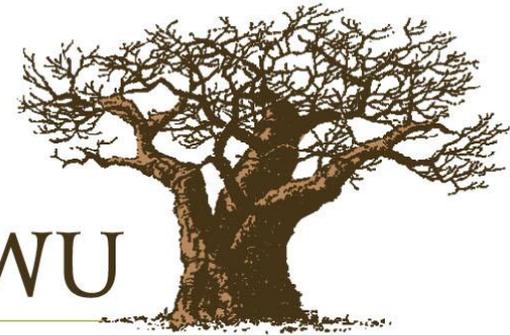




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FEBRUARY 2021 SUSTAINABILITY NEWSLETTER

For a copy of the Safety, Health and Environmental (SHE) Legislation Update, please go to:
<https://imbewu.co.za/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Monthly-SHE-Legislation-Update-February-2021.pdf>

INTERNATIONAL

GENERAL

WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING LEADING TO MAJOR DECLINE IN SPECIES POPULATIONS – A new report released has shown that that wildlife populations in areas where species are traded has caused a large decrease in populations and could lead to extinction. It is estimated that the illegal trade of wildlife could be worth as much as \$23bn a year. The main drivers of this illegal trade include the pet industry, bushmeat, traditional medicine, ivory and laboratory use.

Source: The Guardian dated 15 February 2021

https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/feb/15/wildlife-trade-drives-species-decline-study-aoe?CMP=Share_AndroidApp_Other

SHARK RELOCATION DUE TO CLIMATE CHANGE AFFECTING OCEAN ECOSYSTEMS – As our oceans are getting warmer, juvenile sharks are being forced to move to colder areas, disrupting ocean ecosystems. Ocean ecosystems are already being damaged by over-fishing and pollution and require protection. Scientists have shown that the cold limit for young sharks moved northwards by an average of 600km between 2014 and 2020 - “*The sharks are telling us that the ocean is changing and it’s now time for us to do something about it.*” - Kyle Van Houtan of the Monterey Bay Aquarium.

Source: The Guardian dated 9 February 2021

https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/feb/09/climate-crisis-pushing-great-white-sharks-into-new-waters?CMP=Share_AndroidApp_Other

20% OF PREMATURE DEATHS GLOBALLY ARE CAUSED BY FOSSIL FUEL POLLUTION – A report published in the journal Environmental Research found that one in five premature deaths could be attributed to the burning of coal, oil and natural gas. This new research gives the most detailed assessment of premature deaths due to fossil fuel air pollution to date. “We hope that by quantifying the health consequences of fossil fuel combustion, we can send a clear message to policymakers and stakeholders of the benefits of a transition to alternative energy sources,” said co-author Joel Schwartz.

Source: Reuters dated 9 February 2021

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-pollution-fossil-idUSKBN2A90UB>

PARIS FAILED TO MEET ITS COMMITMENTS ON GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS – In a landmark decision, a court in Paris has ruled that France caused “ecological damage” by insufficiently reducing its greenhouse gas emissions. The court has given the French government two months to take action before issuing any order to reduce emissions and repair damage. The lawsuit, the first of its kind in France, signals an escalation in French environmental activism. Activists hope the ruling will set a legal precedent for victims of climate change.

Source: The New York Times dated 3 February 2021

https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/03/world/europe/france-emissions-court.html?auth=login-google1tap&emc=edit_clim_20210203&login=google1tap&nl=climate-fwd%3A&te=1

PUBLICATIONS

SUPER PLANT FIGHTING AIR POLLUTION – Study published in the journal *Environments* 2020 - Researchers at the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) in the UK have found a “super plant” - *Franchet's cotoneaster* or *Cotoneaster Franchetii* which can trap up to 20% more emissions than other hedges and can be used along busy roads in pollution hotspots to help combat air pollution. The report found that species choice made a significant difference to the extent of particulates capture along major roads.

