

'POLICE NOT COPING'

Wave of hijackings hits Isipingo

BRONWYN GERRETSEN

ISIPINGO is under siege from hijackers, and its residents are threatening to take the law into their own hands because the police are not equipped to deal with the severity of the situation.

One hijacking is reported to have taken place on Friday, and three on Saturday.

Isipingo ward councillor Freddie Maistry said that three hijackings and two attempted hijackings had happened last Sunday.

Residents claim that the police are understaffed and unable to protect them from crime.

The latest crime statistics showed that 199 hijackings had occurred in Isipingo in 2006/2007, second only to Pinetown, which recorded 208 in the same period.

Maistry said he had heard of 17 hijackings in the area since the release of the statistics at the beginning of the month.

Threatened

He said that residents were considering taking the law into their own hands.

One resident said there were only four police officers on duty over the weekends and only one vehicle patrolling eight areas.

"Our police department is lacking in a big way and the people are feeling threatened," he said.

Police Supt Vincent Mdunge said he disagreed that there was a shortage of manpower, and claimed that all police stations were equipped with sufficient officers to deal with

crime prevention, attend to complaints and to carry out patrols.

"If members are off sick, station management has a legal obligation to make sure sick leave and other leave is handled well. This has to be managed internally at the police station," he said.

However, Maistry said there had been only four officers on duty on Sunday night when a murder had occurred in the area. He said two officers had been on patrol and two had been based at the office. He had been told that about eight officers had been on sick leave.

He believed that the hijacking rate in Isipingo was high because the area was close to places such as Umlazi and KwaMakhutha, where hijacked vehicles "can't be found".

Toyotas and high-powered vehicles were some of those commonly targeted.

Dayzel Samaroo, a co-ordinator of Isipingo District Against Crime and chairman of the community policing subforum for Orient Park, in Isipingo, said that people who had been hijacked were "upset" and "losing confidence" in the police, with some wanting to "do things their way".

He said this meant residents were prepared to form vigilante groups to protect themselves against crime, even if that resulted in the death of criminals.

After first meeting the station and area commissioners, Maistry had asked that Community Safety and Liaison MEC Bheki Cele meet residents to hear their concerns. He hoped the meeting would take place within two weeks.



RICHARDS Bay bodyboarder Mark McCarthy lines up a barrel on his way to finishing second in the Shark Island Challenge, near Sydney, Australia, on Sunday. McCarthy came close to winning the event – one of the world's highest-rated bodyboarding contests – on the famous reef break at Cronulla Point. McCarthy said it had been his dream to surf in the famous event, one of the hardest contests on the International Bodyboarding Association's tour

PICTURE: DARRYL MENZIES

No plans to stop using DDT

AMELIA NAIDOO

CAPE TOWN: South Africa has no intention of phasing out the use of DDT for malaria control, in spite of studies that have linked the pesticide to developmental and reproductive problems in humans, in areas where it is used.

DDT is used by the Department of Health in KZN, Limpopo and Mpumalanga. Asked whether SA would begin phasing it out for malaria control, Department of Health spokesman Sibani Mngadi replied: "DDT is playing an important role in keeping malaria cases very low. I don't think we will be moving away from DDT."

– Mercury Correspondent

Matric pupils now under more stress

AMELIA NAIDOO

SOME pupils no longer had any faith in their teachers, it emerged as children returned to school yesterday to face the intense pressure of catching up with work lost during the public service strike last month.

The pupils spoke of a sense of abandonment and pressure on the part of teachers, which had strained relations.

Teachers were dealing with stress from pupils, who blamed them for missing out on work, while the Department of Education was watching them closely.

A Phoenix high-school teacher, who would not be named, reported yesterday that some pupils were unhappy at being placed under pressure because of the teachers' strike. "They feel like victims of the strike, which is justified,"

he said. In Pinetown, education district monitors were out in force yesterday to examine not only teachers' recovery plans, but also their attendance throughout the year and other records.

In addition, the monitors visited the classrooms to observe teachers and pupils.

