World.

With the population of sub-Saharan Africa expected to double by the year 2020, some argue the continent cannot afford to miss out on GMO technology.

For many developing countries, however, the Green Revolution was a disaster.

Hansen says the cost of initially increased crop yields in south-east Asia was marginalisation of small farms and rural unemployment.

He fears this history will be repeated by the GMO revolution.

Sagene, however, points to successful GMO trials with small farmers in the Makhathini flats as evidence that the new technology will be useful to all farmers.

But Hansen warns that the new technology will be too costly for most subsistence farmers. GMO producers are already seeking patents on a series of "terminator" genes that would stop farmers saving seed for replanting, forcing small farmers to buy new seed each year.

As GMO companies increase their already substantial control of the global seed industry, the ability of farmers -- and consumers -- to opt out of GMO technology will be curtailed, he adds.

(76)

FM 5/11/99

WILL RESERVES GET SOME TLC (TENDER LOVING CASH) AT LAST?

New kind of animal on the board to bite at commercialisation

The long-delayed commercialisation of SA's State-controlled nature resources may finally be under way, judging by the shake-up in the SA National Parks (SANP)'s internal management and Board of Trustees. SANP has already secured a R65m loan to proceed with commercial development.

Appointments to the new governing board appear to favour business, tourism and community development skills ahead of the more traditional, purist conservation ethic. Of the 17 board members, nine are from the provinces and the rest have backgrounds in business or community activism, which could help with SANP's noncore functions, such as community involvement in conservation or dealing with land claims. Some members, such as Ian Player and Clive Walker, combine business experience with a wealth of wildlife knowledge.

Environmental Affairs & Tourism Minister Mohammed Valli Moosa appointed the new board last month, saying he was confident it had the "experience and the skill to tackle the challenges facing SANP".

The board's non-executive chairman for the next three years will be Murphy Morobe, a former anti-apartheid activist who has chaired the Financial & Fiscal Commission for the past three years.

SANP, meanwhile, has begun to cut costs. Its decision to downscale the Cape Town office appears to have sparked the criticism of SANP last week by Democratic Party environmental affairs spokesman Errol Moorcroft. His allegations that SANP is "technically bankrupt" and that bookings have dropped about 90% because of problems with a new computer booking system are rejected out of hand by SANP finance director Chris Soglanich.

"All (Moorcroft) had to do to confirm the real situation was pick up the phone and call us," says Soglanich. "But he didn't bother to check the inaccurate stories, which obviously had been related to him by the eight dissatisfied members of our financial division in Cape Town, which is being shut down."

Soglanich confirms SANP's bookings have dropped, but says they are nowhere

near as bad as claimed by Moorcroft. The fall-off is a reflection of the general climate in the tourism industry, he says.

He says bed-night occupancies in the Kruger National Park in the 12 months to end-September fell 4,6% compared with the previous 12 months; the Northern Parks division is down 7,5% and the Southern Parks division is down 4,1%. "The hospitality industry overall is about 10% down, according to our information," he says. Soglanich attributes this to a weak local economy, rising fuel costs, high toll charges on roads leading to the southern Kruger Park and the opening up of Mozambique as a competing destination.

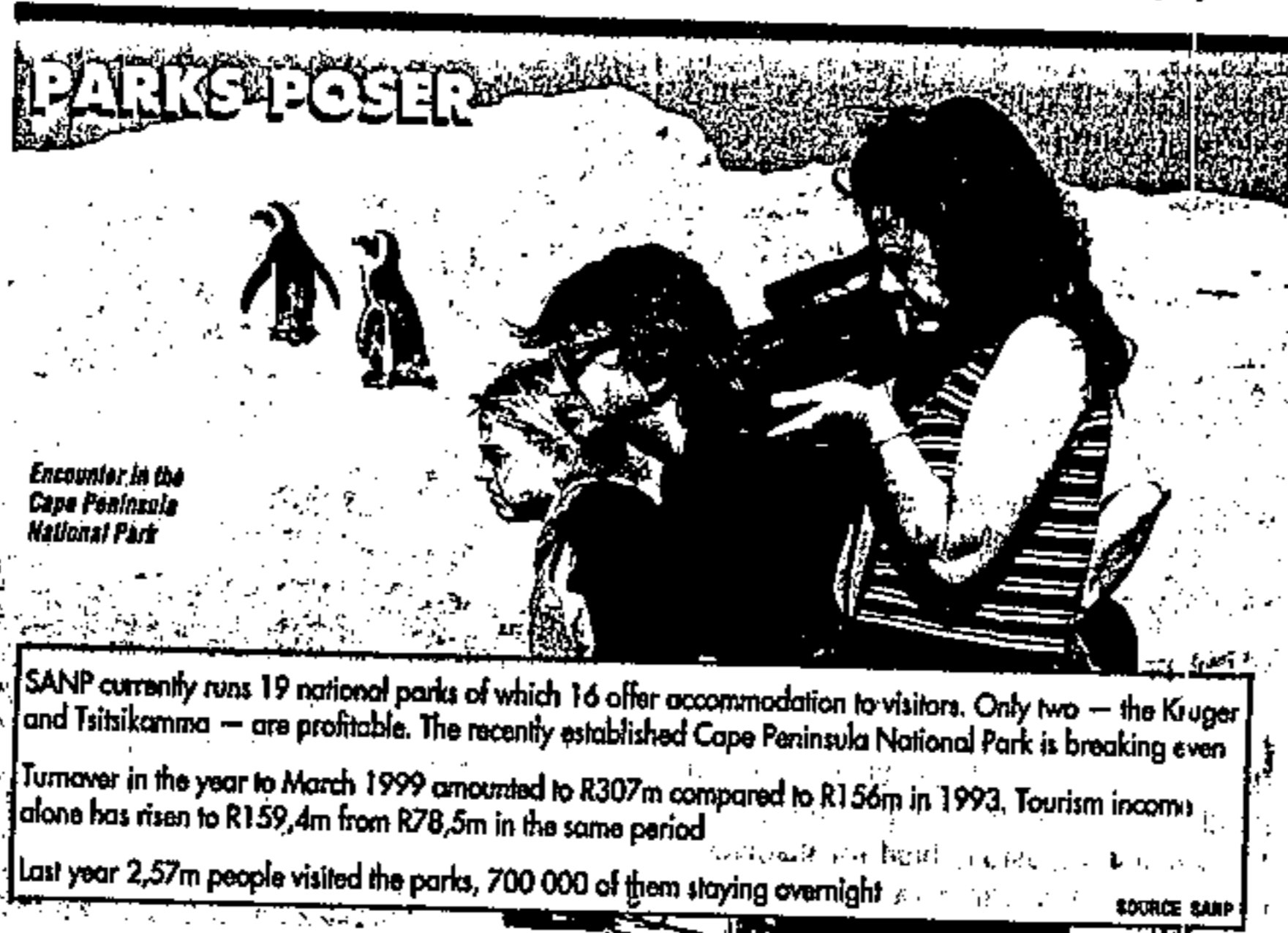
SANP's accounts show it lost R5m in the

Corp. "The IDC has approved a loan of R138m to SANP of which R50m is earmarked for land acquisitions, R65m for commercial developments and the balance for infrastructure," he says. Moosa is currently reviewing the terms.

Since taking over the Environmental Affairs & Tourism portfolio, Moosa has said repeatedly that he favours the involvement of the private sector in the commercialisation of SANP's hospitality functions such as accommodation, restaurants and guided tours. Such developments have been talked about at SANP since 1994, when it was apparent that conservation would be low on the funding priorities of any new government.

Soglanich says SANP management has prepared a commercialisation strategy which the previous board approved. The R65m from the IDC earmarked for commercial development will be used to implement it, he says.

Meanwhile, the provincial reserves are in far worse financial shape. Most have been hit by chopped budgets and the early retirement of skilled staff. Their plight was



Encounter in the Cape Peninsula National Park

SANP currently runs 19 national parks of which 16 offer accommodation to visitors. Only two — the Kruger and Tsitsikamma — are profitable. The recently established Cape Peninsula National Park is breaking even. Turnover in the year to March 1999 amounted to R307m compared to R156m in 1993. Tourism income alone has risen to R159,4m from R78,5m in the same period. Last year 2,57m people visited the parks, 700 000 of them staying overnight. SOURCE: SANP

year to March after a previous year's loss of R7m. Its net current liabilities were R30m on March 31.

"That's not great, but it does not make us bankrupt," Soglanich says. "For the last six months to September, SANP has broken even at the operating level and shows a R6m overall profit."

Soglanich says that, despite Moorcroft's claim to the contrary, SANP has secured finance from the Industrial Development

highlighted by the report last year of Judge Mark Kumleben (*Current Affairs* November 27 1998). But government's response, so far, has been minimal.

Soglanich says government's contribution to national parks has been pegged at about R50m since 1992. But since then SANP has formed five new national parks and bought extra land to expand the Addo and Marakele national parks. This has strained its balance sheet. **Brenda Ryan**

Doctors who dump dangerous waste face the chop — and harsh new penalties

waste illegally, and in some other provinces, the figure was higher. The cost of a proper waste disposal service is R60 a month, yet many practitioners opt to dump their waste, usually in impoverished areas. Hundreds of children have been treated this year at huge cost to the taxpayer after being pricked with dumped needles.

posal from the point of origin to the point of destruction and a set of standards," he said. SanuMed, a subdivision of EnviroServ, processes waste from about 500 of the more than 1 000 medical practitioners in the Western Cape. Mr Bromfield estimated that 25% of practitioners were disposing of their

responsibility it was. Mr Bromfield said South Africa should follow the US example of allowing a medical practice to open only if it had a contract with a recognised waste processor. "We need a register of all medical practitioners, legislation in place which covers all aspects of waste dis-

standards to control medical waste dumping. "Those found guilty of dumping bio-hazardous waste are paying R50 littering fines, which is little more than a slap on the wrist." He said the introduction of new legislation was being delayed because the Government could not decide whose

agreed to strike from the roll those who were found guilty of illegally dumping medical waste. Meanwhile, Ken Bromfield, managing director of EnviroServ, a private waste disposal company, said it was frustrating that 10 years after his business had opened up in South Africa there was still no legislation nor

Cultural Affairs Minister, Glen Adams, said his department would liaise with the Department of Local Government, which is drawing up the draft legislation, to make sure penalties for illegally dumping hazardous waste were increased significantly. Mr Adams said the Health Professions Council of South Africa had

The province's Environment and

HELEN BARFORD (76) STAFF REPORTER ARG 5/11/99

Medical practitioners caught dumping dangerous waste could soon find themselves struck off and facing heavy penalties under tough new laws.

Tug of war over precious Maccassar dunes

Protests prompt official inspection of controversial sand mining operation

AKR 8/11/99

A senior official from the Department of Minerals and Energy is flying to Cape Town this week to inspect the controversial Olympic sand mine in the Maccassar dunes after protests by local residents and an appeal to the Minister by the provincial African National Congress.

JOHN YELD
Environment
Writer



One of the objections is that the mining is taking place in highly sensitive dunes which are home to several rare and endangered plant species. Furthermore, it is alleged, this particular mine is unsafe and is not being conducted according to the approved environmental management plan or within current zoning for the area.

Last month, mine owners said local residents had invaded the mine, disrupting loading and they had been forced to close it temporarily for reasons of safety.

Last week about 100 residents, led by the Maccassar & District Environmental Forum, protested outside the entrance to the mine.

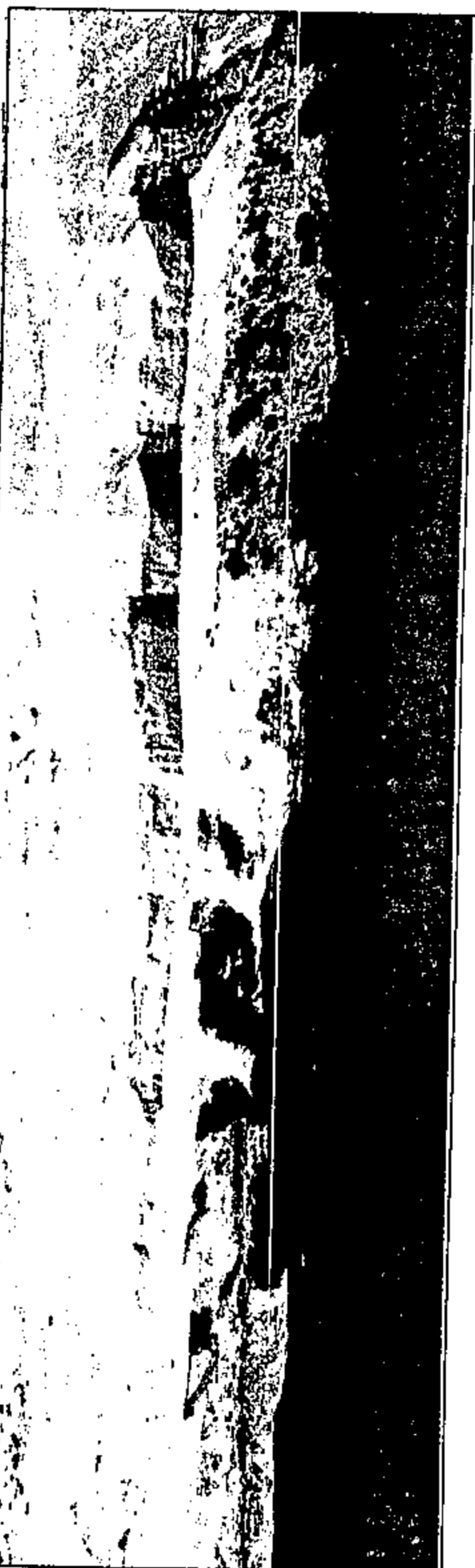
They carried placards with slogans like "Sand mining is destroying God's creatures" and "Clean environments, clean contracts".

They handed a memorandum, calling on the department to take action against "illegal" mining activities and for the mine to be shut, to a senior official in the department's regional office.

The owners of the mine have hit back, saying exhaustive studies over many years have proved the value of the sand deposits at Maccassar. That some of the protesters have hidden agendas because they have also applied for sand mining rights in the same dune system, and that they (the owners) have been subjected to extortion attempts.

"Olympic Sand is on record that for several years it has been subjected to torturous, meandering proceedings, erroneous reporting, partisan distortion and duress. Its employees threatened with violence and its business disrupted, mainly because of a lack of proportionality i.e. evenhandedness, to the extent that it has had to incur tens of thousands of rands of wasted costs thus far."

Provincial Environment Minister Glen Adams, who confessed to being "appalled" by the severe environmental degradation he witnessed during a site visit on Thursday, has also become involved.



Disputed territory: the Olympic Sand mine has cut a huge swathe through the Maccassar dunes, but the mine owners say the area is earmarked for housing anyway

He told Maccassar residents he would write to the national Minister of Minerals and Energy Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka to express his concern, and would also look carefully at the environmental management strategy being developed for the dunes.

"If necessary, we can make adjustments, in consultation around a table," he said.

The dunes are owned by the state, and the mining is done on a lease basis. A Maccassar Dunes Management Plan, being compiled by the Cape Metropolitan Council for submission to the provincial government, is already

on draft four, and is unlikely to be completed before next year.

In their memorandum, the environmental forum said they were concerned that the Olympic mine was damaging the ecology and beauty of the dunes, which were among the highest in the Western Cape.

"The dunes are the home of a number of endangered plants and many types of animals. The dunes are part of the future we want to bequeath to our children."

They also expressed concern about safety of the mine, saying it was not fenced off and there were no warning

signs. "The hole created by the mine is dangerous and totally exposed." Also, they said the mine was not adhering to its environmental management plan.

Max Ozinsky, environmental spokesman for the Western Cape ANC, said they were concerned mining was taking place in an "uncontrolled manner", and shared the concerns of the community. He had contacted Mrs Mlambo-Ngcuka, who had launched a departmental investigation into the matter. "We are confident that the department will take appropriate steps to resolve this issue in consultation with the community."



Attentive ear: Western Cape Environment Minister Glen Adams, left, listens to John Hevel during a visit to the site

'Housing planned'

The entire mining area of the Olympic sand mine is within the 200ha earmarked for the new Khayelitsha 4 housing development in the Maccassar dunes, and it would be "crazy" to simply build over 30 million cubic metres of badly-needed banking sand without mining it first.

Also, closing this mine and forcing builders in the Cape metropolitan area to "import" sand from the Malmesbury and Kluifswel would add significantly to their construction costs.

These are among the points made in a spirited response by mine owner Andre van Rooyen to criticism about his mining operation from local residents, environmentalists and politicians.

Mr Van Rooyen said he had been threatened by some local residents who wanted to get a share of his business.

Mr Van Rooyen also said the objectors were pre-empting the findings of the major Maccassar Dunes Management Plan, which is already in its fourth draft and which is expected to be finalised some time next year.

Responding to specific criticism, Mr Van Rooyen insisted that mining was being worked "strictly" according to the approved environmental management plan and safety regulations relating to the slopes of mined areas were adhered to.

Govt is committed to heritage site

WITH only a month to go before the decision to declare the Sterkfontein, Swartkrans and Kromdraai area a world heritage site or not, top palaeoanthropologist Lee Berger refuses to seriously consider failure.

"If we don't get it? For sure, we'll try again next year, but let's not even talk in that negative way," he says.

Mary Metcalfe, Gauteng's agriculture, conservation and environment MEC, said all the indications were that "we should feel positive". The Cradle of Humankind area, just outside Krugersdorp, boasts arguably the "greatest ever" palaeoanthropological find in Africa.

It is a 3,3-million-year-old fossilised skeleton of a hominid, or early human. It is the oldest and most complete apeman skeleton in the world, and supports the theory that humans originated in Africa.

Once it has been unearthed, the jumble of bones, entombed in fossil-rich breccia in the Sterkfontein caves, could constitute the "missing link" between primates and modern man.

As Berger is quick to point out, it is not only "little foot" that makes the area special.

"Dozens and dozens" of famous fossil sites dot the "pristine wilderness" area from Har-tebeespoort Dam to beyond Sterkfontein.

These sites have produced the remains of hominids from two to 3,3-million years ago: the early stone age, the middle stone age, the later stone age, the early and late iron age and up to the present day.

The area has yielded more than 500 hominid fossils, thousands of animal fossils, more than 300 fragments of fossil wood and more than 9 000 stone tools — some of them the oldest in southern Africa.

The famous Mrs Ples skull, discovered in 1947, was found by Robert Broom in the Sterkfontein caves.

Aside from the rich palaeoanthropological value of the area, the site also boasts game reserves, a Wonder Cave which dates back to 2 200-million years ago, and the first gold mine on the Witwatersrand.

The possible heritage site had an "incredible natural history" with fauna and flora seen nowhere else in the world, according to Berger.

Palaeoanthropologists hold their breath as the Cradle of Humankind is judged (7b)

The 21-nation World Heritage Committee — part of the United Nations' Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (Unesco) — is due to start its deliberations in Morocco on November 29.

Decisions will be taken on the applications from all over the world on December 3 and 4.

An announcement is expected to be made in Paris, France, on December 9.

If the Cradle site is successful it will join the Taj Mahal, Auschwitz, the Tower of London, Victoria Falls and the pyramids of Egypt as sites worth preserving for future generations.

There are about 582 cultural and natural sites listed on the World Heritage list from 114 countries worldwide. These already include 79 sites in 27 African countries.

Berger, who leads Wits University's Palaeoanthropological Unit for Research and Exploration, said a successful world heritage site had to comply with "an enormous list of rules and criteria. But in the end, each nomination is judged individually on its own terms."

It was impossible to apply identical criteria to Victoria Falls and Auschwitz, for instance.

"In summary, the site must be relevant not only to locals, or of immediate national interest. It must be of interest to the world," Berger said.

