

WE SAID IT!

Coal dust must be declared an urgent health disaster

OUR recent front page article (Port pollution problem, 15 September 2025) referred to the Transnet Integrated Report stating that dust pollution at the Port of Richards Bay had reached serious levels.

TNPA admitted that its present operations and future expansion plans were at risk due to potential non-compliance issues which could have legal and punitive implications.

Worryingly, the report said the aim was to reduce complaints – not emissions! – by 30%.

The fact of the matter is that people have become tired of logging official complaints as a perceived waste of time, since the situation remains unchanged.

Richards Bay residents, particularly in Alton and Arboretum, have all but given up on seeing any change in the amount of coal dust generated, which they are forced to sweep and clean a few times a day.

They see ever more permits being issued for uncovered stockpiles of coal adjacent to roads and businesses, and suffer contamination of their own products.

The dangers have hardly been addressed, and the warning temperature has long ago risen from orange to red.

It's now the windy season, and the black dust is being spread far and wide, affecting not only the industrial area, but also the suburbs of Richards Bay.

Black soot settles everywhere, and homeowners are subjected to layers of dirt and grime, both indoors and outdoors.

From roof level to gardens to the bottom of swimming pools, the ubiquitous dust is demanding cleaning be done three or four times a day to make homes properly habitable.

Comment

But the inconvenience is nothing compared to the possible health impacts.

Not only are the dust particles small enough to enter and irritate the lungs, some products that are being blown around and inhaled are corrosive and some have been proven to have metal content.

One shudders to think of the long-term effect on residents, especially those with respiratory problems; not to mention the young whose lungs are still developing.

Online platforms are increasingly filled with complaints over respiratory issues.

The responsible authorities are silent over this incredibly serious environmental and human health risk, while the medical profession treats symptoms without adding its important voice and input to the public debate and outcry.

To say we have a local state of emergency is no exaggeration.

While patients are privately being told that their asthma, sinus problems, lethargy, coughing, sneezing, itching, eye and throat irritations are directly linked to coal dust pollution, the matter is taken no further.

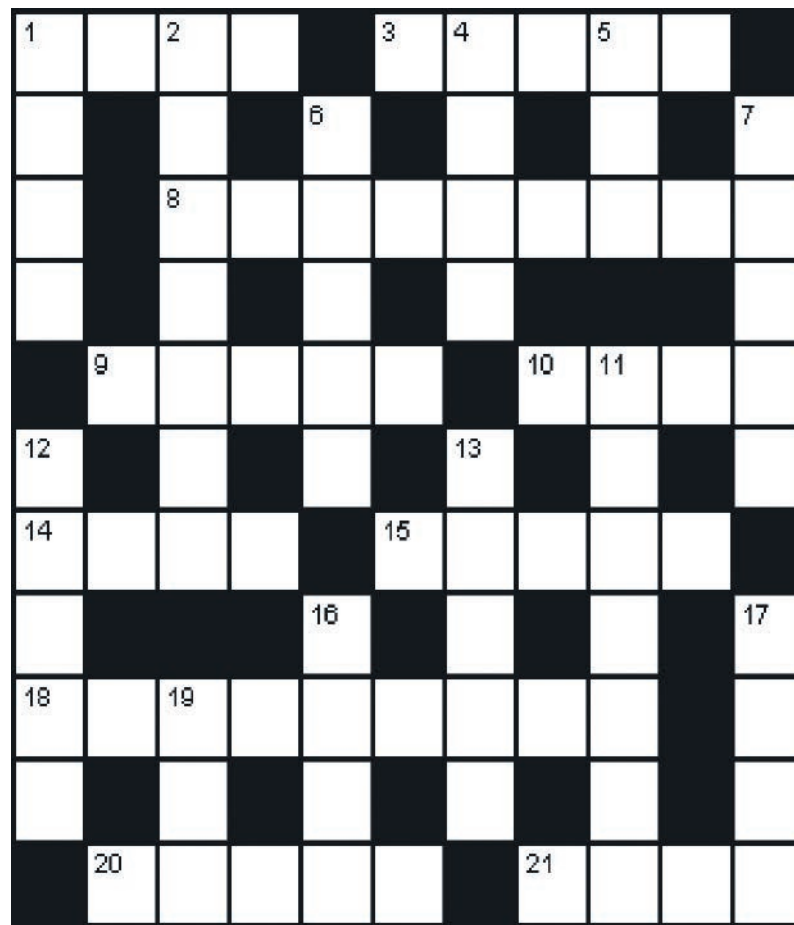
There are government departments whose job it is to ensure our right to clean air, and to monitor and take action with regard to the state of the environment.

