

# Diwali committee distances itself from fraud allegations

Conelia Harry

THE newly-formed Richards Bay Diwali Cultural Committee (RBDCC), which hosted Diwali Celebration 2023, has distanced itself from the fraud matter involving members of another organisation, Richards Bay Diwali Committee.

Chairperson of RBDCC, Nelson Govender said their organisation was elected by the community of Richards Bay and is a totally new, independent body which formally established the 2023 Diwali Celebration.

The fraud matter, which implicates businesswoman and fraud accused Rhana Naicker, community member Gloria Naidu, DeeAnn Huripursad (32), Nana Tsati (66) and Bongani Masuku (43), who face charges of fraud – mismanagement or embezzlement of funds from the NPO to the tune of R75 000, appeared in court earlier this month.

Naicker and Naidu, who were members of

the Richards Bay Diwali Committee at the time of the alleged crime, are believed to have defrauded or illegally benefitted with funds from the committee on which they served.

Govender assured their supporters and members of the public that their entity has formulated a new constitution and has its own NPO number with financials audited annually and open to public perusal.

"RBDCC has no allegiance to the organisation mentioned in the Zululand Observer article dated 3 May 2024 or any previous Diwali committees.

"The Richards Bay Diwali Cultural Committee will continue to strive in hosting the Diwali Celebration annually, and promoting ubuntu and fostering unity through diversity.

"We thank all our sponsors and the community for their support and look forward to hosting another successful celebration later this year," said Govender.



The Richards Bay Diwali Cultural Committee established last year bears no relation to the former committee from which funds were allegedly embezzled

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# Dust storm looming

Dave Savides

ANOTHER mighty coal dust-up is looming after authorisation was given for more mass open coal storage stockpiles close to the Richards Bay residential area.

Despite numerous previous public outbursts about health impacts and dust fall-out – which do not seem to have been given due attention in the environmental authorisation – residents and nearby businesses can expect even more ‘black snow’ on their properties and in their lungs.

The KZN Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs (EDTEA) has given the green light for the development of ‘Eyamakhosi Resources Phase 2 Coal Storage Facility within portion 88, 89, 90, 91, 159 of Erf 5333, Alton South’.

This location is basically adjacent to the John Ross highway, extending west towards the Alton robots and south to Harbour Arterial road. It is also close to an existing wetland.

The development will entail three more coal stockpiles with a capacity of 270 000 tonnes, in addition to the existing one at portion 92, bringing the total to a maximum of 345 000 tonnes at any given time.

Above the coal handling and storage, the number of trucks on the John Ross highway will increase significantly.

This seems to also be at odds with Transnet’s stated aim of upping the rail capacity to minimise road truck transport.

## Mitigation measures

In addition to the bundled coal storage yards, office facilities and amenities plus truck parking bays will be constructed.

Mitigating measures will include a 12m high ‘dust tamer’ wind fence, stockpile sprinkler system, two pollution control dams and stormwater run-off drains.

But while EDTEA says the development will ‘trigger an Atmospheric Emissions Licence’, pollution watchdog Richards Bay Clean Air Association (RBCAA) - which has been monitoring air quality in the city for over 25 years - says the dust impacts were highly understated in the air quality assessment contained in the EIA.

The RBCAA submitted that the Air Quality Impact Assessment (AQIA) had not assessed cumulative impacts associated with the current and proposed Eyamakhosi operations, together with the adjacent existing and proposed expansion of the Grindrod Navitrade facility, and was therefore considered fatally flawed.

The RBCAA further submitted that any additional coal-related activities would add to the current truck congestion and pollution load, thereby exacerbating the already significant environmental and health impacts.

In support of their submission the RBCAA included numerous articles published in the Zululand Observer, documenting the dust and health effects and residents’ complaints.

In conclusion, the RBCAA stated that “Impacts have not been properly quantified and that it would be irresponsible of the RBCAA to support any application that will result in an increase in trucks and coal dust emissions.”

In the Draft EIA document, there are numerous references of impact management through the ‘Richards Bay Environmental Forum’ – a body that is not explained and is not known to the ZO.

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Richards Bay residents say the coal dust they breathe daily is causing serious health problems.

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Richards Bay residents say the coal dust they breathe daily is causing serious health problems.

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**RESIDENTS SEE RED over black dust**

Richards Bay residents say the coal dust they breathe daily is causing serious health problems.

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Ongoing coal dust problem gets up public's noses

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