With this as the simplest and most important criteria, he could see no reason for the Sterkfontein area to fail.

It contained information not only about the ancestors of people who lived in the area, or the ancestors of South Africans.

"This site tells the story of every living human being on this planet," he says.

Metcalfe would not say for certain whether the government would reappraise if this attempt for world heritage site status failed.

"It is a decision that will be made at national level," she says.

The Gauteng government was committed to the preservation of the area, regardless of the outcome on December 9.

Berger said government had been responsible for packaging the application, and was already budgeting to preserve the site.

"I have never seen such in-



Witwatersrand University palaeoanthropologist Prof Philip Tobias and Mary Metcalfe, Gauteng Agriculture MEC are optimistic that Sterkfontein caves, in the West Rand, would be declared a World Heritage Site.

credible commitment (to a site) from a government," he says.

Metcalfe said the popularisation of the area would represent a significant economic development for the West Rand.

If the site won World Heritage status, provincial government would instal public infrastructure and concentrate on integrated environment and conservation management — as well as public awareness and training.

Everyone could benefit from training and technical programmes related to the preservation of the area.

Unesco offered funding from the World Heritage Fund to manage such training.

In addition, she says: "There are legal instruments which allow or disallow developments of different forms." According to information released by Metcalfe's department, the state is obliged to ensure that a world heritage site is protected and conserved for future generations.

Another advantage of world heritage status was security: Unesco could offer emergency assistance from its fund in the event of damage caused by "ad-

verse human activity" or natural disasters.

Metcalfe's department has developed and is implementing a public participation plan involving all interested parties, including farm owners and farm workers.

The benefits of attracting tourists to sites such as Sterkfontein have been well-documented.

Applications for world heritage site status have been made for Robben Island in the Western Cape and the St Lucia wetlands in KwaZulu-Natal. — Sapa.

CAPE TIMES
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 1999

TERMS 'TOO LAX FOR KNYSNA GEM' CT9/11/99

Dept releases draft conditions for marina (7b)

THE CONTROVERSIAL Thesen's Island marina development in Knysna is a step closer to being given official approval. Environment Writer **MELANIE GOSLING** reports.

THE Department of Environment Affairs and Tourism has circulated a draft of its proposed conditions of approval for the massive marina development of 600 houses, canals, boat apartments, shops, offices and hotel in the Knysna lagoon.

The development has been given the nod by the Western Cape Planning Department, but needs authorisation by Environment Affairs for the construction of the marina, canals and reclamation of land below the high-water mark.

Thesen's Island is owned by Barlows. A sawmill on the island is to be moved and once this has been done, developers plan to cut the island into 27 smaller ones for the marina resort.

About 1 ha of the island is contaminated with pollutants, including heavy metals, from the sawmill. One of the draft conditions of approval is that the contaminated areas be dealt with as if

from several quarters as being unsuitable for a National Lakes Area and the picturesque Garden Route town.

Jim Saunders of the Oureniqualand Trust has criticised the draft document. He said there had been no determination of the number of jobs the marina would create after it had been built.

"The Knysna estuary is a National Lake Area. The environmental sensitivity prevents, under law, a decision to approve the development if it is justified on the basis of economics and jobs. In most development there is some balancing of economic issues (with) environmental issues. There must be a clear showing that the environmental impact will be slight and there will be a great benefit to the economics of the area."

"In Knysna's case, where there is an extremely sensitive environment of national importance, even an acknowledged economic benefit does not enter the equation."

Saunders said it appeared that Environment Affairs had "not applied its mind" to the draft document.

They were "a hazardous waste site". The developers must apply to the Department of Water Affairs for a closure certificate for the sawmill, which will have to be done according to their minimum standards.

Another draft condition is that construction cannot begin until an environmental management plan for the project is approved by Environment Affairs.

The department said the key factors that would influence its decision were that:

- The decommissioning of the sawmill on the island would remove an environmental threat to the Knysna lagoon;
- The marina would make Thesen's Island accessible to the public;
- An environmental management plan would minimise any negative environmental impacts;
- The project would generate jobs.

The high-density luxury development has come under attack

RESIDENTS WILL 'STOP AT NOTHING'

Parks cruise for court case

(56) CT 10/11/99

SA NATIONAL PARK has an eye on the Western Cape to arrest its slide into debt. But proposed tariff hikes set the stage for an expensive court battle, writes **GUSTAV THIEL**.

TOURISM is one of South Africa's major assets — last year, more than 2,57 million people visited our 19 national parks, including the West Coast and Wilderness National Parks.

Turnover for South African National Parks (SANP) in the previous financial year, until March, amounted to R307m, but this has not prevented net liabilities for the organisation totalling more than R30m. It now seems that communities in Langebaan and on the South Coast will have to bear the brunt of the SANP's efforts to raise more cash.

More than 200 residents of Langebaan attended a meeting last week to protest against the imposition of new tariffs, the intention of which was published

in April by the SANP in the Government Gazette. These tariffs will apply to all water-going vessels.

The meeting was organised by the mayor of Langebaan, Willem Malherbe, who says they will "stop at nothing" to prevent the tariffs being implemented. Use of the lagoons in the two parks has been free in the past.

Mary-Ann van Rensburg, organiser of a protest action against the tariffs in the Southern Cape, says they will ultimately be forced to take the SANP to court.

"We were not given sufficient time to react to the proposed tariffs and now we are not given the right to voice our disapproval with it," she says.

Residents in Knysna, Langebaan and Sedgefield are most upset about the levy of

R12 000 a year for all owners of houseboats. Van Rensburg says "most owners simply cannot afford that much".

The head of corporate affairs at the SANP, Salifou Sidde, told the *Cape Times* that they have no plans to alter the proposed tariff structures and called them "part of sound business practices". He denied the SANP was in financial trouble, in spite of it being some R30m in debt, and losing another estimated R5m a year.

Head of the SANP office in Cape Town, Nic Geldenhuys, says it is not true that the tariff structures will not be reconsidered. "We are planning a meeting next week with the people of Langebaan to discuss all relevant issues."

Geldenhuys says the new tariffs in the West Coast and Wilderness National Parks are the only significant increases in tariffs charged by the SANP in the Western Cape. The only major change in bookings is that visitors

will in future have to pay in full within 30 days of booking. A cancellation of R50 will be levied when the 30 days expire.

The SANP said it was pleased that only three increases had to be made for the year 2000.

These are the introduction of a high season/low season pricing structure for accommodation at three camps in the Kruger National Park, an increase of 10% for accommodation at the Golden Gate National Park and an increase from R40 to R44 for camping in all national parks.

The row over the proposed new tariffs follows a series of media reports about the poor state of the SANP's financial position.

In October, DP spokesperson for environmental affairs, Errol Moorcroft, called on Minister Valli Moosa to appoint a commission of inquiry into alleged instances of gross mismanagement at the SANP.

● See Letters, Page 11

Mines aim for potable water from waste (56)

ED 10/11/99

Xolani Xundu

FIVE mines in Johannesburg are examining the feasibility of launching a R1bn project to produce 240-million litres of drinking water a day from ground water pumped from mines.

The Amanzi water treatment venture has been established by Western Areas, Randfontein Estates, Durban Roodepoort Deep, East Rand Proprietary Mines and Grootvlei Proprietary Mines to investigate the viability of a private water treatment utility that will purify water from these mines.

The feasibility investigation is being undertaken by JCI Projects, the project manager, with the help of Metsi-Egoli, an international consortium appointed as preferred operating partner.

JCI Projects CE Graham Wanblad said yesterday that the project, if approved, would be the largest private water treatment undertaking in the world. The interim feasibility study report was "optimistic" about the project's environmental, technical and financial aspects.

"There are still technical issues under investigation that could influence the commercial feasibility of the project and we await the results of the final report," said Wanblad.

As part of the study two pilot water treatment plants that have a capacity of 3 000/hour and 15 000/hour were installed and are now operational.

The final report will be submitted to the Amanzi steering committee next month. If it is approved, the implementation — which will take 18 months — of the project's R290m first phase could commence in March next year.

Alistair James, MD of Metago Environmental Engineers, said the aim was to turn a liability into an asset. "Our priority is to protect the environment. We will sell the water and the revenue will go back to offsetting (the cost of) treatment," he said.

Water affairs and forestry director-general Mike Muller said keeping mines open and seeing them grow when SA was facing massive unemployment was a priority.

"But it cannot be done at the expense of the environment. The initiative, which seeks to take a problem with waste and transform it into a productive activity, is wholly in line with government policy," Muller said.



SA urged to act on nuke shipment

ARLT 11/11/99 (56)

Another shipment of high-level nuclear waste rounding the Cape next month will be an "unwelcome Christmas present".

That's the message from environmental organisation Greenpeace International, which wants the South African Government to use the Commonwealth summit being held in Durban to mobilise opposition to planned shipments of plutonium and high-level nuclear waste between Britain, France and Japan.

A high-level nuclear waste cargo was sent from Europe to Japan around the Cape in 1997, as was a shipment of nuclear fuel containing plutonium in August.

A further shipment of waste from France to Japan is expected within weeks, and some of the nuclear fuel sent to Japan in August may have to be returned to Britain because of faults in the production process, says Greenpeace.

**JOHN
YELD**
Environment
Writer



At a press conference aboard the MV Greenpeace, one of half-a-dozen ships in the organisation's fleet, in Cape Town harbour yesterday, Greenpeace International spokesman Mike Townsley was critical of the South African Government, saying they had become "very frustrated" by the Government's lack of genuine opposition to the shipments.

Governments in other parts of the world -

such as New Zealand and Chile - had taken a very tough stand, and Greenpeace believed the nuclear industry would use the Cape sea route between Europe and Japan as a "soft option" because of South Africa's lukewarm response.

South Africa argued that the nuclear shipments through its territorial waters (12 nautical miles) and its exclusive economic zone (200 nautical miles) were legal in terms of the law of the sea convention, Mr Townsley said.

"(But) Greenpeace and a number of governments, including New Zealand, dispute that."

He claimed South Africa was facing a "very real escalation in risk" of an accident because of the large number of shipments of nuclear waste or nuclear fuel being planned.

"People will simply not want to buy goods from a country perceived to have been exposed to radioactive material," he said.

M+C 12-18/11/99

Replacing a throwaway culture

(56)

Though fairly new to South Africa, the eco-village concept has been around for about 70 years, reports Jacqui Pile

James Shepard is a man with a plan. As an ecologist working at Wilgespruit Fellowship Centre in Roodepoort, he has dreams of turning most of the centre's 18ha of land into a working example of how urban areas can become self-sustaining green belts.

Shepard hopes the area can be developed into an eco-village, where people purchase small plots and where all aspects of human social and economic activity are integrated into an environmentally friendly lifestyle.

"One of the main aims of these villages is to develop a culture of recycling and sustainability to replace the throwaway consumer culture that has developed along with industrialism," says Shepard.

Already bulldozers are moving earth to create swales — long mounds of earth that direct and store rain water in regenerated wetlands and dams. These are part of a vast recycling process which will transform a variety of waste into reusable material, so that ultimately the farm becomes completely self-sustainable.

Women can be seen hoeing an area cleared for organic farming and there is a tangible sense that life has returned to the quiet valley.

Central to eco-villages is permaculture — literally permanent culture — which is a philosophy that integrates ecology with food provision, manufacture, leisure, commerce and spirituality.

In large scale eco-villages like The Farm in Massachusetts, vibrant local economies provide income for villagers. Communal farming areas and group solar heating systems provide for their basic food and electricity needs. The trend has caught on in New Zealand, Australia and parts of Europe, where self-contained eco-suburbs are developing. "Ideally, a successful eco-village would only need one car per 800 people," says Shepard, "and that alone would contribute to decreasing air pollution."

While the modern eco-village concept is fairly new to South Africa, they have been developed around the world for more than 70 years.

"People are realising the benefits of living in a community and not in isolated units," says Patti Ovenstone, a pioneer at the Kathumba Eco-village north of Plettenberg Bay.

But while some could criticise the eco-village model as being isolationist and too esoteric, it could be seen as a possible solution to one of South Africa's core social and economic problems: the millions of unskilled, unemployed rural poor.

As we move to a manufacturing and service-based economy, there is little space for employing unskilled labour, but permaculture could be used in an urban or rural setting to empower and feed people.

At the Umthathi Project in Joza outside Grahamstown, women from the community are trained in the

techniques of permaculture and have established a number of thriving urban gardens. "We sell to the hotels and to students," says Elina Mankihlane, "and what we don't sell, we eat."

Permaculture is also being taught in the nearby schools and children take this knowledge and spread it through the communities. Youngsters learn how to catch and store rain water, make compost with waste from their homes and how to grow seeds.

Generally people in squatter camps are living on the breadline and are not using expensive detergents and cleaning agents, so a simple filtering system like a hole with stones in it can purify the water sufficiently for it to be used to grow plants.

"This is not necessarily new knowledge," says Ovenstone, "villages across Africa are in themselves, small eco-villages. To break down the integrity of these is a big mistake."

But she says the challenge is to teach people not to look outwards for handouts, but to add to the wisdom they have developed about the environment and not to try and recreate it.

"Rural farming communities are often experts, but can benefit from an explanation of the principles involved," says Thelma Dalamba, a community developer. "The small farmer represents a large, yet neglected resource for improved agriculture."

Dalamba sees reliance on outside inputs like hybrid seeds and artificial fertilisers as a major problem for small farmers. "But permaculture promotes the collection and preservation of organic seeds, the harvesting and storing of water and the use of compost and organic fertilisers to enrich the soil."

"It is the key to maximum production in the short run, but protecting the land in the long run," she says.

Dalamba says permaculture demonstrates to disadvantaged communities that they don't necessarily need large amounts of money to improve their conditions. "We used to say, 'Give us money'. Now we can say, 'Look what we've done.'"

However, there needs to be a paradigm shift, where people realise that old systems still have their place in new ones.

Education is one of the motivating factors for building the eco-village at Wilgespruit. And education by demonstration is a very powerful tool.

One education centre at Wild Rocke, an organic farm in Lonehill, Johannesburg, helps to show people how permaculture can be used in urban settings.

Here Thomas Linders experiments with a variety of techniques. An abundance of vegetables, fruit and flowers grow where there was once a hard horse-training ring.

Water from the nearby Jukskei River fills a dam and ducks swim and dive among the reeds, despite a thick



Eco-friendly: Thomas Linders (above) employs various permaculture techniques on Wild Rocke farm, including the flow form water cleansing system. PHOTOS: JACQUI PILE

Water transported through city pipe systems tends to lose its natural energy and by allowing it to spiral, it regains a certain life force," says Milton Milaras, a grade eleven science student who won a silver medal for his work with water at the National Science Expo.

He found that "vortical water" — water that has been through the flow form — increases a plant's yield by up to 45% and causes seeds to germinate days earlier than those irrigated with tap water.

Wild Rocke also shows on a small scale what could potentially work at Wilgespruit.

Human sewage is filtered through wetland systems and is recycled into an odourless, dry substance that can be used as manure to enrich the grass where cows graze. "Only 3% of human faeces is solid, so it seems crazy that we waste 11 litres of drinkable water flushing it down the toilet," says Linders.

In the eco-village Shepard hopes to develop, food forests and edible landscaping will also help to save water at the same time as providing food to eat. "Living buildings" made from willow trees will recycle sewerage through their roots at the same time as providing shade in summer.

In permaculture, everything is put back to work.

"Once people start to realise that each natural resource has multiple uses, it creates a shift in seeing the minimum resources as having potential," says Avic Hindmarch, a qualified permaculturist.

She sees the problem in informal settlements and poor rural areas not as being a lack of resources, but as a lack of creative thinking.

People are limited by what they can imagine, but with a belly full of organic food, the chances are that they will come up with creative plans to change not only the fate of their communities, but of the planet as a whole.

layer of oil on the surface.

"This water is badly polluted," says Linders. "Depending on the sample, it can have an E-coli count of about eight million to 160-million per 100ml of water. That is dangerous for humans to swim in, let alone drink."

But Linders has changed the ecology of the water using permaculture and has given it the potential to support life again.

Within three days of implementing his process, the water will have an E-coli count compatible with recreational swimming standards — about 800 E-coli per 100ml.

The process he uses does not involve heavy capital investment, nor does it require any pumps, motors or chemicals. And it could be easily

adapted to a rural setting.

Nature has provided her own cleaning equipment — wetland plants that remove pollutants in the water, by breaking down compounds in their root systems. Microorganisms on the plant also act as predators to harmful bacteria.

The water then goes through a cleansing system, which could well be mistaken for an attractive water feature. Called flow form, these large bowl-like structures circulate water in the shape of an infinity sign to aerate it.

"If you take examples from nature, from the most basic building blocks like DNA to huge spiral galaxies, even a kudu horn, everything in nature has a tendency to spiral.

Dying in a town without hope

By Russel Molefe
Environment Reporter (212)

FOUR words sum up the situation at Bonteheuwel in Prieska, Northern Cape: the people are dying.

Coupled with the 70 percent unemployment rate, it is a situation that has brought stress and hopelessness to the 15 000 residents where almost everyone knows somebody who is dying of asbestosis, a killer disease that develops after exposure to asbestos dust.

Asbestos mines - established in the last century and closed in 1979 when it became evident that asbestos is a silent killer - employed many of the young community members who worked in appalling conditions with no protection against the deadly asbestos.

Those who survived, the majority being sole breadwinners in their families through Government pension money, are now elderly people who

(56)

are desperately ill and waiting to die. Health officials point out that it takes 15 to 20 years for asbestosis to develop after exposure to asbestos, hence the elderly people waiting to die in Bonteheuwel.

The young people are also at risk of developing asbestosis in their later years because they are also exposed to the mine dumps that the British company, Cape plc, did not rehabilitate when it left the country in 1979.

The dumps in Koegas, Groenwater and at the disused Glen Alan open cast mine blow blue dust on windy days which the community inhales.

It is a situation that led to the formation of the Concerned Group Against Asbestos in 1994, led by Cecil Scheepers, to force Cape plc to compensate asbestosis sufferers and rehabilitate the mine dumps.

But it is an uphill battle and the community has already lost the first round after the London High Court dismissed an application to have a case for compensation to be heard

The young people are also at risk because they are exposed to mine dumps that were not rehabilitated

there because South African law did not allow the relatives of dead victims to claim compensation for pain.

Scheepers believes the case need not have gone to court if Cape plc had had an interest in the welfare of the people that unknowingly put their lives at risk, helped make the profits, and are now suffering the consequences.

"Many of our people are sick and

dying and the company is showing no interest at all. I believe the company should have paid compensation to the people it knew it was exposing to danger.

"The global demand for asbestos fell early this century when its dangers were discovered. But the company came to South Africa and continued its activities with the full knowledge of the dangers it posed.

"My father worked in the asbestos mine and he told me the employees worked with no protective clothing," an angry Scheepers said.

This view is shared by Fred Higgs of the International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine and General Workers Union who claimed it was "a disgrace that the company is even contesting the claims."

This also confirmed suspicions within the Bonteheuwel community that the 205 unmarked graves recently discovered on a hillside next to an unrehabilitated asbestos mine dump of the disused Glen Alan open cast

mine, just outside Prieska, were of the victims of asbestosis and the company kept them secret.

The only clue to when the people were first buried is the marked graves of Bennie and Alletta Visser, buried in 1960 and 1962, aged seven months and 12 months respectively.

Northern Cape MEC for environmental affairs Thiabo Makweya has promised to launch an investigation into the background of the graves which may result in the exhumation of the bodies for forensic tests.

He believes the company either deliberately covered up the existence of the graves or had neglected them.

He is also aware of the asbestosis that is debilitating and reducing the quality of life and the mine dumps that have polluted the land on which communities live and seek to make a living.