On top of all this, we recently learnt that, apart from the records and data supplied by the Richards Bay Clean Air Association, none of KZN's air quality monitoring stations are operational.

The matter needs at the very least to be taken to Parliament, to become subject to a proper investigation.

Who will represent our suffering citizens?

Quick Crossword No 109



Solution No 108



Across

1. Metallic element (4)
3. Fruit (5)
8. Insular (9)
9. Bend (5)
10. Female relative (4)
14. Portent (4)
15. System of reasoning (5)
18. With identity concealed (9)
20. Proverb (5)
21. Jealousy (4)

Down

1. Nothing (4)
2. Roman counterpart of Greek Poseidon (7)
4. Step (4)
5. Garland (3)
6. Courageous (5)
7. Arboreal mammal (5)
11. Imaginary creature (7)
12. Poisonous (5)
13. Subject (5)
16. Highly excited (4)
17. Diminutive (4)
19. Type of fish (3)

A peek at the past

Taking a look at ZO news headlines of years gone by

10 years ago

Mother gives birth to quads

What is being dubbed by the KZN Department of Health as a 'miracle' birth, has the mother facing a desperate future.



Mother of the quadruplets. Nobuhle Qwabe seated, is pictured with the CEO and nursing

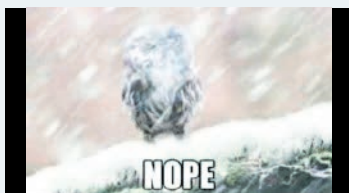
20 years ago

Sensational celebration

Kati Primary School celebrated Heritage Day in style on Thursday as learners performed traditional dances and were treated to traditional food.



What do you meme?



Word of the week

Genial - friendly; kind and cheerful

Quote of the week

Do not judge me by my successes, judge me by how many times I fell and got back up again - **Nelson Mandela**

Life principle of the week

Respect - showing or feeling honour

Dam levels

Zululand dam levels as at Tuesday, 16 September.		
Last week's levels in brackets		
Goedertrouw	95.52%	(95.94%)
Hluhluwe	97.76%	(98.18%)
Klipfontein	99.18%	(99.02%)
Pongolapoort	93.96%	(94.22%)

Meditasie

Die gras verdor, die blom verwelk, maar die woord van onse God hou stand vir ewig.

Jesaja 40:8

Amazwi

Utshani buyabuna, imbali iyavuthuluka, kepha izwi likaNkulunkulu wethu limi kuze kube phakade.

U-Isaya 40:8

Meditation

The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever.

Isaiah 40:8

Respect and preserve water resources

EVERY September we honour our heritage through Heritage Month, with the 24th set aside as Heritage Day to remind citizens of their cultures and encourage them to preserve their heritage.

Heritage is about remembering the past and shaping the future.

This year, Heritage Month is celebrated under the theme Reimagine our Heritage Institutions For a New Era, emphasising the importance of leveraging heritage as a foundation for building a dynamic, socially responsive, technologically innovative and economically inclusive future.

Issues at stake

As we celebrate Heritage Month, let us remember that water is life and the enabler of our cultural activities, writes **THEMBA KHOZA**

This year's celebration focuses on how in society in particular, culture continues to evolve in the light of social, economic and technological challenges.

One of the major institutions of our heritage is water resources, which play a major role in our various cultures and traditions.

Our water resources are our living heritage as they enable us to sustain our cultural and religious activities and rituals.

For the sustainability of our cultural, religious and traditional rituals, it is important to reimagine our water resources as our heritage institutions, and treat them with the care and respect they deserve.

Our water resources are our

living heritage. It is important to protect them and keep them clean and healthy at all times, ensuring they continually flow with healthy water so as to enable us to continue performing our rituals and preserve our cultural heritage. Without our water resources, we are doomed and our cultures will disappear.

The pollution of our water resources leaves citizens without places to perform their cultural and religious rituals.

As we celebrate Heritage Month, let us remember that water is life and the enabler of our cultural activities.

As much as we respect and treasure our cultures, let us also respect, treasure and preserve our living natural heritage, which is our water resources.

* Themba Khoza is a communications officer at the Department of Water and Sanitation.