

● Project aims to eradicate Africa's marine pollution

Bay at forefront of drive to cut plastic in ocean

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The Nelson Mandela Bay metro is to spearhead an African drive to cut marine plastic pollution.

The aim of the Norway-funded project is that marine plastic pollution will be slashed to zero in the Bay within three years and the same will be achieved in Africa within 17 years.

Young people will play a major role, using their networking power to slay the plastic pollution monster – 350kg of plastic entering the sea every second – which is scuttling ecosystems, fisheries, communities and economies.

Announcing these steps at a conference at Nelson Mandela University on Monday, Dr Tony Ribbink, founder of the Port Elizabeth-based Sustainable Seas Trust, said the challenge was huge.

"Globally we are pushing 350kg of plastic into the sea per second. That's 20 tons a minute," Ribbink said.

"At the moment, Africa is the second-worst polluter behind Asia, but it is on its way to becoming the worst."

"But by working together, we can turn this crisis around."

The trust's pan-African initiative would start in Nelson Mandela Bay with the metro and the university coming on board as key partners, he said.

"Satellites and unmanned aerial vehicles will be used for

monitoring, water quality in rivers will be tested, and a new app will be developed.

"We are [also] working with the education department to introduce the issue of plastic pollution to the school curriculum, and an educational booklet is being written."

The role of today's youth was key, he said.

"What they do or do not do will change the planet forever." Healthy competition would be introduced to grow momentum further, he said.

"Homes, churches and organisations will compete. "There will be festivals and clean-ups. The goal is zero marine plastic pollution in Nelson Mandela Bay by 2021 and in Africa by 2035."

In a short speech, mayor Mongameli Bobani pledged the metro's support for the project.

Norway's backing is a major coup for the project and SA.

The Scandinavian country was the leading voice at the UN's landmark commitment in June 2017 to zero plastic marine pollution.

Norwegian research and higher education minister Iselin Nybo said her government had committed itself to a grant of R45m, comprising R42m to NMU over four years and R2.8m to the trust.

She recounted the February 2017 incident in which a whale that had beached itself on the country's western shore had to be put down because it was so sick, and was subsequently dis-

covered to have 30 plastic bags in its gut.

"It was not a freak accident. It is predicted that if humankind carries on polluting the way we are doing, by 2050 there will be more plastic in the sea than fish."

Nybo said Norway – which has a coastline of 21,000km, second only to Canada – was aiming to maximise its ocean-based economic potential.

Fundamental to achieving that aim and keeping alive the possibility for future discoveries, was to stop global marine pollution, she said.

"That is why we are standing with SA on this issue and are proud to participate in [it]."

SA tourism minister and acting minister of environmental affairs Derek Hanekom said while the country needed jobs, this need had to be addressed responsibly.

"With this plastic pollution we're going to have to bite the bullet at some point."

"But, as with the migration from coal to renewable energy, the migration away from plastics can create new jobs and, in fact, result in a net jobs gain."

He said the plan to cut pollution from plastic supermarket bags, including a levy introduced 15 years ago, had clearly "got stuck" and the crux of the matter was the nominal fee charged for the bags.

"It should not be so easy to simply pay the few cents required to get a plastic bag. We need to reduce packaging."



CHANGE OF SCENERY: Thamsanqa High School matrics at the Humewood military base are, from left, Siyanelisa Mbambaza, 22, Lukhanyiso Tshume, 18, Pamela Peter, 18, and Bulelani Zono, 19. Picture: FREDLIN ADRIAAN

Matrics do final battle at base

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While the majority of the Bay's matric pupils are feeling confident little more than a week into their final exams, it has taken a tremendous effort for some of the less privileged schools to have got this far.

Crime and construction are just two of the elements which pupils at Thamsanqa High School in Kwazakhele and David Livingstone High in Schauderville have had to contend with – both during and in the lead-up to their final exams.

Thamsanqa High principal Justice Tutu initiated a turnaround strategy for the school's 29 matrics at the end of August, moving them to the Humewood military base to enable them to prepare for exams away from the criminal elements in the Kwazakhele area.

The school was the worst performer in the Bay in 2017,

managing only a 4.3% matric pass rate.

However, pupils such as Lukhanyiso Tshume, 18, are determined to leave a lasting impression as they remain on the base until the end of finals, working towards their 60% pass rate target.