Pointing out that there are 23 unrehabilitated asbestos mine dumps in the province, Makweya claimed: "No one knew all the health hazards of asbestos. We learned these things through time.

"But, as is often the case, companies are under pressure from their shareholders to maximise profits and they resist evidence that shows their operations are unsafe or that suggest they should spend additional money to improve working conditions."

However, he referred to the new National Environment Management Act that gives power to workers to refuse to work in an environment that is bad for their health.

"Put pressure on companies to fulfil their moral obligations to former employees and their families who suffered, possibly through negligence. This year, companies in Germany are beginning to respond to pressure to compensate slave labourers they used 55 years ago.

"This has been done not so much on legal grounds, but by using moral arguments. Together, we should strive to ensure that the suffering and death endured by our communities will not be in vain and that other communities, families and individuals do not have to endure the same type of pain and sorrow," Makweya said.

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NEW

DAMS CAN BE DISASTROUS

'The year of eating bones'

AS PART OF a global process, several communities in Southern Africa are being given an opportunity to make their voices heard on the effects of dams on their daily lives. Environment Writer **MELANIE GOSLING** reports.

TO the Tonga people who lived on both sides of the Zambezi, the year the newly-built Kariba Dam filled up has become known as "the year of eating bones".

This was said by Fanuel Cumanzala from Zimbabwe, who spoke in Cape Town yesterday at the Southern African hearings for communities affected by large dams, organised by the Environmental Monitoring Group and other NGOs.

It forms part of a global process in which people affected by dams have an opportunity to put their case to the World Commission on Dams.

Cumanzala said the Tonga people, a minority group, had lived by fishing, hunting and flood plain agriculture since 1500 AD.

"When Kariba was built, the Tongas lost everything," said Cumanzala.

"But people in distant cities gained a great deal."

The Tonga people still feel the effects today.

Once they had lost their land they depended on government handouts.

When these stopped, many died. Thereafter, 1957 was remembered as the year of eating bones.

David Syakusule, representing seven Tonga chiefs in Zambia, said many people had refused to be resettled.

"But an African had no say at that time.

"Lorries came and loaded up people. Livestock drowned.

"Everything was buried by water.

"The graves of our ancestors

are under water.

"Soldiers were sent by the government to kill people who didn't want to move.

"Bloodshed was done," Syakusule said.

By the time Kariba became operational in 1957, about 23 000 Tongas in Zimbabwe and 34 000 in Zambia had been forcibly removed.

The 260km long and 30km wide dam had flooded their land.

While Kariba's hydro-electric scheme brought power to many regions, it took 40 years before the displaced Tonga people received electricity.

"For those years we only saw power-lines going over our heads," Syakusule said.

And if colonial governments paid little heed to the feelings of communities affected by dams, so do some modern, democratic governments.

Motjinduiko Kapika, a Himba from Namibia who lives near the proposed Epupa Dam on the Kunene River, said he had been

sent by his headman to give the message to everyone who would hear that the Himba people did not want the dam.

Speaking through an Interpreter, Kapika said: "The Epupa area makes a living for people in Angola and Namibia.

"Life will be destroyed for both of our peoples if this dam is built.

"Our ancestors' graves are there.

"The government's answer is to have a reburial. We went over the whole Epupa area to discuss this dam.

"And the people did not agree with it.

"We say no to this dam."

Andrew Corbett, of the Legal Resources Centre, said several of the Himba's anti-dam meetings in Namibia had been broken up by armed police.

He said the dam was being touted as necessary for hydro-electric power, but the offshore Kudu gas fields were more than sufficient to meet Namibia's energy needs.

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New home for mountain game

Project aims to replace 'alien' wildlife in Rhodes Estate area

JOHN YELD
Environment
Writer



A specialist game capture unit is set to move into the Rhodes Estate area of the Cape Peninsula National Park tomorrow to start a project to remove several exotic or unsuitable animal species from Table Mountain and replace them with indigenous, "fynbos-adapted" species.

Animals being targeted for live capture by the Kimberley-based unit of SA National Parks are the black wildebeest, fallow deer and sambar (Asian deer) which are found on the estate on the lower slopes of Devil's Peak.

Animals likely to be introduced in their place in the coming months are red hartebeest and bontebok.

Other re-introductions into the park, which extends all the way to Cape Point, could include grey rhebok, grysbok, eland, bushbuck, mountain zebra and more klipspringer over the next two years.

Earlier this year, 15 pairs of klipspringers were successfully reintroduced into the Cape Point section of the park, ending this species' decades-long absence from the Peninsula.

But this attractive little antelope cannot be re-introduced to the Table Mountain section of the park before the Himalayan mountain thar, an exotic goat species, is removed.

During the course of next year, parks specialists will target the thars.

A pair escaped from the Groote Schuur zoo in 1936, and their offspring now inhabit the higher and steeper sections of the mountain, causing major ecological damage.

These animals will be humanely put down and their meat used.

The change in the animals on the Rhodes Estate is in line with SA National Parks' general policy of reintroducing animal species to conservation areas, if they were previously found there and if there is sufficient natural habitat for them.

Also, the removal/re-introduction strategy is part of a drive by the Peninsula park's management to make the big Rhodes Estate section more accessible and visitor-friendly.

This will probably include consoli-



On the move: one of the black wildebeest which are to be moved from Rhodes Estate

ating the current small paddocks into a few large game-proof areas, and tourists may eventually be taken there on game drives in open four-wheel-drive vehicles.

The park's conservation manager, Howard Langley, said they were aiming to reintroduce indigenous fynbos animals such as bontebok and red hartebeest in place of the black wildebeest, which were considered "dangerous", and the exotic deer.

This would have to be done in conjunction with better game fencing.

"We know black wildebeest and fallow deer are contributing to ecological problems in the area in terms of spreading weed species, and they have to be fed over winter periods," he said.

"We want to enlarge the camps so members of the public can have a better interaction with the animals there - it's part of the process to make Rhodes Estate much more people-friendly.

"Ultimately, we would certainly like to get the estate as close to a self-maintaining ecosystem as possible, with as little interference as we can."

The capture team will be led by SA National Parks' veterinarian Piet Morkel, who said he expected to start the capture early tomorrow.

"But it depends on the weather, and there are a couple of other ups and downs," he said.

"We will also have to look at what transport we have available, but we're certainly looking at taking out at least



Staying put: the 'quagga' on the Rhodes Estate will not be relocated

20 black wildebeest, and maybe a few more - I doubt we'll be able to take out the lot."

There are about 35-40 of these animals on the estate.

Dr Morkel said they would also capture as many of the deer as possible.

There was a buyer for these animals in the Eastern Cape, but they could also go to a private property-owner in the

Western Cape.

Because of its schedule, the unit could only work here tomorrow, and any of the animals not caught would be captured during another session next year, Dr Morkel said.

The wildebeest, although indigenous to southern Africa, are not suited to the renosterveld vegetation which occurs on Devil's Peak.

The male wildebeest are highly aggressive during the breeding season, and constitute a danger to people walking in the area.

The fallow deer and sambar are exotic animals, and sometimes constitute a danger to traffic on De Waal Drive by escaping through, or over, the fence.

They will be caught using standard capture techniques, which involves erecting a boma in an open section, and driving the animals into it where they are caught and safely immobilised for transport to their new homes.

A recent aerial survey conducted during August of this year revealed at least 84 thar still on Table Mountain.

After statistical correction for possible bias, the estimated total is 93.

The survey found more than 80% of the thars concentrated on Devil's Peak and the eastern face of Table Mountain, and only a few were seen on the western side in the Twelve Apostles area.

Some thar were seen on the back of the mountain, and parks staff have been urged to ensure these animals do not move from Constantia Nek into the southern sections of the park.

Because there were no natural predators or competitors for thars, and because of their broad diet, the thar population escalated rapidly after the initial pair's escape.

In 1970 members of the Mountain Club estimated there were almost 500 of them on the mountain, although this is now believed to have been an over-estimate.

As thar numbers rose, ecological damage increased. This was because these animals concentrated on newly-burnt sites and had a severe impact on the re-generating vegetation, both because of heightened grazing pressure and through trampling.

Because of their impact, the then Department of Nature Conservation started an eradication programme in 1975. Since 1976, some 770 thars have been removed, with just over 70% being taken in the first four years until 1980. But because of an outcry from the public in a less environmentally-aware age, the eradication efforts were suspended.

ARG 18/11/99 (56)

'Creativity is challenge for conservation in SA'

Black or white, the green issues matter - Moosa

JOHN YELD

Environment Writer

There's an often-heard argument that black South Africans have little or no concern for "green" conservation issues.

It's not an argument that Environmental Affairs and Tourism Minister Mohammed Valli Moosa will buy.

On the contrary, he says, he's found a wide interest in such issues among all South Africans and, in particular, among black parliamentarians and the National Assembly's portfolio committee on environmental affairs.

"Black MPs are very keen on environmental questions. I've been amazed wherever I've gone," he told the Cape Argus in an exclusive interview.

"We have a strong civil society on environmental questions and we must consider ourselves fortunate."

Mr Moosa, 42, a keen environmentalist who leads by example - for example, he regularly guides small parties of parliamentary colleagues on hikes on Table Mountain - said it was this broad interest in green issues that had resulted in the individual's right to a clean and healthy environment being enshrined in the constitution's Bill of Rights.

Such "second generation" rights - as opposed to "first generation" rights like the right to vote - were more than just a legal instrument, said Mr Moosa.

"Importantly, (the Bill of Rights) serves as a manifesto of the people of this country. It's a vision of where we want to go ... and the environment has been put squarely on the table." But he also expressed concern that many of the established environmental organisations had memberships which displayed the racial patterns of the old South Africa.

"I just hope we'll be able to find a way of having more than just privileged communities engaging in these matters, because, in the long run, we could do a disservice to our work in the protection of the environment."

But he said he felt positive there was sufficient across-the-board interest to sustain a sophisticated approach to environmental matters.



JOHN YELD
Environment Writer

Mr Moosa, whose name has been punned by headline writers using the title of the famous book by Welsh writer Richard Llewellyn (*How Green Is Our Valli*), pointed to the Maluleke community of the Northern Province as one of several examples of black South Africans who were environmentally aware.

The community has won a substantial land claim to the northern section of the Kruger National Park, but has declined not to renege this area. Instead, they are managing it for low-impact ecotourism. In partnership with SA National Parks.

He acknowledged being asked by the Wildlife Management Association of Southern Africa (the professional conservation managers) to intervene urgently to end what the association described as "a crisis" in South Africa's conservation sector, caused by a shortage of financial and human resources.

He also confirmed being familiar with the Kumba Report, by a board of investigation into institutional arrangements for nature conservation in South Africa, which emphasised that "proper and specific" funding was essential for the maintenance and survival of most of the country's nationally important protected areas.

But he doesn't accept that merely throwing more money at the problem is a meaningful solution. "South Africa is a country in transition," Mr Moosa emphasised, "and if we see conservation simply as a black hole soaking up taxpayers' money, we won't succeed in leveraging the resources needed for conservation in the long run."

The Government did not decide in a vacuum how its available resources should be distributed, he said.

"It's not just the Government which takes decisions, but the Gov-

ernment as influenced by the taxpayers ... Government and Parliament come in with a mandate." And the overwhelming demand from people was for spending on education, crime prevention and job creation.

"So, I really think we're not going to succeed in improving the pool of resources for conservation simply by asking for money from the fiscus, although that's important - the Government has a contribution to make and will always have a contribution to make, because the Government and the state must serve as the ultimate protector of our conservation areas and biodiversity."

The burden of conservation did not have to rest on taxpayers, Mr Moosa said. Instead, conservation areas could be used to generate more income themselves.

"And this can be done not by impacting negatively on the environment, but precisely by not impacting on the environment.

"This is the direction in which I think this country is going and that is why there is a great value in tourism.

"It's fortunate that environmental conservation is also linked into tourism, because there's no doubt - ecotourism has the potential of making it possible for us, as a country, to place even more value on our own conservation areas. You get direct economic benefit from them."

There was also "real potential" for expanding South Africa's network of conservation areas, Mr Moosa said.

A good example was the proposed extension of the Addo Elephant National Park in the Eastern Cape, from the present 16 000ha to 400 000ha and including a marine component so that tourists could see all "Big Six" - elephant, lion, leopard, buffalo, rhino and whales for the first time in a national park.

This would allow Addo to compete on an equal footing with the Kruger National Park, which is one of South Africa's top tourism attractions.

"Suddenly, it makes sense for us to extend our conservation areas and I really think that's the way to go, rather than being in a static mode.

"Instead of looking at our current parks and reserves as a drain on the fiscus, we should rather look to expand in order to generate income."

Managing traditional conservation areas was not the only activity which required funding, said Mr Moosa. "Brown" environmental issues - such as pollution, environmental health and waste management - also required substantially increased funding.

"The biggest challenge for local governments is to find funds to deal with these environmental issues in a meaningful way. And there is no easy answer to that, it's an on-going challenge."

Mr Moosa said the recycling of waste products was an area which he hoped to tackle through devising appropriate incentive schemes.

"The general view is that recycling is not profitable, and we've got to find ways to make it profitable, and that's a very big challenge."

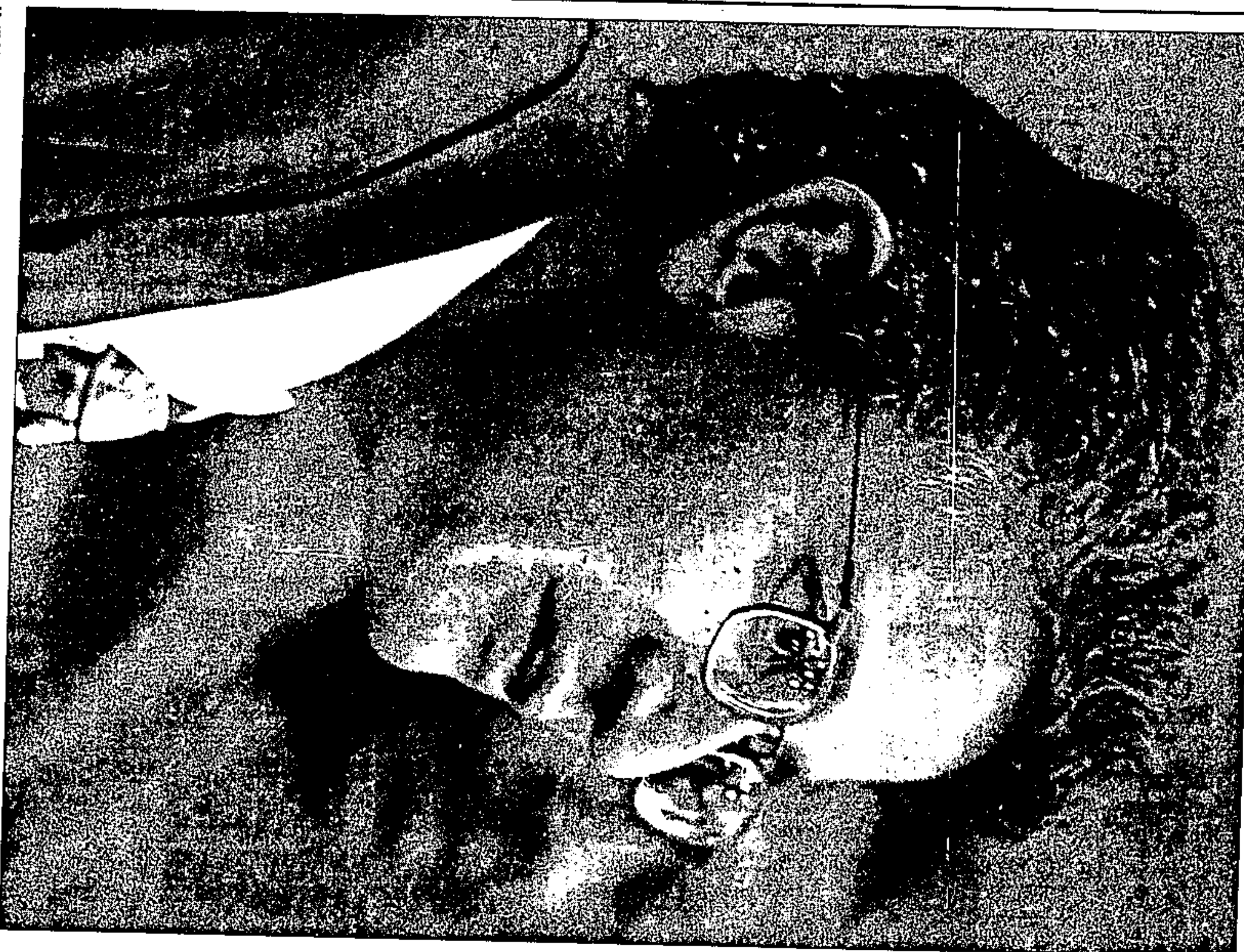
One creative suggestion involved the use of builder's rubble, which constituted a "fair percentage" of waste dumped in refuse sites.

Minister of Housing Sankie Mthembu-Mahanyele was considering stipulating in tender documents for the building of environmentally-friendly housing schemes that a certain percentage of recycled products had to be used in the construction process.

Such products could include those manufactured from recycled plastic, he suggested.

"I think it's a very interesting concept that we can build on. This could absorb quite a lot of waste if we structure it properly and have incentives built in," Mr Moosa said.

"We've got to think creatively and find ways of giving people incentives, and we can use government projects to create an industry and markets for recycled products."



Valli Moosa: a keen environmentalist who leads by example, regularly guiding parties of MPs on mountain hikes

Evolution

Slow killer stalks community

(56)(212) Sowetan 19/11/99

By Russel Molefe
Environment Reporter

LIKE her three young children, relatives and most people in Bontekouwel, Prieska, in Northern Cape, Stephanie Jansen (44) is aware that she is dying. Her death is not from natural causes.

She may be a victim of the activities of Cape plc, a

British company which mined asbestos in the region from the last century until 1979, when it withdrew from South Africa.

Jansen suffers from a rare and fatal cancer which affects the lining of the chest and abdomen. The cancer develops when the tiny fibres that are released by asbestos into the air after it has crumbled are inhaled. Asbestos is associated with a deadly disease known as asbestosis, which is now playing havoc with the Bontekouwel community of 15 000.

Many young lives have already been destroyed because breadwinners are now too sick to work and therefore unable to support their children at school.

Last month Cape plc successfully opposed an application in the London High Court to have the case for compensation for victims heard in Britain.

The claimants believe South African environmental laws are too lenient when it comes to compensation and feel the company knows it might get away with it. They are seriously considering taking the matter to the House of Lords, Britain's highest court of appeal.

Jansen is fully behind this move because she wants her children - aged 11, 14 and 17 years - to continue schooling after her death. Her career as a nurse at a local hospital was shattered when she became incapacitated because of her asbestos-related cancer, diagnosed in February.

Jansen stayed near the Glen Alan Open Cast Mine until she was five years old with her father, who was a labourer there. Her father died in 1968 of an asbestos-related disease.

"I now spend most of the time lying in bed because sitting makes the pain worse. My children are still young but they are aware that I'm very sick," she says.

She and her three children are looked after by her sister, who is a teacher at a local school. She believes Cape plc must fulfil its moral obligations.

"I may be lucky that I can afford medication through the help of my sister. But my sympathy goes out to those who are sick like me and cannot even afford medication," she said. Sowetan was unable to contact Cape plc for comment at the time of going to press.

Parks chief in court

(56) ARG 19/11/99

Suspended Mpumalanga Parks Board chief Alan Gray and two others were arrested and appeared in the Nelspruit Magistrate's court today, the Investigative Directorate for Serious Economic Offences (Idseo) said.

Idseo deputy director Advocate Gerda Ferreira said Mr Gray was arrested at his Nelspruit home early this morning.

