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# Rats invade govt building

## Workers flee as rodents overrun city office block

CHRIS NDALISO

Dozens of state employees who work at a government department in the city centre had to flee their building due to a severe rat infestation.

Staff at the department of Economic Development, Tourism, and Environmental Affairs (Edtea) in Jabu Ndlovu Street were ordered to vacate the building as management feared the growing infestation posed a health risk.

Apart from the risk of disease, staff and visitors to the building had to endure the disgusting smell of rat urine, faeces and dead decomposing rodents, that had spread through the building.

A memorandum was issued to employees by the department's chief director of corporate services, instructing managers at the building to "release staff members due to the outbreak of rodents" at 270 Jabu Ndlovu Street.

Employees, who spoke to *The Witness* on condition of anonymity, said the smell — which emanates from dead rodents — was intolerable.

"The department is currently experiencing an outbreak of rodents at 270 Jabu Ndlovu Street which is affecting the hygiene of the building due to the stench and infestation that has become evident within the building, programme managers are requested to release their staff and make arrangements for them to work remotely. It must be noted that employees should be reachable at all times to perform their duties in accordance with the remote working policy of the department," reads the memo.

The employees said it was difficult to walk in the corridors of the second floor and that the stench was filtering into offices.

"We spot maggot-infested corners as they [maggots] feast on the dead rats. Some dead rats are not easily spotted as they die in hidden areas and this makes the situation worse."

"Prior to the memo asking us to vacate the building some employees had to abandon their offices and work with other colleagues and this has been like this for over a week," said one employee.

Staff say there have been measures taken to tackle the problem, including the installation of rat traps, which in some instances exacerbated the problem. "Remember, these rats pass through these traps but when they die they don't decide when and where the poison should take effect. This means that the rats can die in unreachable areas of this floor," explained a staff member.

"The problem should not have been left to reach this extent, now we don't even know when we should return to work as the memo is not clear," said the employee.

Msunduzi's Environmental Health manager Clive Anthony said his unit carries out vector control methods to identify rodents, their habitats, and breeding places.

**🔴 We spot maggot-infested corners as they [maggots] feast on the dead rats. Some dead rats are not easily spotted as they die in hidden areas and this makes the situation worse.**

"Owners and occupiers of public and private premises have a responsibility to maintain their properties free of rodents."

"The provincial Department of Economic Development in Jabu Ndlovu Street would need to have a vector baiting/spraying plan."

"If the property is owned by the government, then the Department of Public Works could assist, otherwise, the services of a private pest control service provider would be required."

"The Environmental Health unit will bait the immediate precinct to mitigate rodent activity in the streets and around shopping areas, especially those areas conducive to rodent attraction and harbourage," said Anthony.

Pest control expert Don Smale attributed the infestation to uncollected garbage left rotting on the pavement outside the building in the CBD. He said during rainy days, the garbage gets washed into the drains and this contributes to conditions that are beneficial to breeding.

"Once the rats establish themselves they move into the buildings. Tamper-proof bait stations need to be installed around the affected building. Hygiene is crucial because rodents carry diseases and this compromises the health of those inhabiting the affected building," said Smale.

He said once an infestation intensifies it becomes very difficult to bring the problem under control. "It takes about 14 days for a rat to die. The bigger the rat, the bigger the amount of poison needed from the rat trap, so at times not the entire rat family gets its share of the poison. For this reason, it is important to replenish the bait stations timeously," he said.

Complaints on rodent infestation can be lodged with the Environmental Health unit on 033 392 2344/5.

Meanwhile, contrary to what the employees who spoke to *The Witness* said, MEC Siboniso Duma's spokesperson, Ndabezihle Sibiya said this was an old issue. He said the memo was issued last week and that employees were back at work.

Sibiya added that a pest control company was called in to fumigate. • chris.ndaliso@witness.co.za



**Adding a touch of colour to PMB**

Siyabonga Sikosana (45) has been drawing and painting township scenes and cityscapes since 1998, when he was still in school. Sikosana is currently painting murals on the bridge in Chatterton Road in Pietermaritzburg and receives donations from passing motorists. The project was initiated by the Keep Pietermaritzburg Clean organisation and is sponsored by Save Hyper supermarket. **PHOTO: NQUBEKO MBHELE**

## Maharaj's dad over the moon as his son's 'utter determination' pays off

NIYANTA SINGH-MAHARAJ

Proteas spinner Keshav Maharaj's slot at the top of the ICC ODI bowling rankings is no mean feat and is proof of his outstanding work in the last few matches.

