

# Flaring at oil refineries in



# south Durban and Denmark



**Asthma levels in SA 'alarming'**  
The professor said that apart from the inadequate use of preventer medications, "asthmatics may be dying because they either don't have easy access to medical care, or they are seeking care until their condition is really severe".

**Pupils and staff are gassed**  
Power failure is blamed

**Refineries under fire**  
Refineries in the Durban South East Coast region have been under an onslaught of criticism in the wake of a diesel leak at the Island View, the release of a fuel tank at the Durban refinery, and a fire at the Durban refinery. Read more on page 3.

**Mill loses court battle**  
Community alliance stops plan for new waste-burning plant

**Mother tells of baby's suffering**  
Pollution results in chronic asthma

**Minister probes health threat to school**

*Left: Michelle Chetty and baby Sachin who is suffering from chronic asthma because of the pollution from the Engen Refinery. Above: Excessive flaring at the Engen Refinery is a health threat to residents living in Merebank.*



# Black Wednesday

## SDCEA wants Sutcliffe to resign

Residents in the South Durban Basin are up to a 'Black Wednesday' this week as they discovered clouds of thick black smoke hovering over their homes.

According to residents, people outside the local community, who came from the SAPREF industrial area, were seen in Isipingo.

## BEST WORLD - FIGURES FOR DEATHS

## Asthma levels SA 'alarming'

The professor said that apart from the inadequate use of preventer medications, "asthmatics may be dying because they either don't have easy access to medical care, or they delay seeking care until their asthma attack is really severe".

For this reason, South Africans need to know how to recognise, prevent and treat asthma.

"Effective therapy for asthma is freely available," said Zar.

**Treatment**

The most cost-effective means of controlling asthma is to use a preventer pump containing inhaled corticosteroids.

The report was also found that the prevalence of asthma was generally higher in urban areas and in more affluent communities.

In order to raise awareness of the disease, The Breath of Life Asthma Support and Advocacy Group will set up audio-visual displays at major train stations and some large shopping centres in Gauteng.

A call centre will also be operational for the whole of today. People wanting to contact the centre should call 011 465 3596.

about 4:45am on Wednesday (21 April 2004) the SAPREF crude oil refinery experienced a power failure. This resulted in a safe shutdown of the refinery.

"Consequently, surplus gases were released at the flare. The steam released was also a result of the power failure. There was a lot of black smoke being produced."

South Durban Community Environmental Alliance (SDCEA) said, "A fire broke out in the distillation unit, which a city health official, Neil Larratt, confirmed with Dixon Lowe from SAPREF Communities in South Durban heard sirens going off, and believed that a fire occurred."

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### Power failure is blamed

Dr Yusuf Asmal, from KZN Emergency Services, examined and stabilised all casualties. He also instructed that all casualties be sent to hospital.

"Engen agreed to pay the medical bills, but who will pay for the follow-up treatment?" asked Vartharajulu.

According to SDCEA, altogether 24 people were treated, and six were sent to hospital for tests and observation. Vartharajulu has been outspoken about air pollution since 1999.

"We need to know what toxins have been released from the stacks. This is a crisis situation. I insist on toxicity tests for each affected person, and Engen should foot the bill," he said.

"However, our first priority is the children. Their constitutional right to study in a pollution-free environment has been violated on numerous occasions," he said.

Settlers Primary has a fully-equipped sick bay, but no trained personnel to man it.

"This is not only of benefit to the school but the larger community who also suffer," said Vartharajulu.

He said, with the latest incident it is time for legal action, and SDCEA is to take up the fight on behalf of the school.

A complaint has been lodged with eThekweni Municipality to determine the exact cause of the problem.

RESIDENTS in Merebank, Abseeriville, Engen's southern stack, last Thursday, and 9:15pm on October 21, in air cooling systems similar to radiators, coolers operate more efficiently. Use of down at a time for cleaning. How

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