Ms Ferreira said ousted African National Congress Youth League secretary James Nkambele and a person called Maxie Green, were also arrested and appeared in court with Mr Gray.

Ms Ferreira did not immediately want to discuss the charges.

Mr Gray was suspended in September last year for his alleged role in a promissory note scandal during which he allegedly used 32 public game reserves to issue six promissory notes worth millions in return for off-shore loans.

The deal, designed to net massive foreign funding for the MPB, was declared illegal by the Reserve Bank, the Finance Ministry and the Heath Special Investigating Unit. - Sapa

FRANK BONJISWE falls silent as we drive the last 2km to the asbestos mine. He becomes as brooding as the oppressive Northern Cape heat, which today sees the thermometer rise to a searing 39°C. Bonjiswe, known as "Om Frank Boonies", is returning to a place he'd wished he would never see again.

More than 30 years ago, he and his wife, Elizabeth, packed their possessions and moved from the Glen Allan mine near Prieska, hoping that the life of hell they had left behind would never come back to haunt them.

But it has. Bonjiswe, 72, has asbestosis, and his lungs are slowly turning to stone. His wife has also caught the "hoeslong" (coughing lung) from her days of pounding rock to extricate asbestos — the mineral she refers to as "garing" (thread).

At the deserted mine, Bonjiswe climbs a steep dump and stares across to 155 graves marked with mounds of rock on a barren hillside opposite. Only recently discovered, Bonjiswe cannot remember seeing them before.

Two weeks ago, while on an inspection tour of mine dumps in the area, a spokesman for the National Union of Mineworkers, George Molebatsi, stumbled on the graves.

In doing so, he again brought attention to the plight of 3 000 workers and their families who are trying to sue the British company Cape plc, which ran mines in the area, for damages in an English court.

But local doctors — who are sympathetic to the plight of the former workers — say asbestosis is not the reason for the 155 graves.

Asbestosis is caused when asbestos fibres are inhaled. The fibres form a layer of dust on the lungs and show up as a white shadow on an x-ray.

In less severe cases, the victim has difficulty breathing. In severe cases, the lungs harden and stop functioning.

Asbestosis's twin is mesothelioma, a lung cancer caused by asbestos which kills victims within two years.

But both diseases takes between 15 and 20 years to develop — far longer than the time most people spent at the mine, says the local district surgeon, Dr Wilhelm Pieterse.

But the fact remains: asbestos killed these people. Maybe not as a disease, but just because they were working there.

Bonjiswe remembers the illness, the drunkenness, the stab-bings and the tuberculosis — the most likely cause of death for those who lie beneath these heaps of rock.

"We lived in homes made from rags at the mine," he says. "I was sick there on the mine."

Where

Lungs

turn to stone

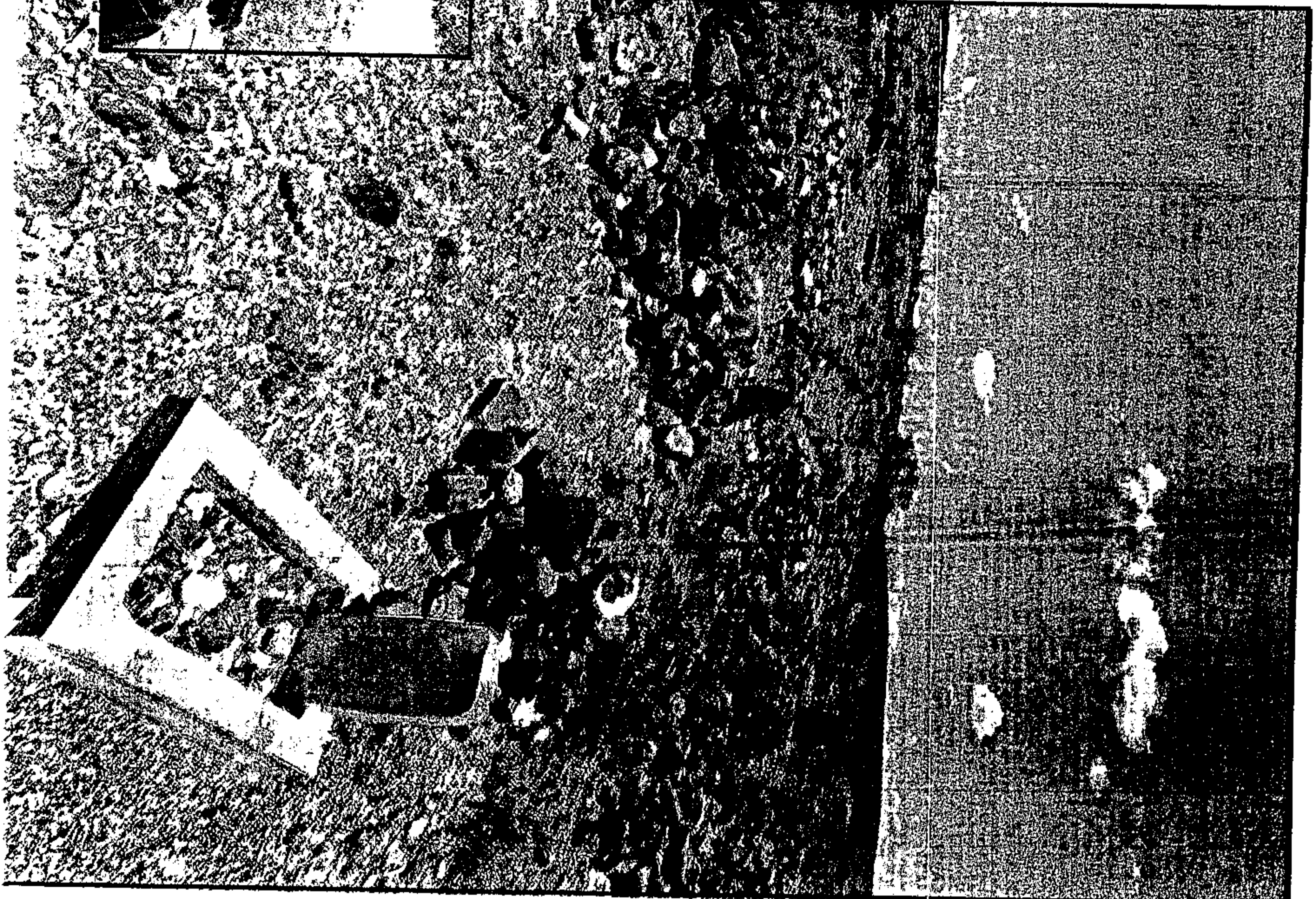
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The plight of Prieska's asbestos miners and their case against a British mining company is set to be debated in the House of Lords, writes JAN HENNOP. In the meantime, they're slowly dying



VICTIMS: Frank Bonjiswe and his wife, Elizabeth, worked at the mine. Both have fallen seriously ill as a result

...no proper trans- down who they were have been



All I can remember is a lot of people who were sick here. They died because of the asbestos. The asbestos has finished us



there should be an investigation into the matter," he says.

Many others think the identities of the dead will never be known. Many don't care.

What they do care about is the court case and the compensation. Prieska's economy has taken a serious tumble since the mine closed down. Many blame this on the negative publicity the town has received because of the asbestos.

And, in Prieska, it's everywhere. It is still used as insulation in ceilings. Asbestos roofs and water tanks dot the lunar-like landscape of the surrounding Bo-Karoo.

In the plasterwork of Alexander Boo's makeshift house on the outskirts of town, the asbestos sticks out like electrical wires looking for a connection. Boo, 52, has asbestosis. It's a thing that you learn to live with, he says.

But most of Bonjiswe's old friends are dead. On Monday, Petrus Matsiangan, who worked with him at the mine, passed away — because of asbestosis, his family say. He was in his 70s, and died horribly.

"He could not walk any longer," says his sister-in-law, Susan Nel. "His eyesight had gone, and he could not breathe."

As with all the who die of mine-related cases, Matsiangan's lungs could be removed and sent for testing to the Med-

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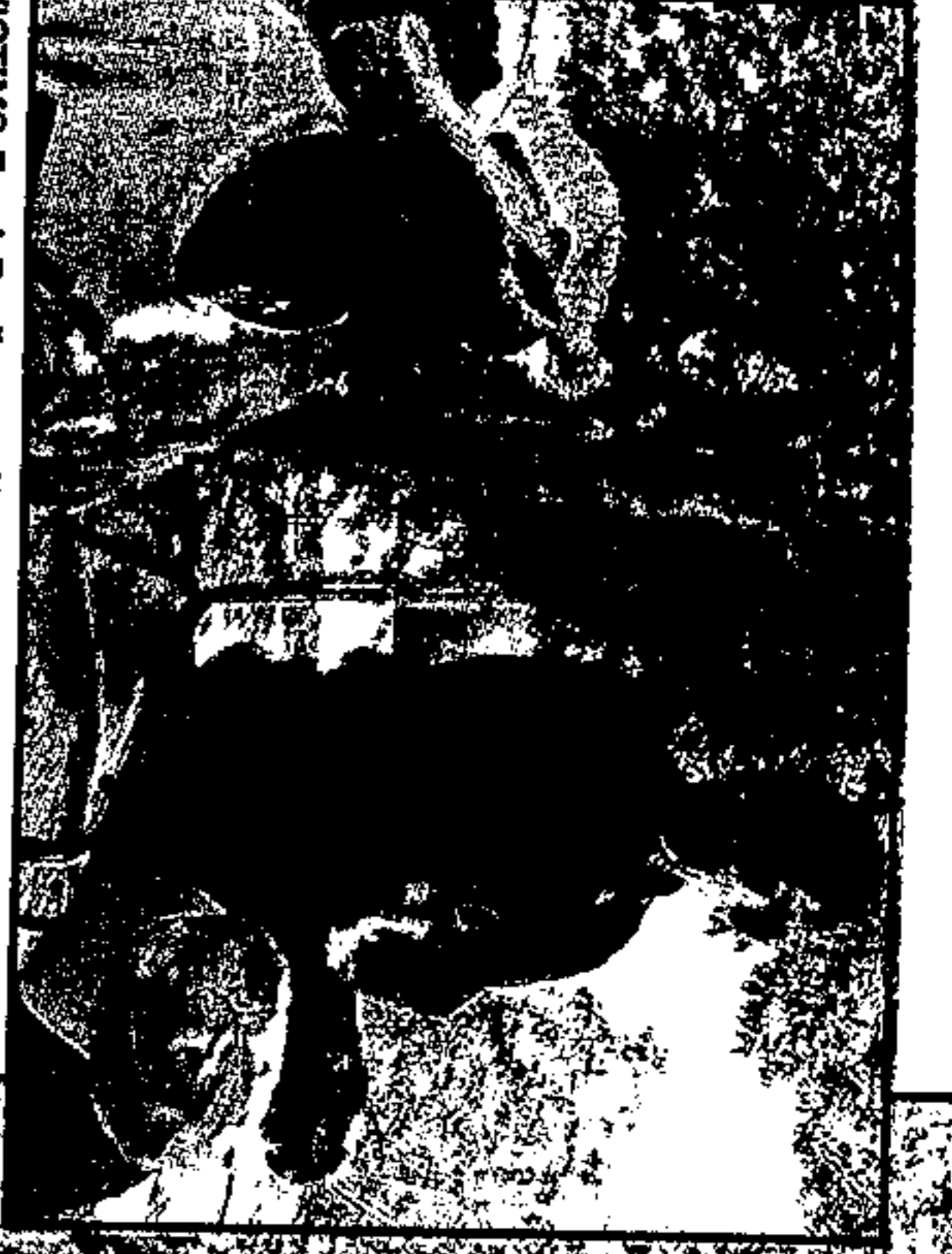
But the fact remains: asbestos killed these people. Maybe not as a disease, but just because they were working there.

Bonjiswe remembers the illness, the drunkenness, the stabblings and the tuberculosis — the most likely cause of death for those who lie beneath these heaps of rock.

"We lived in homes made from rags at the mine," he says. "I was sick there on the mine. My chest hurt and I was coughing all the time."

He worked as a jackhammer operator while his wife chipped away at the rock in the blazing sun with a hammer and steel chisel, pulling out asbestos and dumping it in a bucket.

"All I can remember is a lot of people who were sick here. They died because of the asbestos. The asbestos has finished us," Bonjiswe says. In those days, in the '50s and

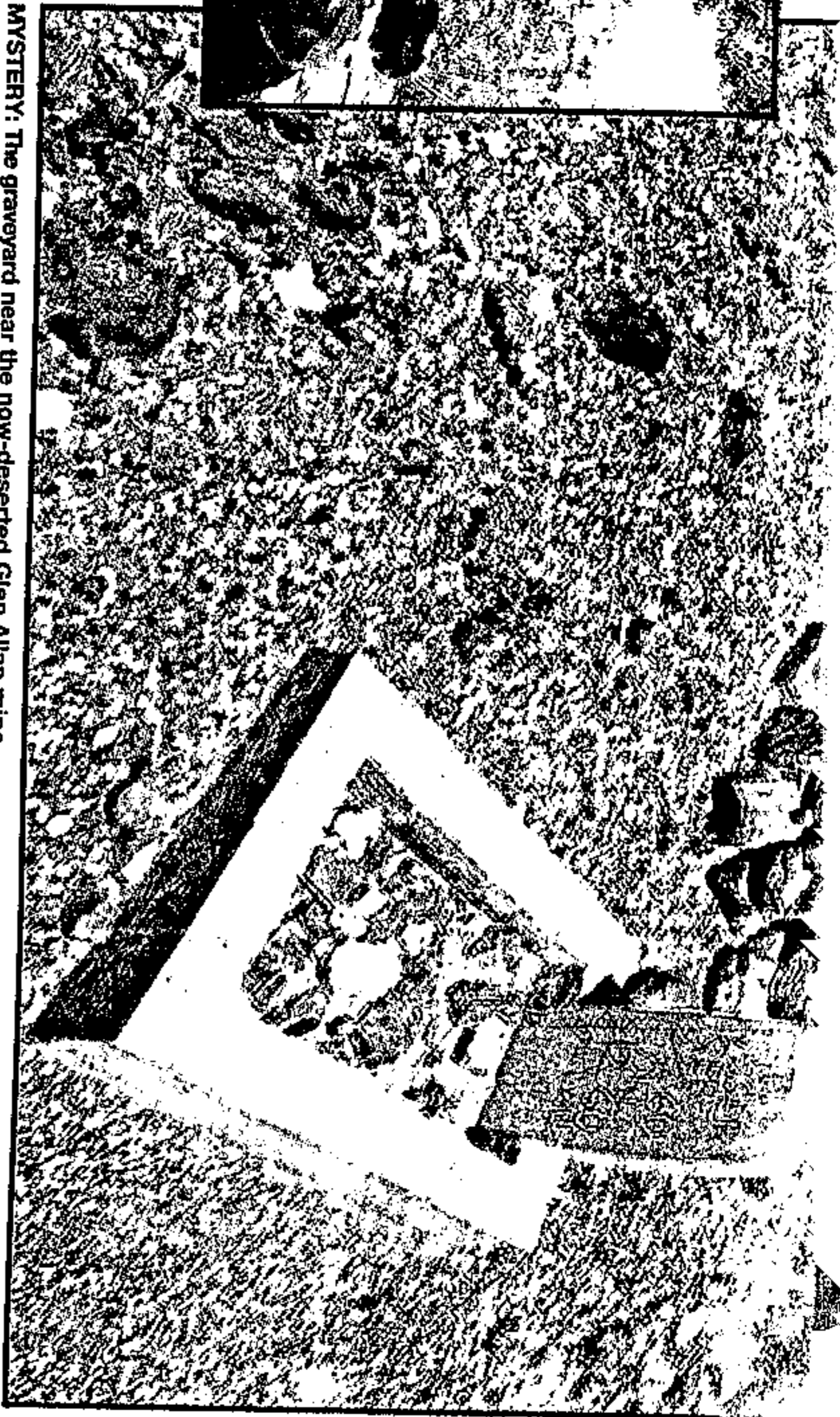


VICTIMS: Frank Bonjiswe and his wife, Elizabeth, worked at the mine. Both have fallen seriously ill as a result.

'60s, there was no proper transport and, when they wanted to get into town, the miners rode on the back of a truck filled with asbestos on its way to the mill.

Among the anonymous graves near the mine are two marked headstones, for Bennie and Aletta Visser. Believed to be brother and sister, they were both six months old when they died — Bennie in 1960 and Aletta in 1962.

Efforts by local community leader Cecil Skeffers to track



MYSTERY: The graveyard near the now-deserted Glen Allan mine

whose original owners, Henry Muggleston and his son, Joseph, have long since died. The current owner, Bill van Deventer, says he has seen the graves but doesn't know anything about them.

The only person who can remember someone who died at the mine is Anna Williams, 45,

the town has received because of the asbestos.

And, in Prieska, it's everywhere. It is still used as insulation in ceilings. Asbestos roofs and water tanks dot the lunar-like landscape of the surrounding Bo-Karoo.

In the plasterwork of Alexander Boo's makeshift house on the outskirts of town, the asbestos sticks out like electrical wires looking for a connection. Boo, 52, has asbestosis. It's a thing that you learn to live with, he says.

But most of Bonjiswe's old friends are dead. On Monday, Petrus Mathangan, who worked with him at the mine, passed away — because of asbestosis, his family say. He was in his 70s, and died horribly.

"He could not walk any longer," says his sister-in-law, Susan Nel. "His eyesight had gone, and he could not breathe."

As with all those who die of mine-related diseases, Mathangan's lungs will be removed and sent for testing to the Medical Bureau for Occupational Diseases in Johannesburg.

The same fate probably awaits Bonjiswe, who walks around the Glen Allan mine with a far-off look in his eyes. He picks up a piece of the rock and shows us the threads of asbestos inside.

He tells us that when the thread lies underground long enough it turns into the semi-precious stone tiger's-eye.

"It becomes quite beautiful," he says.

dealt a serious blow last month when Britain's Appeal Court turned down their request to have the case heard in Britain, prompting their lawyers to release a statement saying: "We believe the rights of the victims had been ignored."

They now plan to take the case to the House of Lords.

Molebatsi thinks differently. He believes the origins of the graves should be investigated — even if it means bringing in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

"What's funny about it is that the people in the area know nothing about it. That's why

Her teenage cousin, Ban Swarts, died when he fell off a cliff face nearby.

In town, the discovery of the graves leaves most people cold. They are too busy fighting their own court battle against "the Cape" (Cape plc), which pulled out of the country in 1979. Their quest for compensation was

There are other puzzling aspects about the graves. The hill on which they are located is barely 20m away from where the miners' homes must have been. And, given the fact that the ground is as hard as rock, they could not have been very deep, making for unhygienic conditions for the present-day miners. The graves lie on a farm

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Cites expected to grant SA's request to sell ivory

SA's bid to sell ivory is likely to be approved by the Convention on Trade in Endangered Species (Cites), although the jury is still out on the effect from previous sales.

SA is seeking permission from the Cites conference in the Kenyan capital Nairobi next April to hold a one-off auction of about 28 tons of elephant tusks from the Kruger National Park.

SA's request follows similar, experimental auctions held in April by Namibia, Botswana and Zimbabwe. The proceeds from those sales are being channelled into conservation and rural poverty alleviation projects.

SA must justify its proposal and show why it wants to do this and how the money will be spent. If it is well documented and is in line with the previous sales, it will likely be approved, a Cites official in Geneva said.

SA's application will be rigorously examined by a Cites team, which will also pay a visit to the country. SA has one of Africa's best track records with regard to conservation and anti-poaching programmes, a fact that boosts its prospects for approval. Money raised is earmarked for badly needed conservation projects, includ-

ing the creation of new reserve land to relocate elephants from the Kruger National Park.

The park's current elephant population is more than 9 000, while its ideal population is in the region of 7 000.