Tutu had previously said he held one-on-one sessions with each matric pupil to establish how they could help them. He said the current school environment was not conducive for learning, prompting the move.

"People don't realise the severity of crime that takes place at the school and in the area. On an almost weekly basis, we are victims of crime at the school – break-ins, robbery, you name it."

"It is impossible to focus on your studies when you fear for your life," Tshume said.

"Moving to the base has definitely provided us with a good opportunity to turn the entire

It is impossible to focus on your studies when you fear for your life

situation around and make people in our area realise that through working hard at your education, you can escape the cycle of crime."

Tshume was echoed by classmate Bulelani Zono, 19, who said: "We are under a lot of pressure as the Thamsanqa class of 2018 as we are the first who moved out of the area to do our matric."

"We have to prove – not only to the community but our juniors – that our circumstance does not define what we can achieve."

"We miss home but know that we are here for our future and the future of our school-

mates to ensure they don't become victims of crime or participate in it like so many of the pupils before them."

At David Livingstone High, the school's 85 matrics have had to endure the sweltering heatwave which matric pupil Aletha van Wyk, 17, said felt amplified as a result of them being housed in prefab classrooms while construction was ongoing at the school.

"The heat has been intense, but fortunately I learnt from my trial exams and chose a seat away from the window where the sun is really bad."

"But I hope some fans are installed before the heat gets worse," Van Wyk said.

"It hasn't been too bad for me but I know it affects the concentration of my peers during exams."

The crime which Thamsanqa High pupils spoke of, was experienced first-hand by a Herald reporter who arrived at

the school on Friday, only to be the victim of an armed robbery on the school premises.

The armed robbery is one of several incidents which have taken place at the school – as frequently as twice a month – in 2018, according to New Brighton police responding to Friday's incident at the station.

Despite the alleged frequency of the events on the premises, it has done little to improve the reaction time of police, who after more than half an hour had failed to arrive at the school premises.

Police spokesperson Captain Andre Beette could not be reached for comment on Monday despite several telephonic attempts.

This week, matrics tackle mathematics P1, maths literacy P2, visual arts, geography, first additional languages, history P1, economics P1, physical and technical sciences P1 and religious studies P2.



REUSE, RECYCLE: At the Africa Youth Waste Network launch were, back, from left, Sustainable Seas Trust founder Dr Tony Ribbink, Norwegian minister of research and higher education Iselin Nybo, and SA tourism and acting environmental affairs minister Derek Hanekom, with, front, Nelisa Ngabaza, 13, Anelisa Ngidana, 13, Owam Kuse, 12, and Lilitha Njokwana, 13. Picture: WERNER HILLS

Lifestyle diseases kill more than HIV and TB

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Lifestyle diseases such as heart attacks, strokes, asthma, diabetes and hypertension are now the country's number one killer, claiming 718 people a day and causing more deaths in SA than HIV and TB.

This was said by Professor Andre Pascal Kengne, of the SA Medical Research Council, on Monday.

He said SA had failed to significantly reduce the risk of death from lifestyle diseases.

Kengne is the unit director at the council's research unit for non-communicable diseases.

"It is time we wake up to this cold fact that we need to address the risk factors that contribute to all non-communicable diseases as they are fast becoming the leading cause of death, now accounting for more than HIV and TB," Kengne said.

Despite regulations to reduce salt in food and the use of tobacco products, 260,000 deaths were still associated

with non-communicable diseases in 2016 alone, he said.

The country might have to speed up its implementation of the World Health Organisation's strategy to deal with lifestyle diseases.

These included vaccinating girls to prevent cervical cancer, educating people about the risk of lifestyle diseases, and effectively implementing and regulating the recently introduced sugar taxes.

Kengne said SA should also address the socioeconomic circumstances that made it diffi-

cult for people to eat healthily and to resist the marketing of alcohol and tobacco products, or for its citizens to engage in physical activity.

A WHO report aimed at describing a possible scenario for 2030 said SA was one of the countries that could fail to reach the United Nation's goal to reduce lifestyle disease.

Kengne said the four major lifestyle diseases – cardiovascular diseases (like heart attacks and strokes), cancer, chronic respiratory diseases (such as chronic obstructed pulmonary

disease and asthma) and diabetes – shared common risk factors, including tobacco use, physical inactivity, harmful use of alcohol and unhealthy diet.

"Development, industrialisation, urbanisation and ageing are also the major drivers of this epidemic in South Africa."