No one is prouder of his achievement than his father, Athmanand Maharaj, a retired Durban school teacher.

Ahead of today's semi-final against Australia, the Proteas are aiming to make history by winning their first final, while experts have named Maharaj, Quinton de Kock and Marco Jansen as some of the key players who will be able to deliver again.

On Tuesday evening, the ICC announced Maharaj's position on the rankings, knocking India's Mohammed Siraj down a notch.

It's double trouble, with a unique twist: A 32-year-old woman from Alabama who was born with two uteruses is now pregnant in both.

Kelsey Hatcher, who is documenting her story on her Instagram account "doublehatchlings", knew from the age of 17 she has "uterus didelphys" a rare condition where a person has a double uterus, thought to affect about 0.3% of females.

It was during a routine eight-week ultrasound visit in May that the

Earlier in the month, Maharaj was sitting at second position but moved up having picked up seven wickets in three matches, which included a four-wicket haul against New Zealand in Pune last week.

He was one of the very few bowlers who troubled India, returning figures of 1-30 when the hosts scored 32a, and in their final league-stage game, he scalped two wickets against Afghanistan.

Maharaj's father Athmanand, who recently returned from supporting his son in India, said Maharaj's ranking was "extremely well-deserved".

"We are tremendously proud of his achievement. When he injured his Achilles in March this year, we thought this was it for him as it usually takes about nine months to heal. But Keshav, as determined and dogged as ever, was back in the park less than six months later and deter-



Athmanand Maharaj and his son Keshav. **PHOTO: SUPPLIED**

mined to make the World Cup. He never stopped training even while in recovery and focused on other areas that he could develop while unable to use his foot.

"This is Keshav's signature though — resilience and utter determination to achieve what he wants. He has worked very hard and remains humble throughout it all, never forgetting to thank the Almighty."

"He focuses on what he has to do. His goal right now is to be his best to ensure that South Africa wins — be it if he is batting or bowling," said Athmanand.

Athmanand said he will return to India for the finals if South Africa qualify. "It's been a marvellous opportunity to watch him play and achieve so much. It's also been remarkable for us as a family, because of our Indian roots and heritage."

"Playing in India has always been a dream for Keshav, so it's more than a dream come true now for him reached this milestone in the motherland."

"The local Indians have been in

awe of him and his spirituality — where he always acknowledges God before going on the field and when he is bowling," said Athmanand, adding that they are a deeply religious and spiritual family.

An erstwhile cricketer himself, Athmanand, who played for the then Natal B side, said when Maharaj was three years old, he started directing him towards cricket.

"As a cricketer myself and physical education teacher, I thought it was time to nudge Keshav in the right direction. So we started with backyard cricket practice and I was his slave-driver who took no nonsense."

"But Keshav stuck to his guns and trained with dedication. He always played way above his age level. When he was 11 years old, he was playing with 13-year-olds. That's how he made his debut with the Dolphins at 16," said Athmanand.

## U.S. WOMAN WITH RARE DOUBLE UTERUS EXPECTING BABIES IN BOTH

up on each separate uterus and fertilisation occurred separately," Shweta Patel, the obstetrician-gynecologist caring for Hatcher at the University of Alabama at Birmingham's Women and Infants Centre, told ABC's *Good Morning America*.

Although women with a double uterus often face pregnancy complications, all three of Hatcher's previous children were born healthy at full term. Pregnancies in both uteruses are exceedingly rare — Hatcher said

she was told the odds were one in 50 million — with the last widely known case occurring in Bangladesh in 2019 when Arifa Sultana, then 20, gave birth to healthy twins 26 days apart. Hatcher is hoping to go into labour and give medicated natural birth to both Baby A and Baby B, or "the girls" as she affectionately calls them, with a due date of Christmas.

Both are said to be "thriving". But the uteruses will contract at different times, which could be

minutes, hours or even days apart, and Kelsey and her husband Caleb Hatcher are aware Cesarean sections — for one, or both — could be needed, depending on how things unfold.

"They like to tell me at every doctor's visit that 'You are aware, we've never had a situation like this before, this is a new case for us altogether... But I feel like I have the best team for this situation and I'm at the best hospital at Alabama for what's going on," she said. — AFP