"There is just not enough space for the current numbers," said Didi Moyile, a special adviser to the environmental affairs and tourism ministry.

But some environmentalists and animal rights groups say a fresh supply of ivory on the market will be a red rag for poachers, who will attempt to launder dirty goods with the legal stuff.

Other environmentalists warn that Cites should move cautiously as the impact of the previous sales — about which Cites says it has been receiving reports — has not yet been scrutinised.

Cites is still awaiting reports on the impact of the Namibian, Botswanan and Zimbabwean sales from two monitoring systems — the Elephant Trade Information System and the System for Monitoring the Killing of Elephants (Mike). Mike is still being set up, so a report any time soon is doubtful.

Kenya, which opposed the resumption of the trade, says poaching may be on the rise as a result. — Reuters.

770 22/11/99

Wiehahn set to develop slopes of Kirstenbosch

MELANIE GOSLING ENVIRONMENT WRITER

UDENKRAAL owner Kassie Wiehahn, unable to develop luxury housing on the slopes of Table Mountain below the Twelve Apostles, has moved his attention to the other side of the mountain and is developing land adjacent to Kirstenbosch.

The land stretches from above Fernwood to the boundary of Kirstenbosch, and borders the Cape Peninsula National Park. It will be cut up into plots of about 500m² accommodating 50 luxury houses, and will be the highest residential development on the southern side of Table Mountain. Single plots are being sold for R435 000.

The land has been in the Wiehahn family for about 30 years, and was bought with approved township plans in place, passed in the 1940s.

Wiehahn was not available for comment yesterday, but his son, Theodore, confirmed that the development was going ahead.

Fernwood residents are angry about the proposal. Said Lawrence Gawronsky: "We're revving up for a fight. I'm hearing chainsaws on the mountain all day. It's being done in great secrecy and there has been no



RIGHTS: Developer Kassie Wiehahn plans luxury housing near Fernwood.

environment impact assessment. It's going to have a huge impact on the traffic, the sewerage system and trees."

Area ward councillor Ian Ivers said the land had been zoned residential in the 1940s and the building plans had been approved in the 1960s. Because of this, no environment impact assessment was necessary, nor did Wiehahn legally have to inform Fernwood residents about the proposal.

"The delay between the approval in the '60s and the start of the development in the late '90s was because the city council and the provincial authorities put a freeze on any development of the land. At the time they were talk-

ing about building a road, the Kirstenbosch bypass, which would go through Wiehahn's land and the process for expropriation had begun. They were apparently arguing about a price."

"The bypass idea was eventually abandoned last year, when the city council took a decision not to go ahead with it. The development will have a huge visual impact, but there is little anyone can do about it. It was approved at a time when officials believed they knew best and the public was not consulted," Iversen said.

Paul Britton of the Cape Peninsula National Park said they had tried to persuade Wiehahn to consider an alternative township layout, but he had said he was not interested.

"We were hoping to persuade him to consolidate the development lower down the mountain slopes, leaving the upper part underdeveloped. Visually it will stand out like a sore thumb, as it is much higher up the mountain than any surrounding suburbs and will extend right up to the boundary of the Kirstenbosch Research Centre."

"But one has to fight the battles one can win, and Wiehahn has got rights to develop," Britton said.

He said the land was mostly invested with alien vegetation, but had some patches of indigenous vegetation.

HISTORIC LANGEBAAN COTTAGE FLATTENED

Illegal demolition sparks outrage

MELANIE GOSLING
ENVIRONMENT WRITER

(56) CT 23/11/99

A TURN-of-the-century fisherman's cottage on the edge of Langebaan Lagoon, which was protected under the National Monuments Act, has been flattened to make way for the Langebaan waterfront development.

The National Monuments Council has called an urgent meeting with the developers and architects of the new scheme today and a charge of unlawful demolition has been laid.

Angry residents have slammed the demolition, which has reduced the historic cottage to a pile of rubble. David Hart of the National Monuments Council said the cottage had been either late Victorian or early 20th century. "It was one of the last remaining beach-front cottages from the old Langebaan days and was protected under the National Monuments Act. We specified to the developers that it was to be retained as part of the new waterfront development. The incident has been reported to the police, so it is now a criminal matter," Hart said.

Hart said the fines for unlawful demolition were "hopelessly outdated", with a maximum penalty of R10 000 or three years' jail. This was way below the cost of renovating an old building. The new act, with more realistic fines, would come into force in April.

Local resident Rosemary Hornsby said she had been on her way to post a letter on Friday when she saw a front-end loader flattening the cottage.

"I immediately phoned the National Monuments Council and they said the developers had no



GONE: Langebaan resident Rosemary Hornsby was too late to stop this historic fisherman's cottage (inset) from being illegally demolished by developers to make way for the local waterfront development.

PICTURE: DENZIL MAREGELE

permission to (demolish the building) and said I had to go to the police," Hornsby said.

By the time the police arrived, only a few sections of walls were still standing.

"This is outrageous. I want to see these people taken to the cleaners," Hornsby said.

Jannie Laubscher, a member of

the Langebaan Aesthetics Committee, said yesterday he would report the architects involved to the SA Council of Architects.

Laubscher said: "I'm utterly disgusted ... A town planner involved in the development gave written instructions to the builder to demolish the cottage. The police showed me the fax. Earlier he had

told me the building was unstable, but one is supposed to design struts to support an old building during renovation."

Another resident, Jo Callanan, said nearly all Langebaan's historic buildings had gone.

"I live here because I loved the quaintness, now they're taking away that very quality,"

Callanan said.

All buildings older than 50 years are protected under the National Monuments Act.

If the Monuments Council considers they are not worthy of conservation, it will issue a permit for the demolition.

The developer was unavailable for comment.

Clock ticks on Gauteng's landfill timebomb

SHARINA KAPOOR

Johannesburg - Gauteng is sitting on an environmental timebomb as hundreds of thousands of tons of hazardous waste are dumped at more than 100 illegal landfill sites across the province each year.

The illegal landfill sites are dangerous to the environment and a health hazard to residents living near the sites, which have not been subjected to environmental impact studies, according to Anchen Dreyer, a member of the provincial legislature's standing committee on agriculture, conservation, environment and land affairs.

About 500 000 tons of hazardous waste and about 840 000 tons of medical waste products were unaccounted for each year, the 1999 annual report of the provincial agriculture, environment and land affairs department revealed.

"The only conclusion that can be drawn from this is that a large percentage of this waste finds its way to the illegal sites," said Mr Dreyer.

The hazardous waste problem has been exacerbated to such a point that the provincial government had to get funding from Denmark and Norway to deal with medical waste management. The Gauteng government recently reached a three-year agreement with the two Scandinavian countries to develop a regional strategy for medical waste control.

"The Danish government has one of the best technologies in the world to deal with waste management," said the head of the Gauteng land affairs department, Trish Hanekom.

"They will provide us with the support and knowledge needed to provide effective control measures in Gauteng."

She said medical and hazardous waste was of great concern because Gauteng was a densely-populated and highly-urbanised province, which produced thousands of tons of toxic waste that could not be accommodated at all the legal landfill sites. Illegal refuse sites, the spawning



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Filthy sites: illegal landfill sites in Gauteng are posing a health problem to people from neighbouring squatter areas who often scrounge for items from which to make a living

grounds for disease, have mushroomed around the province.

A lack of access control and management at these sites meant that any kind of waste could be dumped there.

Mr Dreyer said: "This results in underground water becoming polluted through rainwater and run-off seeping through the waste."

In rural areas, where people rely on borehole water for domestic use, this could have disastrous consequences.

In urban areas, people from surrounding suburbs often scavenge on the sites, trying to make a living out of

items that can be recycled.

"They often contract... infections and diseases, some life-threatening," said Mr Dreyer.

The dangers of such dumps were highlighted by a recent incident in the Western Cape where children were found playing with discarded medical needles.

This prompted the Government to establish a ministerial task team, which investigated several cases of hazardous waste disposal and pointed out shortcomings in existing municipal by-laws and national legislation.

The team concluded that the penalties for offenders were too lenient and warned that the laws were "silent" on the handling of medical waste and on the contractors hired to transport and dispose of such waste.

A draft white paper on incident control and waste management, based on the ministerial team's proposals, is now in the pipeline.

The Gauteng provincial government has identified "hotspots" and implemented remedial measures. Ms Hanekom said: "We have recognised that toxic and hazardous med-

ical waste are a huge health risk, especially in rural areas, and we have enforced certain reforms to deal with the matter."

She said her department had helped residents in rural areas in identifying and purifying polluted water coming out of boreholes.

"We have people based in some of the areas to test the water, so that residents do not use unpotable water."

A provincial local government forum, together with the water affairs and forestry department, are also looking at minimising waste products

and ensuring the disposal of waste is well-managed.

"If companies adhere to proper operating standards and requirements we can control the waste disposal and reduce the health risks and diseases," said Ms Hanekom.

She was confident the department would win support from companies and the communities surrounding illegal dump sites to fight the waste problem which she said was "crippling the environment".

site confirmed the scale of the problem. Hundreds of tons of domestic waste, building rubble and other unidentifiable products were piled up at the dump site.

Children were running around the site, playing with some of the waste products and residents of a nearby informal settlement were scavenging on the dump.

The Tembisa dump site has also attracted squatters.

Mdu Khangelani said he brought his family of five to live at the nearby settlement because he could "lift stuff" from the dump to sell.

"I make a lot of money from selling the boxes and tins. If I don't, my family will starve," he said.

Mr Khangelani conceded that his three children, aged one and five, could contract diseases and other medical problems from the dump, but said he had "no choice".

"I don't have a job and cannot see my family go without food. Where we lived before (in another part of Tembisa) we had nothing," he said.

Mr Khangelani, however, will have to vacate the site because the Gauteng legislature called for its closure.

While not illegal, the legislature ruled that the Tembisa dump was too hazardous to remain open.

Ms Hanekom promised that people dumping hazardous waste at illegal landfill sites would be prosecuted.

"We are beginning to deal with this issue systematically and legally."

The department recently won a case against a man who was sentenced to a prison term for damaging a wetland.

"Wetlands act as a natural sponge for pollutants and if there is an erosion of it, the waste problem is aggravated. We cannot tolerate people who destroy the natural aids of waste reduction. They will be dealt with severely," she warned.

Various measures to police and manage landfill sites were suggested by the provincial standing committee.

It was also proposed that people be educated about the importance of the three Rs - refuse, re-use and recycle.

-Sapa

NATIONAL

Gauteng gets help with its medical waste problem

Denmark and Norway are helping with funding and development of a regional management strategy

HUNDREDS of thousands of tons of hazardous waste are dumped at more than 100 illegal landfill sites across Gauteng each year. These illegal landfill sites are a threat to the environment and a health hazard to residents living near them, as the sites have not been subjected to environmental impact studies, according to Anchen Dreyer, a member of the provincial legislature's standing committee on agriculture, conservation, environment and land affairs.

The 1999 annual report of the provincial agriculture, environment and land affairs department shows that about 500 000 tons of hazardous waste and about 840 000 tons of medical waste products are unaccounted for each year.

The only conclusion that can be drawn from this, says Dreyer, "is that a large percentage of this waste finds its way to the illegal sites."

The hazardous waste problem has been exacerbated to the point where the provincial government has had to get funding from Denmark and Norway to deal with medical waste. The two Scandinavian countries have agreed, also, to help Gauteng develop a regional strategy for medical waste control.

The Danish government has one of the best technologies in the world to deal with waste management," said the head of the Gauteng land affairs department, Irish Hanekom.

"They will provide us with the support and knowledge needed to provide effective control measures in Gauteng," she said. Medical and hazardous waste was of great concern because Gauteng was a densely populated and highly urbanised province, which produced thousands of tons of toxic waste that could not be accommodated at legal landfill sites.

Illegal refuse sites, spawning grounds for disease, had mushroomed around the province. A lack of access control and management at these sites meant that any kind of waste could be dumped there.

Langebaan demolishers admit to 'small mistake'

MELANIE GOSLING
ENVIRONMENT WRITER

CREATIVE PROFILE, the company that illegally demolished the historic cottage at Langebaan to make way for the new waterfront development, told the National Monuments Council yesterday that they had "made a small mistake."

David Hart, of the Monuments Council, said this transpired during a meeting with the developer, William Lightbody, and Creative Profile: Architects and Planners, which Hart had called to establish why the building had been demolished.

Said Hart: "I pointed out that it was in fact a very large mistake, that the building was protected under the National Monuments Act and that the matter was now in the hands of the police and public prosecutor."

"Developers should understand that the public and the Monuments Council consider this disregard for our heritage in a serious light. The architects and planners took a chance by demolishing the cottage, and will now have to face the consequences."

"They apologised and have offered to rebuild it, but Langebaan would then have a replica, and the historic value of the building would have been lost."

The Monuments Council had explicitly specified that the cottage was to be retained. The *Cape Times* has asked Lightbody and Creative Profile to comment, but neither has responded.

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(56)

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on the ministerial team's proposals, is now in the pipeline. The Gauteng provincial government has taken also a proactive role by identifying "hot spots" and implementing remedial measures.

Hanekom said: "We have recognised that toxic and hazardous medical waste is a huge health risk, especially in rural areas, and we have enforced certain reforms to deal with the matter."

She said her department had assisted residents in rural areas in identifying and purifying polluted water pumped out of boreholes. — Sapa.

New regulations to protect buchu plant

MELANIE GOSLING
ENVIRONMENT WRITER

(56) ET 30/11/99

THE San were the first to use buchu for its medicinal qualities. The Khoi followed, and then the Dutch settlers, and now buchu is exported all over the world.

Sadly, because it's so sought-after as a natural medicine, buchu's survival is now seriously threatened. Illegal buchu picking has reached "alarming" proportions, according to Cape Nature Conservation (CNC).

In an attempt to save buchu from extinction, the authorities have introduced legislation which makes it a protected species.

CNC's Riaan van der Walt said yesterday that, according to the legislation, land owners who want to pick or plant buchu on their properties, with the intention of selling it, will now have to apply to the CNC for a licence.

Where people want to pick buchu on someone else's land, the pickers and the land owner will have to register as sellers and cultivators, respectively, of a protected flora.

"The most important point is that land owners, pickers and companies who trade in buchu must ensure that their businesses and partners are registered. The uncontrolled harvesting of buchu will eventually lead to the plant being wiped out."

Several species of buchu are part of the Cape floral kingdom and the plants are either made into a tea or added to brandy and taken as a tonic. Buchu is also sold as tiny capsules on supermarket shelves along with vitamin and mineral supplements.

"The seed source is destroyed when the same plants are cut down every year. Even where buchu is legally harvested, we prefer the plants to be cut down only every second year," Van der Walt said.

Blair urged to back asbestos victims' compensation battle

RONNIE MORRIS

Cape Town - Community leaders from the Northern Cape Province, an area which bore the brunt of the effect of asbestos mining by Cape Plc, have appealed to British prime minister Tony Blair to support them in their battle for compensation.

They have sent an open letter to Blair just as three Appeal Court judges gave reasons for

their finding that the more than 3 000 victims of asbestosis should sue Cape Plc in South African courts because British courts were not the appropriate forums.

Late in June a London High Court judge granted Cape Plc a stay of proceedings on the basis that it would be against public policy for Cape to be held accountable in a British court for damages suffered by South African victims of asbestosis.

The judge said he "took comfort" from a New York District Court decision which, as a matter of public policy (because of the burden it would pose on US taxpayers), had stayed proceedings in a damages suit by Indian Bhopal victims against Union Carbide, the US chemicals group.

London law firm Leigh Day and Co, which acts for the claimants, then took the decision on appeal, which was dismissed.

An application for leave to appeal was also refused which now leaves an appeal to the House of Lords as one of a fast dwindling number of options open to them to obtain justice.

Should they fail in the House of Lords, the claimants intend to approach the European Court of Justice for a ruling that the UK abide by the provisions of the Brussels Convention (to which the UK was a signatory) which provided that a defendant should be sued in the country of its home base.

As the judges were giving their ruling, campaigners from Action for Southern Africa (Actsa) demonstrated outside the court and vowed they would press the company and its shareholders for urgent compensation.

Aditi Sharma, Actsa's head of campaigns, said: "It's a travesty that a British company can walk away from its responsibilities in South Africa while entire communities are paying for Cape's asbestos operations with their lives."

Cape owned asbestos mines, mills and factories in the Northern Cape (Prieska and Koeegas), Northern Province and Gauteng. Medical evidence is that at Prieska 13 percent of the deaths are attributed to mesothelioma, a painful asbestos-related cancer.

SA now boasts three

World Heritage Sites

TONY CARNIE

(576)

DURBAN: South Africa was honoured with its first three World Heritage Sites last night when the United Nations recognised the "outstanding universal value" of Lake St Lucia, Robben Island and the human fossil sites of Sterkfontein.

The hat-trick of world acclaim, relayed to Johannesburg from a meeting in Morocco, was greeted with jubilation by local tourism and conservation authorities because of the fresh potential for South Africa to boost tourism, job-creation and conservation.

Environmental Affairs and Tourism minister Valli Moosa said Satour would launch its biggest international marketing campaign next year.

The news is also seen as a vindication of the ANC government's decision not to allow dune-mining at St Lucia, but to transform the unique wetland into a world-class tourism and conservation park. SA has applied for the Drakensberg/Maluti mountain range and the Cape Floristic Region to be nominated next year.

ET 21/2/99

Sites not for 'just any tourist'

(56) (288)

**Xolani Xundu
and Sapa**

WORLD heritage sites would be used to attract a certain breed of international tourists to SA, Chippy Olver, acting director-general of environmental affairs and tourism, said yesterday.

The Greater St Lucia Wetland Park, Robben Island and the fossil hominid sites at Sterkfontein were declared world heritage sites by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation's World Heritage Committee on Wednesday.

"Not just any tourist" would be able to visit the sites, because "we are marketing this country as a special kind of destination with a different environment", said Olver.

Stricter control over activities taking place in these sites would be exercised to comply with international standards.

Richards Bay Minerals, which had prospecting rights in St Lucia to look at the possibility of mining titanium, welcomed the decision.

MD Keith Rumble said: "St Lucia is off our agenda (although) we have always believed that mining and ecotourism could coexist in the area just like it is happening in Australia."

Andrew Zaloumis, project manager of the Lubombo spatial development initiative, said the declaration of Greater St Lucia should be viewed in the context of an integrated development to unlock the enormous economic potential of the region while ensuring that its

outstanding natural and cultural values were conserved.

Government, through the Lubombo initiative, will convert the park from the a loss-making conservation area into an economic engine, with the potential to create 4 000 jobs in five years and 7 000 new beds for tourists over 10 years. The sum of R32m has been committed for infrastructure.