"A greater focus on political will and regulation of the way in which products such as tobacco and alcohol are promoted has to be monitored in South Africa, where 718 people die every day of lifestyle diseases," he said.

inbrief

Shots fired in store robbery

Two men fired two shots during a robbery at the Provincial Mini Market in Eastbourne Road, Mount Croix, on Monday morning.

One of the employees was hit on the head with the butt of a firearm.

Police spokesperson Warrant Officer Alwin Labans said the men entered the store at 8.40am.

"They fired at least two shots into the back wall. They then demanded the two store employees and the owner lie on the ground," he said.

"During this process, one of the men was hit on the head with a firearm."

He said the gunmen stole money from the cash register, cigarettes and the hard drive of the CCTV recorder. – Gareth Wilson

Prosecutor arrested

A prosecutor arrested on suspicion of corruption and extortion was due to appear in the Pretoria Magistrate's Court on Monday.

"The prosecutor dealing with a murder case in Bronkhorstspuit was arrested for corruption and extortion," police spokesperson Colonel Lungelo Dlamini said.

"It is alleged an offer was made to an investigating officer to destroy evidence in a murder case."

"The prosecutor was arrested after the alleged cash transaction."

In a separate case, a police officer was due to appear in the Rooodepoort Magistrate's Court in connection with the death of two taxi bosses, Dlamini said. – TimesLIVE

Teen plunges to death from cliff

A teenage girl has died after falling 70m from a cliff in Winston Park, west of Durban, on Sunday.

It is understood that relatives raised the alarm after witnessing the 17-year-old fall from the edge.

Officers from the police's search-and-rescue unit, along with paramedics from across the city, raced to the scene.

A rope rescue system was set up to allow paramedics and rescue technicians to abseil down to the girl, who lay at the base of the cliff with severe injuries.

The girl died from her injuries several hours after arriving at hospital.

Police are investigating the circumstances that led to her death. – TimesLIVE

Humble granny hits R57m jackpot

Naledi Shange

A 63-year-old grandmother of five who can neither read nor write is in a state of disbelief after becoming SA's latest multimillionaire, bagging almost R57m in the National Lottery.

Gladys Nchabeleng said whenever she played the Lotto, she randomly selected numbers from the rows on the betting sheet.

"I looked at the Lotto paper and started writing . . . and then wrote on the second line."

"I cannot even see well. I was just guessing where the numbers are," Gladys said.

Clothed in a modest dress, blue shoes and a doek, with her children around her, Nchabeleng said she had religiously played the Lotto over the last five to six years.

"I thought since I don't get pension, some luck may come my way," she said.

"I would joke about how my R5 [that I used to play the Lotto] was enriching other



people. I would also say that perhaps the lottery is helping other people with this money."

The most she had ever won before was about R50.

But whatever winnings she had in the past, she would use to bet on the next lottery game.

Asked how she discovered she was a winner, she said her eldest daughter checked her ticket and one by one the numbers that were being read out matched those on her ticket.

"As she called the numbers out, I got up and said 'God has answered my prayers, we have won the Lotto,'" Gladys said.

Her daughter had danced in celebration.

The entire family did not get a wink of sleep that night.

They travelled to the Ithuba offices the next day to claim their winnings.

Gladys, who bought her ticket in Germiston, was still in disbelief, saying that the excite-

ment was yet to kick in. "My life will be beautiful."

"I will be able to go to the best doctors and get good medication," she said, revealing that she had a chronic illness.

"I will get transport to town. I will get to eat food which is eaten by other people."

Until now, she had depended on her husband for income. "My husband had odd jobs. "He was a sole provider and he could buy us mealie meal

every now and then," she said. One of Gladys's biggest dreams was to fly.

She plans to get on a flight to Cape Town. She also plans to build houses for her five children and enrich her village.

"We live in mountains where there are no roads. As the rains come, cars cannot pass, so I want to fix the roads."

But for now, this elderly woman says she plans to keep the news of her winnings among her immediate family.

Asked how she would keep her family from fighting over her new-found wealth, she said: "The money is mine."

"They won't fight over it. [I've told them] 'if you guys fight, I will put that money in my account and give it away to the state.'"

Gladys says she will not be able to stop playing the Lotto.

"It is now in my blood to play," she said with a laugh. – TimesLIVE

*Not her real name.