Source: EcoWatch dated 18 February 2021 and MDPI

<https://www.ecowatch.com/plants-fighting-air-pollution-2650611803.html?rebellitem=1#rebellitem1>

<https://www.mdpi.com/2076-3298/7/10/81>

FOOT OFF THE GAS: WHY THE UK SHOULD INVEST IN CLEAN ENERGY – A report by Carbon Tracker Initiative dated 25 February 2021 – In this report, the cost of new gas-fired power plants is compared to those of a clean energy portfolio (CEP). The key findings show that the UK would be misguided to invest in gas power plants and that a combination of clean energy sources and flexible technologies is a strong and cost-effective option.

Source: Carbon Tracker Institute report dated 25 February 2021

<https://carbontracker.org/reports/foot-off-the-gas/>

NATIONAL

GENERAL

R3BN IN EXCESS EXPENDITURE BY THE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT, FORESTRY AND FISHERIES – The Auditor General’s (AG) 2019/20 report concluded that significant irregular expenditure, wasteful and fruitless expenditure, flouting of supply chain management legislation and overpayment of invoices resulted in none of the environmental portfolios receiving a clean audit. Despite the stated concerns, the portfolio committee said it was “pleased with the performance of the Department and entities as well as those of the Forestry and Fisheries branches, especially in terms of meeting predetermined objectives.”

Source: Daily Maverick dated 21 February 2021

<https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2021-02-21-department-of-environment-forestry-and-fisheries-blows-nearly-r3bn-in-irregular-expenditure/>

SASOL CLEARED AS INVESTIGATION CONTINUES INTO THE SOURCE OF THE STENCH EXPERIENCED IN PARTS OF GAUTENG AND MPUMALANGA – The Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries (DEFF) has cleared Sasol's Secunda based operation as the source of the odour caused by elevated levels of sulphur dioxide and hydrogen sulphide. According to an inspection, the Sasol plant was within the approved limits of the Atmospheric Emission Licence. DEFF has expanded its investigation to include power plants and waste water works in the area that also emit hydrogen sulphide.

Source: Sowetan Live dated 28 February 2021

<https://www.sowetanlive.co.za/news/south-africa/2021-02-28-sasols-secunda-plant-cleared-as-source-of-stench-over-gauteng-and-mpumalanga-two-weeks-ago/>

ENVIRONMENTALISTS LOSE AGAINST TENDELE COAL MINE – The Supreme Court of Appeal (SCA) ruled against the Global Environmental Trust (GET) finding that the environmentalist organisation acting on behalf of the Mfolozi Community Environmental Justice Organisation (MCEJO), did not make out their case to interdict the mine from operating. The court ruled in favour of Tendele Coal Mining which operates one of the country's biggest anthracite coal mines in northern KwaZulu-Natal. The dissenting judge, Judge Ashton Schippers, said that halting the mine would decimate the local economy and found that Tendele should be given a year to get the necessary environmental authorisation.

Source: The Sunday Times dated 11 February 2021

<https://select.timeslive.co.za/news/2021-02-10-illegal-tendele-mine-can-stay-open-because-its-too-important-to-the-economy/>

ESG IN THE MINING INDUSTRY – NO TIME TO WASTE – The mining industry is starting to focus more and more on Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) issues. Mining companies are being forced to take responsibility for the impact they have on the environment and surrounding communities. UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres said on 18 February, at the launch of a new UN report, that "*Humanity is waging a senseless and suicidal war on nature*" and ESG-related issues need to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

Source: inceConnect dated 24 February 2021

<https://www.inceconnect.co.za/Share360/esg-no-time-for-the-journey-?cid=PDM15607&bid=453029518>

THE VAAL SEWAGE SPILL – A VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS – The South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) has found a number of constitutional rights violations after an investigation into the sewage crisis facing the Vaal district. They found that the Emfuleni Local Municipality flouted its constitutional duties by allowing people to live in deteriorating conditions for years resulting from the failure to maintain water and sanitation infrastructure due to ineffective service delivery.