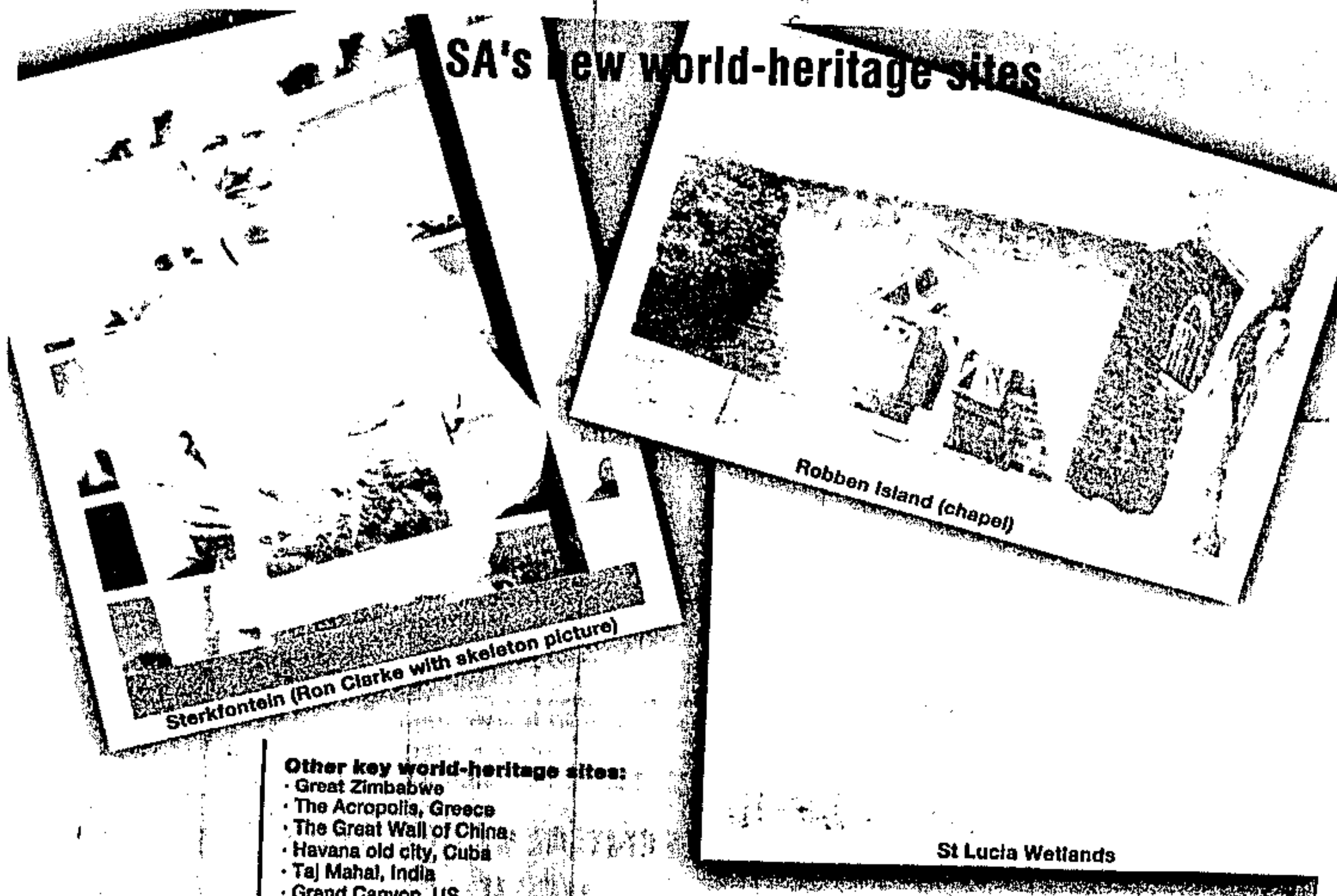
Trish Hanekom, Gauteng's head of agriculture, conservation and environment department, said the Sterkfontein site would take up to 10 years to be fully developed.

The director of Robben Island's museum, Andre Odendaal, said the future of the island as a museum, has now been assured.

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Building a nation through our heritage (56)

Inclusion of three sites on auspicious international list is not merely about attracting tourism, but a component of discovering our true history, writes Mohammed Valli Moosa



Graphic: KUBEN DAVID

THREE sites in our country were highlighted on the world map this week. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation's world heritage committee unanimously voted to inscribe Robben Island, the Greater St Lucia Wetlands Park and the fossil hominoid sites at Sterkfontein on its roll of world heritagesites.

The international list groups some of the most famous cultural and natural sites in the world, including the Acropolis in Greece, the Pyramids in Egypt, the Great Wall of China, the Taj Mahal in India, the Galapagos Islands, the US Grand Canyon and the Great Barrier Reef off Australia.

The heritage list captures the heights and history of human endeavour and the natural riches of our planet so that they may be protected and conserved for future generations.

For the first time, SA has a place on this international heritage map, and we are proud that our first three sites embrace the diversity of our country and its heritage.

The fossil hominoid sites of the Sterkfontein, Swartkrans and Kromdraal area in the hills west of Johannesburg are a complex of palaeoanthropological sites containing some of the most valuable evidence about the origins of modern humans — from the 2,5-million-year-old skull of Mrs Ples to the 3,3-million-year-old set of bones of Little Foot and other remains.

The discovery of these hominoid fossils underpins the claim that the African continent, and SA in particular, is the origin of humankind and that from here our species spread across the globe.

The second site, the Greater St Lucia Wetland Park, is a natural

site of five interlinked ecosystems in an area of almost unrivalled natural diversity and beauty. It is the biggest wetland in the southern hemisphere and the largest estuarine system in Africa.

The placing of the park on the list is a validation of the decision of former president Nelson Mandela's government not to allow mining in the area, but to use this spectacular wetland park as one of the anchors for the Lubombo spatial development plan.

With our neighbours in Swaziland and Mozambique we are turning this area of poverty and underdevelopment into a high-yield international tourist destination while preserving its natural beauty and rich biodiversity.

The third site, Robben Island, has come to symbolise the triumph of the human spirit over hardship and adversity. Immortalised by Mandela's long walk to freedom, this island was a place of banishment and imprisonment for the past 350 years. Its recognition by the World Heritage Convention is as a global icon of human rights and reconciliation.

These three sites are part of our history, our culture and our natural heritage. Alone they each stand for unique and wondrous aspects of our country. They are also more than tourist attractions.

They are symbols or icons of what we as a nation can feel justifiably proud about in the world.

We must take them and boldly start to project ourselves as a nation internationally whether through promoting investment or marketing tourism.

This will not be easy.

The reasons are not hard to find. They include our divisive history and a tendency to dwell on negative perceptions relating to

our difficulties and problems in combating crime, unemployment and the AIDS pandemic.

Focusing only on the negatives is easier than building the image that we want of our country. This goes beyond countering negative publicity. We have to start working on a consensus of how we see and want to build our nation.

There are some issues we probably have consensus on already:

- We have a well-managed national economy;
- We have unparalleled natural beauty and diversity;
- We have one of the best information technology and physical infrastructures in the developing world;
- We have a new vibrancy and creativity that has been unleashed by the process of transition; and
- We might even get consensus that we have some of the world's best rugby players and cricketers.

But is that the kind of consensus we could use to inform our national image? The manner in which we do this cannot be separated from the process of nation building. We cannot say that our campaign to market SA to potential British tourists can be separated from nation building. Unless the nation owns the campaign, we will not succeed and it will rightly be scorned as bogus.

At the core is what we say to ourselves about promoting SA and being South African.

It incorporates building genuine respect among all South Africans for those who have borne the brunt of colonialism, and especially apartheid.

That is why it is fitting that Robben Island is one of our first three heritage sites.

But these three sites are not the sum total of our heritage.

The Drakensberg/Maluti Range and the Cape Floristic Region will go forward as our nominations next year, followed by seven natural sites, three cultural landscapes and six cultural sites as soon as they match the standards expected of a world heritage site.

One of the cultural sites is Mapungubwe, a complex of ruins lying largely undisturbed near the Limpopo River in the Northern Province.

Older than Great Zimbabwe, it is a valuable archaeological site that has not even begun to take its rightful place in our history, let alone the continent's.

University of Pretoria researchers have been doing research on site for about half a century. They found a golden rhino and removed it from one of the graves and locked it away in their vaults. To this day few South Africans have seen this treasure.

The apartheid ideologues kept it a secret because they would have had to say that 500 years before Jan van Riebeeck came to SA, technology, gold mining, gold smelting and trade were going on here. However, that did not fit in with the racist ideology premised on the arrival of the white man bearing civilisation.

Mapungubwe tells a tale of a culture so old that we will need to recapture it ourselves.

Our membership and commitment to the Heritage Convention serves us as a way to our history. It gives us the building blocks as we become aware of our cultural and natural heritage. As we reclaim these sites and learn their history, we see that they are the threads to the rich tapestry of SA.

Moosa is environmental affairs and tourism minister.

Riverine rabbit is close to extinction

(1)
WHAT is South Africa's most endangered land mammal? The black rhino? Cheetah?

Wrong. It's the riverine rabbit, and scientists fear it is close to extinction.

The rabbit is found only in the southern Karoo and lives exclusively along river beds. A survey in March found only 21 rabbits, which means, in global conservation terms, it is as threatened as gorillas and tigers.

Cape Nature Conservation said a 1986 survey had recorded 1 435 rabbits. A population of fewer than 1 500 runs the risk of extinction.

The shy rabbit digs a burrow in the soft sand of river banks and has only one baby a year, and about four in a lifetime. The major cause of its threatened status is the destruction of its habitat by over-grazing, soil erosion and the damming of rivers.

(56) RT 6/12/99

Marine management officials sacked

Alan Fine

CAPE TOWN — The chief director of Marine and Coastal Management has been sacked and two senior officials have been suspended after an internal audit uncovered R23m of unauthorised spending, including evidence of corruption.

Marine and Coastal Management is a division of the environmental affairs and tourism department and is responsible for marine conservation and administering the fishing industry and fishing harbours.

Environmental Affairs and Tourism Minister Valli Moosa made the announcement yesterday after releasing the findings of the special audit, which covered a period of only three months ended July this year. The report by acting director-general Chippy Oliver was handed to Moosa on Monday.

Chief director of Marine and Coastal Management, Monde Mayekiso, has been relieved of his responsibilities,

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which will be taken over temporarily by the department's deputy director-general Tanya Abrahamse.

The director of support services, G de Villiers, and the deputy director of finance, N Petersen, have been suspended on full pay pending disciplinary action. Mayekiso and another four officials also face disciplinary charges.

Cases related to double payments to companies, irregular contracts with printing companies and contracts for information technology support services are to be handed to the investigative directorate for serious economic offences for further investigation.

The auditor-general has been asked to do a special audit of the division for the past three years.

The probe found "an absence of leadership, and a lack of general management competence at the level of chief director and directors" in the division. The internal audit identified 29 generic problem areas. These included a lack of expenditure control, flouting of

tender regulations, double issuing of cheques as well as advances to staff for travel and subsistence not being repaid or accounted for promptly.

The report proposes measures to correct management deficiencies, and others regarding the long-term restructuring of the division. It proposes the outsourcing of the division's fleet management function, establishing public-private partnerships to manage fishing harbours, and transferring the regulation of the fishing industry and the "mariculture" industry to the departments of trade and industry and agriculture respectively.

Moosa said the unauthorised use of taxpayer's money would "not be tolerated. Those engaged in wrongdoing of any kind can expect zero tolerance from government." He said both he and his deputy Rejoice Mabudafasi viewed the report "in a very serious light". He had requested the deputy minister to give her urgent attention to the matter and the operations of the division.

Moosa acts after audit reveals R24-m scams

Marine and coastal management removed, two officials suspended and others facing hearings

JONN YELD

Environmental Affairs Minister Mohammed Valli Moosa has taken tough action after reports of financial irregularities and possible corruption involving at least R24-million in the Marine and Coastal Management directorate.

Mr Moosa has removed chief director Monde Mayekiso and suspended two senior officials. Four directorate officials, including Dr Mayekiso, are also facing disciplinary proceedings.

Corruption in the directorate has been alleged, including payments of up to R30 000 to "facilitate" the granting of fishing quotas, the responsibility of the directorate in association with the Fisheries Transformation Council.

Scientific research contracts have allegedly been awarded to people and institutions without proper procedures being followed.

Mr Moosa has now asked the auditor-general's office to conduct an urgent special audit of Marine and Coastal Management (formerly Sea Fisheries). Meanwhile all the directorate's

cheque books have been seized.

Mr Moosa's action follows the submission to him in Pretoria on Monday of an audit of the financial management of the directorate.

Mr Moosa said the audit indicated "an extreme lack of basic financial and administrative procedures and controls, substantial amounts of unauthorised expenditure, transgression of treasury instructions and potential irregularities and corruption."

He took immediate action: ■ Dr Mayekiso was removed from his post as programme manager, and

temporarily replaced by the department's deputy director general, Tanya Abrahamse.

■ Two senior officials, Guillaume de Villiers (director, support services) and Noel Petersen (assistant director, finance) were suspended pending the outcome of a disciplinary inquiry.

■ Disciplinary proceedings were opened against Dr Mayekiso, Andy Payne (director, offshore resource management), Nasir Daniels (deputy director, administration) and Andre Bantjes (senior state accountant).

■ The Office for Serious Economic

Offences had been brought in to investigate cases of corruption, including systematic double payments to companies and irregular contracts with printers.

The administration and financial management of the directorate had been brought under the direct control of head office in Pretoria.

Administration of the marine living resources fund had been transferred to Pretoria, and all decisions on contracts and expenditure now had to be made by the department's head office.

All contracts entered into on behalf

of the directorate were being reviewed, and financial controls were being instituted urgently.

Mr Moosa said the internal audit had covered only a three-month period during the 1999/2000 financial year. Previous investigations by the auditor-general's office had failed to detect irregularities, although it was clear that many of the problems were longstanding.

A committee had been established in Cape Town last week to verify the audit's findings, Mr Moosa said.

"The findings do not constitute disciplinary procedures in terms of the Public Service Act, but rather a set of recommendations for urgent action by the minister."

"Allegations against specific staff members will need to be substantiated in terms of formal disciplinary procedures set up in terms of the Act."

Mr Moosa said his department, like all state departments, operated within treasury rules, and "The unauthorised use of taxpayers' money will not be tolerated. Those engaged in wrong doings of any kind can expect zero tolerance from Government."



Heads roll over missing R24m

CT (MR) 8/12/99 (56)

LYNDA LOXTON

Cape Town - Mohammed Valli Moosa, the minister of environmental affairs and tourism, yesterday ordered urgent action to deal with the unauthorised expenditure of at least R24 million in the Marine and Coastal Management (MCM) chief directorate of his department.

This followed the release of the findings of an internal investigation by Chippy Olver, his acting director-general.

With immediate effect, Moosa announced the suspension from duty of Monde Mayekiso, the chief director of MCM (formerly the department of sea fisheries).

He would be temporarily replaced by Tanya Abrahamse, the

deputy director-general.

Rejoice Mabudafhasi, the deputy minister, had been asked to give her "urgent and detailed attention to the matter and the operations of MCM".

Guillame de Villiers and Nasir Petersen, two senior officials at MCM, were suspended immediately, pending the outcome of a disciplinary inquiry. Four others, including Mayekiso, Andrew Payne, N Dantels and A Barnes, faced disciplinary proceedings.

The Office for Serious Economic Offences was asked to investigate cases of corruption in the department, including systematic double payments and irregular contracts.

The office of the auditor-general, which failed to detect irregularities in previous audits

"although it is clear that many of the problems are of a long-standing nature", had been asked to conduct an urgent special audit of MCM.

"It must be emphasised that the investigation was an internal process established by the acting director-general to verify the findings of the internal audit report, and it does not constitute disciplinary procedures in terms of the Public Service Act," said a statement from Moosa's office yesterday.

Allegations against staffers would have to be substantiated in formal disciplinary procedures.

Moosa said his department operated within the Treasury rules on expenditure.

"The unauthorised use of taxpayers' money will not be tolerated," he said.

Knysna 'canal estate' given go-ahead

ARG 8/12/99 (56)

JOHN YELD
ENVIRONMENT WRITER

The controversial R800-million "canal estate" on historic Thesen Island in the Knysna lagoon has been given the thumbs-up by the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism.

But the department's approval is subject to a formal appeal process of 30 days that expires on the Day of Goodwill (December 26).

Western Cape environment and cultural affairs minister Glen Adams has already told his national counterpart that he is not happy with the decision and that he wants a review.

The national department is required to approve the development in terms of

the Environment Conservation Act, because "listed activities" associated with it include the construction of a marina and channels linked to the lagoon, as well as reclamation of land below the high-water mark.

Acting director-general Crisptian Olver told the developers his department's approval did not exempt them from any other applicable legislation.

The proposed development has attracted criticism from a consortium of objectors representing Knysna residents and environmental groups, who fear pollution of the lagoon.

In a letter this week to Valli Moosa, Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, Mr Adams said he had visited Knysna last month and informally met the various parties involved, "to

discuss the dispute on various issues relating to the development".

"It was apparent from indications given by interested and affected parties that they were not opposed to residential development on the island.

"Their main concern was the extent of the environmental damage that would occur as a result of the manner in which the present development proposals were framed."

Mr Adams also told Mr Moosa that the groups involved were amenable to mediation to resolve their differences.

While absolute agreement would be impossible, it would have been desirable to obtain "at least sufficient consensus" on what constituted an environmentally sustainable development, Mr Adams said.

The developers' original plans were to divide most of Thesen Island into 27 smaller residential islands separated by canals. They were given permission by Mr Adams's predecessor, Lampie Fick, to build 299 single houses, 241 group housing units, 120 apartments, and shops, offices, a hotel and conference centre/eco-linn.

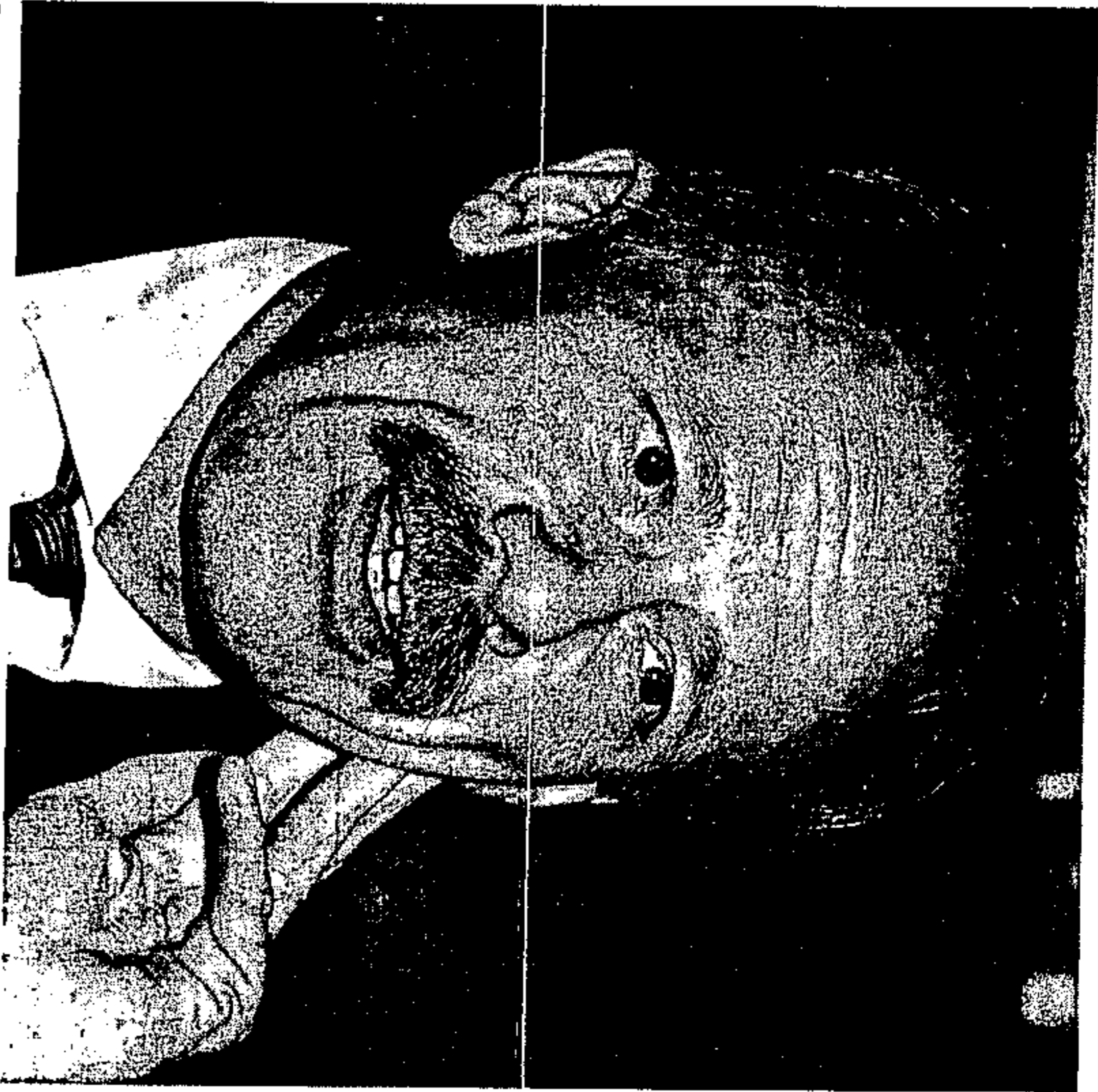
However, the plans were subsequently modified, partly because environmental studies showed 11 hectares of soil had been badly polluted by products from the sawmill which has operated on the island for decades.