"What is the need for this? Teachers already feel pressured as we gear up towards exams that begin on Wednesday. It's a witchhunt," the Phoenix teacher said.

He said the Education Department should trust teachers' judgment, as they were professionals who knew what was required to catch up on lost work.

"The monitoring should be more supportive and advisory than act as harassment," the teacher said.

The Education Department

had not uniformly requested recovery plans from schools and was not monitoring all its districts. Some schools were not expected to submit recovery plans and where some district monitors sat in on lessons, others merely visited school principals.

One such school was Thokozwayo High School, in the KwaZulu-Natal Midlands, whose district monitor only visited the school principal last Wednesday.

The school was not expected to submit a recovery plan and had only provided information on pupil and teacher attendance, said principal Bongani Ngongo.

He said there had been an "element of resistance" from pupils to the extra lessons, but that teachers had managed to persuade them that it was for their benefit.

Prof Deevia Bhana, of the University of KwaZulu-Natal's Education Faculty, said that there was a huge sense of stress and anxiety among pupils over not being able to meet the requirements of higher-education institutions.

While all grades had been affected, the stress placed on matric pupils was significant compared to the junior grades, which might have seen the strike as a holiday, she said.

"There is a sense of abandonment. It is a sense that the teacher doesn't really care about my work, and this affects the teacher-pupil relationship," said Bhana.

However, teachers were bound to their unions and had a right to strike, she said.

Bhana said that pupils could suffer emotionally as they crammed in a large volume of work in a short time.

Police shoot suspected rapist

JEFF WICKS

ONE of the men thought to be responsible for the hijacking and rape of two women leaving a Westville pub was shot and critically wounded yesterday.

Another man – also a suspect – escaped, but could have been wounded in the skirmish with police and private investigators.

The women, aged 24 and 22, were hijacked as they left Waxy O'Connor's pub in Westville late last Friday.

They were driven to a house in KwaDabeka, where they were held for several hours, during which time they were raped repeatedly by one of the gunmen, while his accomplices had gone to withdraw money from their bank accounts.

Later, they were driven to a secluded area near the Inanda Dam wall, where they were forced down an embankment.

Their cries were heard by a

taxi owner, who notified the authorities and helped the traumatised women up the slope. The police, along with private investigators, received a tip-off and arrested a man believed to have been involved in the incident at Richards Bay at the weekend.

According to Brad Nathanson, a private investigator hired to look into the matter, another man had handed himself over to the police yesterday. "The man revealed information about the location of two other suspects who were believed to reside in Hammarsdale," he said.

Nathanson, his team and police stormed a house in Hammarsdale, but found that the men had gone out for the day.

The investigators settled down at taxi ranks and other locations in the area, and lay in wait for the men.

"As police detectives attempted to arrest the two

men as they alighted from a taxi, they drew firearms and opened fire on the officers.

"The officers returned fire, critically wounding one man, while the other managed to escape," Nathanson said.

The wounded man was hit four times in the chest. Nathanson praised the police for their valiant efforts.

"Detectives from Westville and KwaDabeka have worked tirelessly, and it shows what can be accomplished by hard work," he said.

Two of the men involved in the attack are still at large. "We know who they are and will find them," said Nathanson.

Police Supt Vincent Mdunge also praised the efforts of the investigators.

Anyone with information on the incident should telephone Nathanson at 084 455 6007 or Insp Adele Meyer at 031 267 7344.

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Rat 'dinner' attacks pet snake

PRETORIA: The food chain was temporarily disrupted when a rat refused to be eaten and instead attacked the snake that planned to eat it for dinner.

The young 1.5m boa constrictor was clearly feeling sorry for itself while it was being treated at the Bird and Exotic Animal Hospital at the University of Pretoria Faculty of Veterinary Science, yesterday.

The snake was bitten eight to 10 times. Some of the wounds were so deep that its vertebrae were visible.

Veterinarian Dr Dorianne Elliot said that incidents such as this occurred when snake owners put live rats in the reptiles' quarters before they were hungry.

This rat decided not to wait to become dinner and attacked instead.

The rat escaped with its life. Its whereabouts are unknown. – Mercury Correspondent

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