



NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

(For written reply)

QUESTION NO. 644 {NW762E}

INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO. 6 of 2021

DATE OF PUBLICATION: 05 March 2021

Mr N Singh (IFP) to ask the Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment:

Whether any recent (a) interventions and/or (b) oversight activities have been actioned by her department in order to facilitate the safe removal of toxic mercury waste substances from the shutdown of a certain chemical factory (name and details furnished); if not, what (i) interventions and/or (ii) oversight processes will immediately be put in place in order to ensure that such substances do no further harm to the surrounding environment; if so, what are the relevant details?

644. THE MINISTER OF FORESTRY, FISHERIES AND THE ENVIRONMENT REPLIES:

a) b)

- i. The Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries (DEFF) is currently in the process of facilitating the movement of the mercury containing waste materials from Cato Ridge, KwaZulu-Natal to Switzerland where it is being treated prior to its safe disposal. Since April 2020, 1082 (one thousand and eighty-two) tonnes of this waste has been removed from the Cato Ridge site in 57 (fifty-seven) sea freight containers.

In order to ensure strict regulatory oversight during the extraction, repackaging and transporting of this material, the Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, with the support of the political heads of the Department of Water and Sanitation; the Department of Labour; KwaZulu-Natal: Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs and the

Ethekewini Metropolitan Municipality formed an Intergovernmental Task Team in order to ensure strict compliance with, amongst others, the following:

- On site health and safety by evaluating the outcomes of the biomonitoring that is done on all the employees involved in the extraction and repackaging of this material. Furthermore, and to the extent that it relates to onsite health and safety, a detailed Environmental Monitoring Programme was designed to identify the risks associated with each aspect of the removal process;
 - Ensure compliance to road transport regulations; and
 - Monitor compliance with the Basel Convention which regulates the transboundary movement of hazardous waste.
- ii. There is also further work being undertaken to build a water-related inventory which will enable the authorities to make objective findings relative to the analysis done by the land owner. This information will be used to inform the Terms of Reference for the appointment of the services of an independent specialist to provide an independent recommendation around whether further remediation work is required after the waste is removed from this property.

There is an ongoing risk of theft of this material from the property, despite the many security measures that are being implemented. These incidents are reported to the South African Police Service as and when they occur, and have been elevated to the Minister of Police in order to request additional assistance, given the inherent risks associated with this material. It is anticipated that the removal of this waste will be finalised by June 2022.

Regards



MS B D CREECY, MP
MINISTER OF FORESTRY, FISHERIES AND THE ENVIRONMENT
DATE: 18-3-2021