No construction, excavation or reclamation can start before the environmental management plan, an original condition of approval by Mr Fick, has been formally approved.

Interests of economy and ecology must be balanced

Globalisation must not lead to a 'race to the bottom' in environmental standards. There is growing evidence that ecologically friendly moves boost productivity and savings, says Jürgen Trittin

BO 9/12/99



German environment minister Jürgen Trittin in Johannesburg this week. Picture: Trevor Sanson

Germany, SA back environmental issues

Nomavenda Mathlane (NB)

Minister Vaill Moosa
BO 9/12/99

THREE co-operation agreements were signed by German and SA business communities to recycle tyres, plastics and compost handling, visiting German Environment Minister Jürgen Trittin said yesterday.

Speaking in Johannesburg after meeting with various local ministers, business community members, representatives from nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) and parastatals, Trittin said the visit was to enhance co-operation for the international climate protection policy, as well as for environmental issues. Trittin is leading a group of German businessmen, parliamentarians and NGOs visiting SA.

He indicated that there were other programmes in the pipeline which will unfold as part of the co-operation agreement between the two countries.

One of the programmes scheduled for next year is a visit to Germany by Mineral and Energy Minister Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka and Environment

Trittin said in spite of an energy surplus in SA, the country still could not provide a nationwide supply of electricity.

A programme looking at co-operation in climate protection and at the work of the United Nations Commission for sustainable development, clean production technologies, waste management, recultivation of mining areas and environmentally sound tourism, would be launched next year.

Other programmes will relate to education, specifically directed at the youth, Trittin said.

Trittin said that he was impressed with the commitment shown by medium-sized German energy companies who were enhancing their investment activities in the use of renewable energies in SA, as well as in other states in the region.

He said this programme would assist in the fight against poverty which continues to be a major factor in rural life.

Balancing interests: Page 10

MY EXPERIENCE in SA over the past few days presents a most interesting contrast to the usual discussions on environmental policy taking place in Germany.

I also now have a lasting impression of the environmental problems facing the countries in the south.

The "Geo 2000" environmental report recently published by the United Nations clearly documents that, despite all our efforts and successes, the threat to the natural basis of life has increased over the years.

World consumption of wood has doubled, water and grain consumption has tripled and the combustion of carbon substances has increased five-fold.

These problems are becoming more and more international. Globalisation does not only refer to development in the economic sector, but also describes the ecological situation at the turn of the century. The holes in the ozone layer, climate change, the extinction of species, desertification, the destruction of the rain forests, over-fishing of the world's seas and the shortage of drinking water are all global environmental problems.

They are occurring at the same time in different places all over the world. Their consequences are global, and joint efforts from both industrialised and developing countries are re-

quired to overcome them.

We will achieve sustainable development on a worldwide scale only when we are able to maintain intragenerational balance: when countries like Germany pursue development aimed at reducing resource consumption and pollution in order to provide the developing countries with the leeway to further their own development.

The industrialised countries have no small role to play in whether the developing countries succeed in achieving a satisfactory standard of living.

The balance of interests between ecology and economy is a fundamental element of sustainable development — the idea that economic and social interests are intrinsically linked with environmental protection and nature conservation issues.

Convincing evidence has emerged showing that not only are these areas compatible, but that an environmentally friendly approach can also lead to win-win situations.

For example, investment in energy efficiency reduces dependence on raw materials, lowers pollutant discharge, is climate-friendly and promotes economic efficiency.

According to experts, the operational costs resulting from neglecting environmental protection measures are in many

cases greater than the cost of implementing the measures in the first place.

The German Association for Environmentally Aware Management estimates that introducing targeted environmental management can save 2%-5% of the total costs of an enterprise. For Germany, for example, this means a saving potential totalling about DM150bn-DM200bn per year.

In general it is true that a goal as complex as sustainable development cannot be regulated by laws and ordinances. Instead, it must be shaped by framework conditions, particularly prices.

Market signals

The environmental technology sector will be ready for innovation only when investment is economically viable. In other words, the market influences each decision.

However, today's market often gives out the wrong signals, as the costs of using natural resources are only rarely internalised appropriately.

From the point of view of sustainability this incentive system is distorted. In order to change this, Germany's Social Democratic-Green government has introduced an ecological tax reform, which will gradually increase the price of energy each year, while at the same time re-

lieving the burden on employers and employees. Increasing prices creates incentives to save energy, while the revenue from these taxes goes towards reducing social security contributions. Non-wage costs, which are an obstacle to creating new jobs, will thus be reduced.

The framework conditions must be the same in both an international and a national context. In many parts of the world, the globalisation of production procedures has led to an improvement in living standards.

However, at the same time, consumption of energy and raw materials, emission of pollutants, greenhouse gases and industrial wastes, traffic volume and the proportion of built-up areas have increased.

The structural change and growth resulting from globalisation can be sustained in the long term only if we protect our natural foundation of life from damage or destruction. We therefore need a framework for the world economy that ensures that global competition does not lead to a "race to the bottom" of environmental protection standards.

We must make every effort to achieve continuous improvements in environmental standards and norms.

In the long term, national economies and individual enterprises will succeed only if they

use natural resources such as raw materials, energy and water as efficiently as possible. The innovative opportunities offered by such an approach cannot be emphasised enough.

The agreement on environmental co-operation between Germany and SA highlights the good relations between our two countries in the field of sustainable development and environmental protection.

It is true that each society has to define its own path to sustainable, environmentally sound development, taking into consideration its own national capabilities and requirements. However, many of the environmental problems facing SA today are also problems Germany has had to deal with in the past or faces in the present. It is only logical to exchange experiences, for example to pass on suitable solutions.

I am firmly convinced that, with concrete co-operation in environmental protection and discussion on global environmental issues, we can all make an important contribution to a common understanding of sustainable development.

□ Trittin is German environment minister and a Green Party member. This is an edited version of his speech to the Southern African German Chamber of Commerce in Johannesburg on Tuesday.

Guarding SA's waters from contamination

By Russel Molefe
Environment Reporter

South Africa has a substantial shellfish industry, which includes oysters, mussels, lobsters, crabs and clams. Like other sectors of the economy, this industry has a fair share of the international market. But if there is any indication of contamination in the shellfish industry, international markets may reject local supplies and lead to its demise, which could have a devastating impact on the country's economy.

Poor people also harvest shellfish for family consumption from near-shore coastal waters, where exposure to sewage contamination is even more likely. If contaminated, shellfish can cause diarrhoea and viruses can be transmitted from person to person under unhygienic conditions.

It was against this background that the Water Research Commission (WRC), in conjunction with the University of Pretoria, conducted research

on marine pollution.

Besides growing concern over the safety of consumers because of exposure of shellfish to contamination, the research was also carried out to draw up reliable water guidelines for the marine industry.

The guidelines, "Water quality guidelines for the South African coastal marine environment", can now be obtained from the Water Affairs and Forestry Department.

According to WRC research manager Annatjie Oelofse, the study revealed that the faecal pollution of marine waters - through the reckless discharge of waste water or bird droppings - were potential sources of shellfish contamination.

These guidelines will help the industry adhere to international standards to protect its markets.

The study made a valuable contribution to the development of expertise in the detection of contamination and the building of research capacity in a field of national importance," said Oelofse.

The guidelines for South African coastal areas also indicate the time span that shellfish must be kept in unpolluted water to ensure that none of the bacteria which entered them, remains.

Oelofse also said that comparative tests were carried out on shellfish seeded with laboratory strains of

site-like organisms which feed on bacteria, was an early indication of contamination."

Besides the threat faced by the shellfish industry, marine pollution has also affected a number of freshwater species.

A recent World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) report painted a disturbing picture of how the numbers of freshwater species, from fish and frogs to river dolphins, were declining due to pollution.

Amphibians, especially frogs, are particularly hard hit and many losses were recorded in national parks and nature reserves, indicating pervasive threats even in protected areas.

Agriculture in South Africa is one of the pillars of the economy. But the 45 000 active commercial farmers, together with about 30 000 emerging ones, use pesticides, fertilisers and other agrochemicals on their farms to produce quality products.

Excess amounts of these pollutants are washed by rain into streams and

rivers, causing damage to freshwater species.

The WWF report also found that the ever-increasing human demand for fresh water pointed to the urgency of ensuring an adequate supply. As a result the Living Waters Campaign was launched early this year.

Its aim was to focus greater attention on the looming global crisis in freshwater ecosystems and resources and to promote the action needed to provide adequate fresh water.

WWF director general Dr Claude Martin said: "More than 1.3 billion people worldwide are already without adequate fresh water, while human water consumption is doubling approximately every 25 years.

The report is a graphic call to reduce these negative trends as the world enters the 21st century.

The observed declines in the populations of freshwater species are particularly alarming as they show the extent of deterioration in the quality of the world's rivers, lakes and wetlands."

Pollutants threaten shellfish industry

viruses and those harvested from sewage-polluted marine environments.

"It was of great importance for the industry to be able to determine the origin of pollution - human or seabird - which caused the contamination of the shellfish," she said.

"The study has shown that the presence of phages, which are para-

ET 14/12/99 (56)

Rastas lose battle to save wetland

MELANIE GOSLING
ENVIRONMENT WRITER

THE group of Rastafarians who have been trying to save the seasonal wetland in the rundown Cape Flats suburb of Parkwood were in high spirits when they were told that MEC for the Environment, Glen Adams, would visit them yesterday to share important information.

Their leader, Bernard Brown, hoped they would be told that the wetland, home in winter to African spoonbills, coots, darters, Egyptian geese, ducks and many other birds, had been given

conservation status.

But he was disappointed. Adams, who the Rastas had asked for assistance, told Brown that the proposed extension to the R300 road was still planned to go over the wetland. It appears the only reason the land is still undeveloped is that it was zoned years ago as road reserve.

Said Adams: "The good news is that it won't happen for the next five years, and when it does, we hope we can relocate you. You won't simply be thrown out."

Adams was referring to the Burning Spear Movement, founded in Parkwood by Brown several

years ago, which Brown describes as a "religious, socio-cultural, economical development movement" to uplift the depressed area.

Brown said after the meeting with Adams: "I was hoping he would tell us it had been registered as a wetland."

Adams, who had earlier made a visit to the wetland where the Rastas live in a communal wooden shack, said he had been impressed by the food garden they were growing, their cleaning up of litter in the wetland, what they were doing to involve the local youth in environmental projects and in keeping them off the

streets. If the community wanted the Burning Spear Movement to stay, he would back them, Adams told them yesterday.

Leila Mahomed of the Wildlife and Environment Society, who attended the on-site meeting yesterday, said there was a need to reassess whether it was necessary for the R300 extension to go through the horticultural areas of Philippi and the residential areas of Grassy Park and Parkwood.

The society supported the Burning Spear Movement in trying to preserve the wetland and use it as a resource for community education and recreation, she said.

Years before Rastas hit the road

Proposed extension of the R300 will not be built immediately

(71) NRK 15/12/99

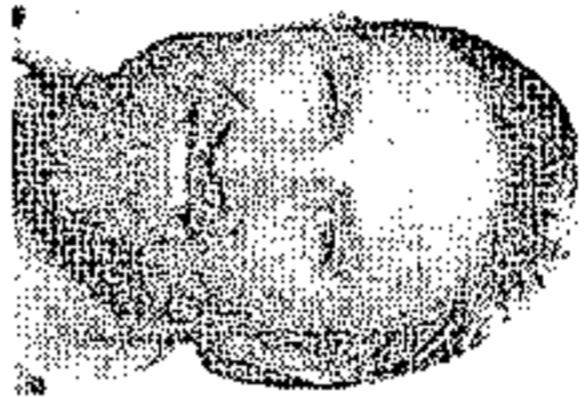
There was bad news and good news this week for followers of the Burning Spear Movement who are trying to protect a seasonal wetland at Parkwood Estate near Grassy Park.

The bad news is that an extension of the R300 freeway, planned some 20 years ago, is still scheduled to run through – or at least over – the wetland, which attracts many species of water birds in the eight months of the year in which it contains water.

The good news is that the road won't be built for at least five years, and perhaps not even then.

Also, the Burning Spears – a Rastafarian-aligned group described as a "reli-

JOHN YELD
Environment
Writer



gious, socio-cultural, economic development movement" – will be accommodated elsewhere if they lose their corrugated iron community centre which has been built in the road reserve.

This was the message brought to the movement by Western Cape Environment Minister Glen Adams, some two

months after he conducted a site visit at their request.

Mr Adams said he appreciated their efforts to conserve the seasonal wetland – one of relatively few left on the Cape Flats – and to provide entertainment for the youth and develop a sustainable food garden behind their centre.

After his visit, he had contacted the South Peninsula Municipality to see what could be done.

Although the freeway had been planned, it would not be built for at least five years.

"So we've got a bit of time to sort things out; I think it's quite positive at the moment," Mr Adams said. "The message we'd like to bring is

that everyone is working behind the scenes to solve your problems.

"We take your concerns just as seriously as those of people living in the leafy suburbs of Constantia.

"You're doing a good job and we'll certainly assist you, but I must be honest – I want to know that the community wants you here."

Bernard Brown, spokesman for the group, told Mr Adams he was "quite optimistic", but the group still maintained there hadn't been proper consultation about the proposed freeway extension.

"We've been more than seven years from this site and we weren't consulted," he said.

Estuary a wetland park for the people

CHRIS JENKINS

(56) CT 17/12/1999

EMPANGENI: Deputy President Jacob Zuma has called for the wise use of the Greater St Lucia Wetland Park for future generations, balancing development and conservation.

Opening the St Lucia Wetlands Festival of Living Treasures, he said the declaration of the park as a World Heritage Site marked a new beginning.

However, Zuma said St Lucia's beauty contrasted with poverty and under-development, where decades of neglect had stunted the potential of its people. More than 95% of homesteads earned less than R450 a month.

The challenge was for the region to use its beauty to achieve reconstruction and development, Zuma said.

The park's fragmented ownership and management had meant it had remained severely underdeveloped. This was worsened by commercial afforestation on the eastern and western shores, the impact of land claims on investor confidence and the SANDF's Hell's Gate military base.

Government, he said, was setting

up a dedicated authority for the park to accelerate development and create sustainable jobs and the conditions for an internationally competitive tourism destination.

Sixteen different parcels of land would be consolidated under a certificate of uniform title. The authority would be a separate legal entity enabled by the new World Heritage Act of 1999. Its structure was designed to balance responsible environmental management with optimal tourism and local economic development.

And for the first time local government and local structures would be empowered in a meaningful way by participating in policy and decision making in the park, Zuma said.

Cultural tourism, he said, would attract the sort of investment that created work without spoiling the natural beauty and resources of the region.

Zuma challenged visitors and residents of KwaZulu-Natal to "discover the spirit that stirs the soul of Africa in the vast and majestic Kingdom of the Zulu at the start of the new millennium".

Syndicates strip Bushbuckridge Nature Reserve

The Bushbuckridge Nature Reserve is being plundered while politicians squabble over who it belongs to, and who will take responsibility for it, reports Fiona Macleod

Armed syndicates are pillaging truckloads of rare indigenous trees from a 7 000ha game reserve on the border between Mpumalanga and Northern Province while politicians and conservation authorities squabble about who should take responsibility for it.

A handful of rangers has been left to fend off the syndicates plundering the Bushbuckridge Nature Reserve. They don't even have a leader in the reserve: their warden is based about 50km away.

"The syndicates come with their trucks and their chainsaws," says Elmon Khumalo, one of the rangers.

"They cut the trees out in the open. They're

not scared, because they're armed and they know there's nothing we can do."

The syndicates are after kiaats, which are under pressure because they take so long to grow and because they're in huge demand among furniture-makers. Kiaat is a dark wood that fetches about R3 000 per cubic metre, and is popular because it's easy to work with.

The standard procedure used by the syndicates is to find a large tree, chop out the middle and leave the rest for firewood-gatherers or to rot. The reserve was once stocked with game, but the animals were poached and disappeared a long time ago. Because the fences have been pulled down, there is little chance game will be reintroduced.

But conservationists and local residents say it has potential as a community resource reserve, which would be used for medicinal and household needs by locals in a managed way. It's the only reserve in the Lowveld that crosses a transitional zone, with both Lowveld and mountainous vegetation.

"The local people graze their cattle here, but they haven't tried to move in to the reserve or start agriculture. Mostly they respect its borders," says Khumalo.

This restraint is remarkable considering the Bushbuckridge reserve is surrounded by some of the fastest-growing and most neglected communities in the country.

Most of the plunderers, Khumalo



Wooden victims: Kiaat trees, which are in huge demand among furniture-makers, are being cut down, the middle chopped out and the rest left to rot. PHOTOS: FIONA MACLEOD

adds, come from outside the local communities, though some locals have also jumped on the bandwagon.

Like the communities living around it in the Bushbuckridge border badlands, the reserve exists in a state of paralysis while politicians squabble about who it belongs to and who should look after it.

Its chequered past includes being divided in two between the former Gazankulu and Lebowa homelands. It was once run as a forestry reserve, and has been managed by the bantustan department of development aid, the Transvaal provincial administration and more recently the Mpumalanga Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Environment.

Who's supposed to be running it now depends on whom you talk to. A joint provincial

committee was set up in 1998 to arrange its transfer from the Mpumalanga department to the Northern Province conservation authorities, but more than a year later the transfer has still not taken place.

"The committee reported to their respective MECs, but probably because the Mpumalanga department has not been very stable the transfer did not take place," says Felus Brand, director of the Northern Province Department of Agriculture and Environment.

"As far as we're concerned, we've been waiting for Northern Province to act," says the Mpumalanga department's Hannes Botha.

"The paperwork is complete. We just need the MECs to rubber-stamp the agreement for the transfer to take place.

"It's a case of one side waiting for the other while nothing happens."

(56) MAC 17-22/12/99

By Russel Molate
Environment Reporter

Good... and bad news for SA's environment

(56) Sowetan 20/12/99

AT FIRST glance it does not seem as if 1999 was a particularly good or bad year for the environment in South Africa. But a closer look shows it has been quite an extraordinary 12 months.

On the downside, the Tuli elephant saga sparked off a very high-profile public debate. The National Council of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals laid charges of cruelty to animals.

The Brits Magistrate's Court subsequently dropped the charges against Africa Game Services owner Riccardo Ghiazza, who purchased the elephants from the Tuli Block in Botswana.

It appeared as if international animal rights groups merely played on the emotions of local animal lovers to promote their own agendas.

On the upside, commendable work was carried out at Government level this year. It passed important legislation aimed at protecting the environment.

The Government also passed legislation to protect people from environmental hazards and water resources, though not without criticism from some quarters.

A Coastal Management Green Paper and a report on the State of the Environment was released, which painted a gloomy picture of the country's environment, especially fresh water resources such as rivers and streams.

However, the National Environmental Management Act, the National Water Act, and the Marine Living Resources Act indicated that the protection of water resources was being given much more attention.