Source: Eyewitness News dated 18 February 2021

<https://ewn.co.za/2021/02/18/vaal-sewage-crisis-could-lead-to-huge-civil-cases-against-state-sahrc-warns>

MINISTER BARBARA CREECY APPOINTS AN INDEPENDENT SCIENTIFIC PANEL TO INVESTIGATE LAKE ST. LUCIA ESTUARY MANAGEMENT PLAN – In light of differing scientific opinions and strong public interest, the Minister of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries Barbara Creecy, has appointed a committee to evaluate and advise on the complex and dynamic socio-ecological system of the Lake St. Lucia Estuary. An adaptive management strategy may be required.

Source: Daily Maverick dated 4 February 2021

<https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2021-02-04-barbara-creecy-acts-on-lake-st-lucia-breaching-storm/>

ABALONE POACHER RECEIVES SUBSTANTIAL JAIL SENTENCE FOR BRIBING OFFICIALS – A sentence was handed down in the Western Cape High Court sentencing a man convicted of poaching related offences to an effective 18 years in prison for charges including: 16 counts of corruption, two counts of money laundering and numerous counts of contravention of the Marine Living Resources Act. The convicted implicated 9 officials from the Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries (DEFF) who he would pay thousands of Rands to in order to arrange for confiscated abalone to be returned to him.

The nine DEFF officials have been arrested and are before the court on charges of corruption and abalone poaching.

Source: News24 dated 16 February 2021

<https://www.news24.com/news24/SouthAfrica/News/abalone-poacher-sentenced-to-244-years-in-jail-for-paying-officials-to-get-his-haul-back-20210216>

RHINO HORNS WORTH R52 MILLION SEIZED AT OR TAMBO INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT – 18 pieces of rhino horn destined for Malaysia worth an estimated value of roughly R52 million were seized by officials on Thursday the 4th of February 2021. The rhino horns were discovered during a routine search at a courier facility.

Source: News24 dated 4 February 2021

<https://www.news24.com/news24/southafrica/news/rhino-horns-worth-more-than-r50-million-seized-at-or-tambo-airport-20210204>

PUBLICATIONS

THE NATIONAL NUCLEAR REGULATOR (NNR) ASSURES THAT KOEBERG NUCLEAR POWER STATION IS NOT DISCHARGING HARMFUL RADIATION – In response to recent media coverage reporting cracks in the outer shell of the containment building at Eskom's Koeberg Nuclear Power Station in Cape Town, the NNR has explained that the buildings comply with safety regulations. Concrete repairs have been implemented to reinstate areas of the external structure that had cracked due to corrosion. Eskom has confirmed that an induced cathodic protection system is being implemented as per recommendations from a team of civil engineers as a long-term solution.

Source: Engineering news dated 15 February 2021

<https://www.engineeringnews.co.za/article/eskom-regulator-says-cracks-to-koeberg-containment-structures-not-serious-2021-02-15>

CONFERENCES AND OTHER EVENTS

ONLINE COURSES

IMBEWU is offering an **ONLINE ENVIRONMENTAL LAW UPDATE** training course. For more information visit our website: <https://imbewu.co.za/services/> or email: sam@imbewu.co.za.

NATIONAL & INTERNATIONAL

VIRTUAL ENERGY, ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE CONFERENCE: 8-9 March 2021 (Bangkok)

VIRTUAL RENEWABLE ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY CONFERENCE: 15-16 March 2021 (London)

VIRTUAL ENVIRONMENT, ENERGY AND CHEMICAL ENGINEERING CONFERENCE: 8-9 April 2021 (Athens)

POWER GEN AFRICA: 11 – 13 May 2021 (Cape Town)

IMBEWU'S NEW ONLINE Safety, Health & Environmental (SHE) Legal Register Platform. This new SHE Legal Register offering is contemporary and streamlined for easy access with secure passwords, regular updates, easy navigation, explanations of SHE legislation relevant to your operation, access to a

comprehensive searchable SHE legislation database and user-specific functions such as bookmarks.

For more information contact sam@imbewu.co.za or visit <https://imbewu.co.za/she-electronic-legal-registers/>

IMBEWU's environmental note: 35 Things you can do to help save the planet in 2021 <https://www.vogue.co.uk/arts-and-lifestyle/article/how-to-be-more-sustainable>

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