South Africa is one of the 20 most water-scarce countries in the world, with more than eight million of its people relying on unreliable water resources because of pollution.

Most of the rivers of Gauteng, the country's economic heartland and most crowded province, are very polluted.

The Crocodile, Jukskei and Little Jukskei rivers, as well as the Braamfontein, Modderfontein and Sand spruits, have high levels of bacteria and raw sewage.

All these rivers and streams, including the Jukskei (which is reported to be the most polluted river in South Africa), flow through densely populated urban areas, including upmarket suburbs and squatter camps, posing a serious health risk to residents.

It was reported that there were about 1 000 sewage blocks and spills a month in the Johannesburg Eastern Metropolitan Substructure alone. At one stage, a sewage treatment company allegedly caused unfiltered sewage to



Children play on the banks of the polluted Jukskei River near Alex. Reports state that there are about a thousand sewerage blocks and spills a month in the Johannesburg Eastern Metropolitan Substructure alone.

PHOTO: ANTONIO MUCHAVE

flow into Klip River.

Large corporations are also to blame for water pollution. For instance, oil-from-coal giant Sasol was blamed for allowing toxic waste from its Sasolburg plant to leak into Leeuspruit, which feeds the Vaal Dam.

Sasol repeatedly and vehemently denied the accusation, but became the subject of a landmark judgment, which was a victory for environmental conservation.

The Save the Vaal environmental group successfully challenged the company's authorisation to strip-mine the Rietspruit site on the banks of the Vaal River.

Sasol lodged an appeal but the Supreme Court of Appeal in Bloemfontein declared: "The Constitution included environmental rights as a fundamental human right, which required that environmental considerations be given recognition and respect."

On marine resources, environmental organisations have been expressing concern since the beginning

of the year over the dumping of industrial waste and sewage into the sea around Durban.

The dumping is threatening the future survival of marine resources industries such as shellfish.

Still on pollution, asbestos again caused an uproar this year, especially in Northern Cape, where many people are dying of asbestos-related diseases.

The victims are now claiming compensation from the British company, Cape plc, which mined asbestos in the area and wanted the case to be heard in Britain.

However, a London court rejected the application and the victims are now set to lodge an appeal in the House of Lords.

Land restitution, redistribution and tenure programmes - which then Land Affairs Minister Derek Hanekom said may take 10 years to complete - also



had an impact on the natural environment.

However, some of the land claims already settled, especially those within protected areas, helped to achieve plans to include disadvantaged communities in nature conservation management.

On wildlife conservation matters, the bovine tuberculosis (BTB) in buffaloes, lions and other species gave Kruger National Park authorities sleepless nights trying to control the disease that so far has no cure or vaccine.

This led to conservation bodies in other provinces being on the alert and monitoring the movements of wildlife to make sure they stay BTB-free.

A big plus for wildlife conservation was that the World Wide Fund for Nature-South Africa (WWF-SA) bought private land, which became part of the new Cape Agulhas National Park

managed by the South African National Parks. The bad news this year was that the future of the Vaalbos National Park in Northern Cape remained uncertain because of its apparent lack of financial viability.

But the process started by WWF-SA 11 years ago paid off when the newest park, the Namaqualand National Park in Northern Cape, was proclaimed. This was after WWF-SA bought 930 hectares of land near Kamieskroon with funds donated by Dr Anton Rupert.

Other good news for the local environmental fraternity was that two individuals received international awards.

Anne Mearns, a veteran campaigner for environmental education, was one of 23 people around the world selected for the United Nations Environment Programme's Global 500 Roll of Honour.

Endangered Wildlife Trust's Lindy Rodwell won the Royal Geographical Society's 1999 Whitley Award for International Nature Conservation.

Shootout in Cape reserve (7)

CT 20/12/99

MELANIE GOSLING
ENVIRONMENT WRITER

POLICE bust a ring of perlemoen poachers at the weekend after they had fired shots from the shore at the group, who were making off with perlemoen worth R180 000 allegedly stolen from Cape Point Nature Reserve.

Four men, wearing scuba diving gear, were arrested as they came ashore on Saturday night to recover the 1 705 shucked perlemoen which they had hidden earlier in bags behind the rocks on the beach.

The shellfish, stolen from Cape Point's marine reserve where it is illegal to remove any marine life, were destined for the lucrative black markets of the Far East.

More arrests are expected today. Inspector Chris Rossouw, head of the four-man team in the police's organised crime unit tasked with stamping out smuggling of marine resources, said yesterday's bust had come after a tip-off from a member of the public.

"The poachers had hidden their catch in 13 bags behind some rocks at Cape Point. A member of the public saw the bags on Saturday and alerted the authorities."

Police and staff of Marine and Coastal Management moved into the area where the bags were and positioned observers that night.

"About 9.30pm they saw a boat coming towards the shore. Four divers jumped overboard and swam ashore. They came to where the bags of perlemoen were hidden, picked them up and headed back towards the boat. Police arrested the divers and shouted at the skipper on the boat to cut his engines. He started to leave the scene and police fired shots at the boat, but he escaped.

"We alerted police at slipways around the coast and about three hours later the boat was found in Hermanus harbour. The skipper was not on the boat when the police found it, but we have sufficient evidence to make more arrests today," Rossouw said.

Police say although 550kg of perlemoen were recovered, this represented only the tip of the iceberg in a country which has become a haven for perlemoen poachers and the focus of the world's illegal abalone trade.

As other countries pour resources into cracking down on marine poachers, criminals are increasingly taking advantage of

South Africa's inability to protect her marine resources and estimations are that stolen perlemoen worth millions of rand leave the country every year.

The bust also comes as Marine and Coastal Management, the Department of Environment Affairs directorate responsible for managing our marine resources, is in a state of disarray after the head of the organisation and two senior officials were removed from their posts this month following an internal audit which found a chaotic department and that millions of rand had gone missing.

Rossouw said he was sure the perlemoen was destined for the overseas market as 99% of smuggling operations of this size involved the illegal export trade.

The perlemoen was most commonly flown out of the country through Cape Town, Johannesburg and Durban airports, although some were taken across the borders to Swaziland and Botswana and then flown overseas.

With only four police officers in the Western Cape dedicated to controlling organised poaching of marine resources and only one sniffer dog in the country trained to detect frozen perlemoen when packed for export, the authorities are fighting a losing battle.

Rossouw said: "The perlemoen is frozen and packed in foam containers, usually just marked 'fish'."

"Customs do spot checks at airports, but they cannot open all such containers.

"If no contraband products are found, the companies whose frozen goods have been opened can take legal action.

"We have one dog in South Africa which has been trained to detect perlemoen and crayfish, but she can't be everywhere at once. She is taken to work at Johannesburg and Durban, but what we need is at least one sniffer dog at each of the airports. It is very frustrating for us."

The upshot is that hundreds of tons of the illegal shellfish, worth many millions of rand, pass freely through our airports every year.

Some months ago the police's organised crime unit seized 700kg of illegal perlemoen at Cape Town International Airport. On investigation they found that the company involved had smuggled more than 10 tons of perlemoen out of South Africa in the preceding six months with a black market value of R3 million.

4x4 owners drive rare birds from their beach nests

Conservationists call for stricter control of permit system

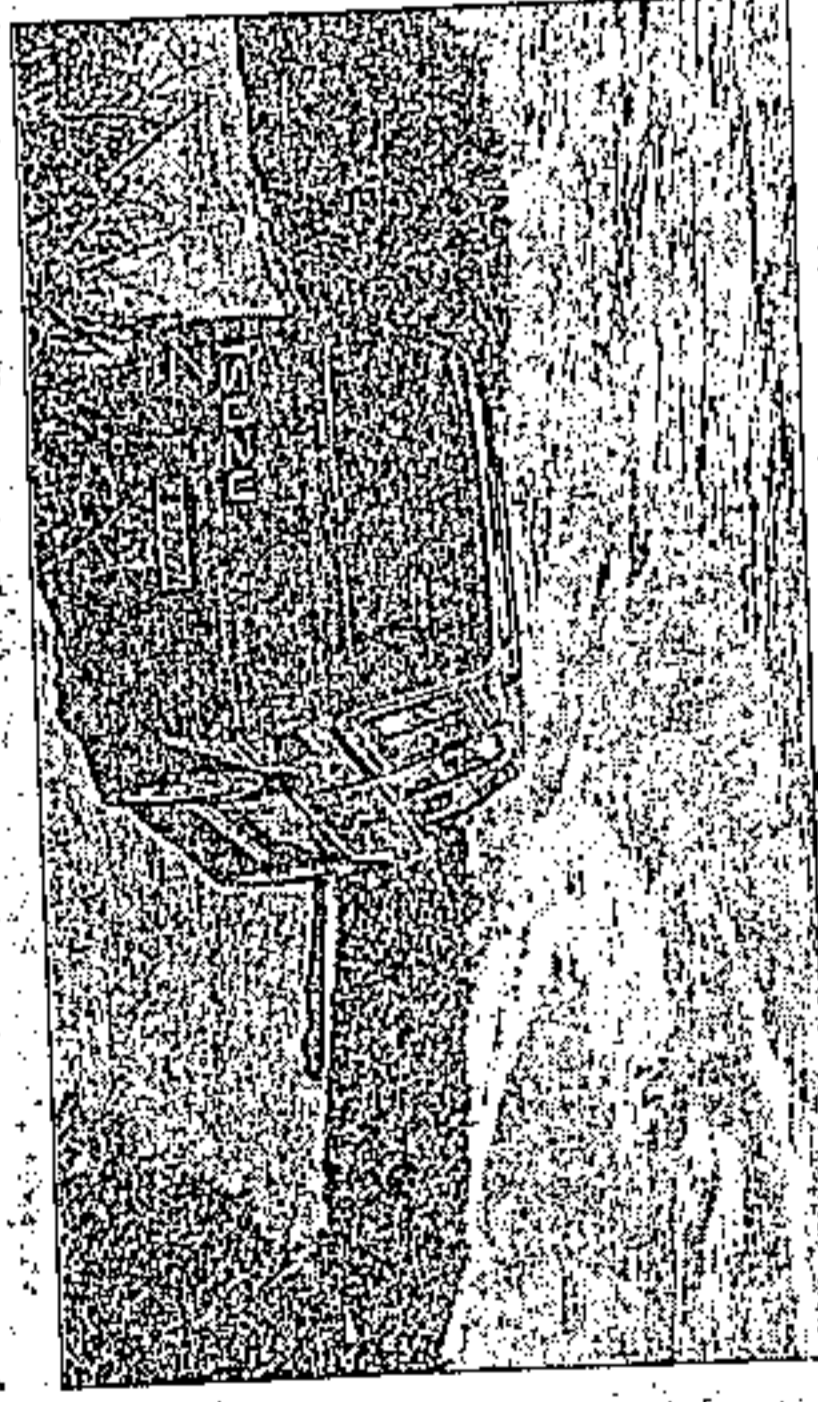
(56) AAT 20/12/99

JOHN YELD
Environment Writer

Many 4x4 owners appear to be affected by a "millennium madness" that makes them tear up and down the coastal strip with no respect for plants and birds like the highly endangered Black Oystercatcher.

That's what West Coast farmer John Duckitt thinks after seeing a sudden influx of badly behaved 4x4 users in the area between Melkossstrand and Yzerfontein in recent weeks.

Stressing that he was not opposed to people with permits using their off-road vehicles to reach the coast along public tracks or to drive responsibly in the inter-tidal zone to reach fishing spots, Mr Duckitt said vast major-



The right stuff: this 4x4 owner has parked responsibly - unlike scores of other off-road users who insist on driving on to the beach itself

ly of visitors to the area had been careful and considerate during the past five or so years.

But in recent weeks, there'd been a significant increase in the number of vehicles using the area, and the drivers' behaviour had deteriorated sharply.

"It was only a pleasure to see 90% of them here.

"They brought black plastic bags and cleaned up the beach before leaving, they didn't make a nuisance of themselves, they didn't mess up the beach (by driving on it) and they didn't disturb any nests.

"But in the past two or three weeks, it's been chaos, complete chaos." The affected area was a lengthy

section of coastline which could absorb quite significant visitor pressure, Mr Duckitt said.

In some areas there were places where people could park their 4x4s within 20m of the sea, he said.

"But they don't - they have to go right down on to the edge of the sea. Their attitude is 'I've got a permit to drive in the inter-tidal zone and I'm going to use it'.

"It's never been a problem before, and I can't understand it. I don't know whether it's millennium madness or what."

Several pairs of the highly endangered Black Oystercatcher had disappeared from their regular haunts on the beach, he added.

Mark Duckitt, who chairs the West Coast Environmental Forum

and serves on the West Coast Biosphere committee, blamed the permit system being applied by the West Coast District Council.

People who bought permits for their 4x4s were entitled to use any beach within the jurisdiction of the council, he said.

"The council is responsible for a really substantial piece of coastline, so the expense of the on-the-ground enforcement is substantial. But the council's law enforcement is totally under-resourced."

"They (4x4 owners) all talk conservation, but unfortunately it's very often just a veneer."

Mark Duckitt said the West Coast District Council had recently appointed a new chief executive officer, and they were hoping this official would give the issue his urgent attention.

He also said they wanted permits to be beach-specific, and valid for a shorter period. The price of the permit could also be raised substantially, and the revenue should go directly to improving the system of control.

"If you play with a quarter-of-a-million rands' piece of steel on the beach, you can't beat about a couple of hundred rands," he said.

When the Cape Argus attempted to contact West Coast District Council officials for comment at 3pm on Friday, it was told the office had closed for the weekend.

The conservation struggle continues

By Russel Molefe

THE Endangered Wildlife Trust recently released its environmental report for 1999 on 10 Southern African countries, including South Africa.

The report, called *A Vision*, shows that while Africa is not exactly a haven of peace, the southern part was largely free of war – except for Angola, where the civil conflict has caused massive environmental destruction.

Last year Angola experienced relative peace and things on the environmental front were returning to normal. But the country started bleeding again this year and the programme to rehabilitate national parks ground to a complete halt.

Last year the Centre for Wildlife Management at the University of Pretoria mounted a programme jointly

with the Angolan government to rehabilitate Quicama National Park and other nature areas.

But the university withdrew from Angola this year, a setback for the government, which fully supported conservation efforts because it recognised its real value and its role in promoting tourism.

However, the Trust report points out there is reason for optimism in other countries on the continent, especially Botswana, where the negative took a back seat.

The biggest environmental story this year was the declaration of the first "Peace Park" in Southern Africa, the Kgalegadi Trans Frontier Park between Botswana and South Africa.

The park, a massive tract of wilderness which will be co-managed by the two countries, was a result of combining the Kalahari Gemsbok Park in

South Africa and the Gemsbok National Park in Botswana.

The Trust hailed the move as "a milestone in conservation in Africa, and a clear sign of what can be achieved with a little cooperation".

It also reported that some fences, which had a negative impact on the movement of wild animals, were being taken down. At least 30km of fence between Kwando and the Caprivi Strip in Namibia has already been removed. In Lesotho a conference entitled "Towards a New Conservation Dispensation in the Kingdom of Lesotho" was held in March, bringing together government, community and tribal authorities.

The conference was deemed a success. An important decision was to form a new parastatal body to administer conservation areas. On Malawi, the Trust reported that

the small, beautiful country had been awakened to the realisation that environmental conservation was unlikely to fare very well if the general state of the economy was depressed.

There was civil unrest in Malawi this year because of a 60 percent increase in the price of maize and a 70 percent hike in the petrol price. This was followed by the devaluation of the national currency, the Malawian kwacha.

However, foreign donors and organisations still did sterling work in the country's national parks this year, as well as in general programmes such as anti-poaching, which is Malawi's biggest conservation problem.

In Mozambique there was modest but steady progress in a number of areas.

The two most important sections of development were the Zinave and

Banhine National Parks in the southern region, and the Maputo Elephant Reserve and a concession area in the south.

The Trans Frontier Conservation Areas movement, backed by the World Bank and the Peace Parks Foundation, worked on "community mobilisation projects" in the subcontinent this year.

One of the project areas is in Banhine, next to the Gonarezhou National Park in Zimbabwe, and the second is in Zinave, which is adjacent to the Kruger National Park.

The idea is to come up with a future management plan for the parks that will include the people living inside them. The plan will cover, among other things, the general rehabilitation of the parks and the reintroduction of various wildlife species.

Southern 29/12/99 (56)

Yeoville grows ⁽⁵⁶⁾ back to its roots

Community gardens are helping Yeovillites to solve social problems, writes **Luvuyo Kakaza**

Yeoville has long been known as South Africa's pre-eminent bohemian enclave. But today Yeovillites fear for the future of their suburb.

Overcrowding, informal trading, unlicensed nightclubs and rampant drug dealing have come to represent a widespread social unravelling.

To save Yeoville from falling victim to Johannesburg's inner-city urban decay the Yeoville Community Development Forum (YCDF) has embarked on various developmental projects.

The residents of Yeoville are planning environmental projects which will hopefully halt the downhill slide. The YCDF believes that environmental initiatives are important in uplifting the social conditions in the suburb.

"Community gardens is one effective way of empowering people to find creative solutions to social deprivation and decay of their community," says Brendan Jacklin of YCDF.

Vacant land in Yeoville and the

neighbouring Bellevue, Bellevue East, Randview and Highlands has been earmarked for redevelopment for vegetable gardens. Each gardener will be allocated a 2m x 3m allotment, compost and seed. Ten percent of their returns will go back to the project.

To speed up the process, a community garden at the Yeoville Creation Centre has already been established with the help of Creation Centre staff.

"Food production is strongly encouraged, to create an awareness of how to alleviate poverty," says Jacklin.

Hopefully community gardens will encourage a secondary economic activity in the form of selling freshly grown vegetables at the soon-to-be established Yeoville traders' market.

Last month, the area played host to the launch of the national Integrated Pollution and Waste Management Campaign — the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism's programme aimed at cleanliness, poverty alleviation and job creation.

According to Deacon Mathe, an adviser to Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism Pallo Jordan, the waste management policy adopted by Parliament last year will involve all stakeholders, including businesspeople, schools, community-based organisations and NGOs.

"Local people both in urban and rural areas will be encouraged to collect waste material, which will be sold to major recycling companies. The finance will be used to further the project's programmes, such as environmental education," says Mathe. "The department will spend about R2 million on each provincial project."

Another major initiative is the Yeoville 2000 vision. The objective is to revive the economy of the area and meet the consumer needs of Yeovillites. The Rocky Raleigh Management Committee, consisting of the community, the council and the police Service, has been set up to work on this.

The YCDF has identified vigorous law enforcement by the council and the police as the best way create a climate in which the economy can begin to grow and attract business.

One major development is the planned Yeoville traders market in Raleigh Street. It was initiated by the Inner City Committee, which consists of representatives of the Greater Johannesburg Metropolitan Council and four other local councils. The R5.5-million market will be one of eight markets to be developed in the city.

"The market will provide proper



In the shadow of the tower: Vacant land in Yeoville has been earmarked for vegetable gardens. PHOTOGRAPH: NADINE HUTTON

facilities for current Yeoville traders and their customers," says Graeme Reid, acting inner city manager. "We hope that the market will minimise the space problems on the pavements and improve the public environment."

More environmental initiatives are in the pipeline, including a recycling depot, a nature reserve, a nursery and a cultural tourism site. Funding will determine the establishment of the major projects, such as the nature re-

serve and a cultural tourism site.

While environmental programmes are regarded as an essential vehicle in uplifting the social conditions in Yeoville, the residents still have to deal with crime. The most reported crimes in the area are housebreaking, assault and car theft. "We and the Yeoville Police Forum are working together to deal with the problems," says Superintendent Jameson Radingoana of the Yeoville police station.

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