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Daily News

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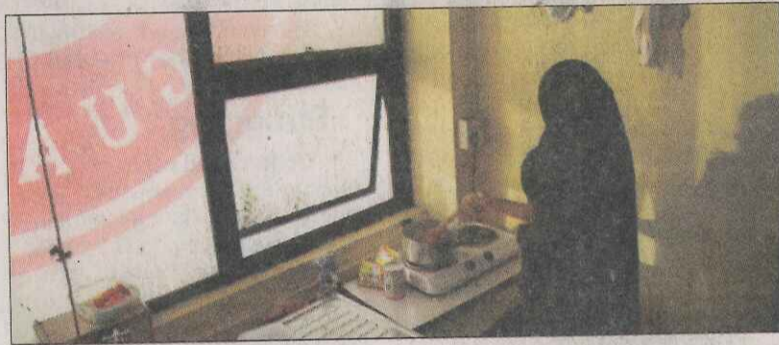
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Living in an advert

Wraparound banner gives tenants misery



The steam of a meal is trapped in a flat because the window cannot be properly opened.

PICTURES: MOTSHWARI MOFOKENG

NOSIPHO MNGOMA

A GIANT advertisement enveloping a Durban building has got tenants steamed up, saying it is depriving them of fresh air.

The canvas, advertising KFC, is wrapped around more than half of the Tasnim Centre building in Bertha Mkhize (Victoria) Street in the CBD.

It stretches from the 5th to the 12th floor of the 13-storey building. These are the residential floors. The lower floors are reserved for businesses.

According to Hafiz Mohamed, an agent who handles all the building's non-rental income on behalf of the owners, MHT Investments, the advert was put up last week.

He said it would run until "some time" next month.

Mohamed said no authorisation had been sought from the eThekweni Municipality, but said: "We have done both a structural and fire inspection to ensure that the site is 100% safe and we have the relevant approval from both the respective engineers."

The *Daily News* visited some of the tenants this week and found one woman cooking.

"The steam just stays in the house, it can't go anywhere because of this advert. They are suffocating us. They are making money at our expense and they can't even fix the lift for more than a year," she said.

In another flat, a man said the poor ventilation was to blame for his family being sick with flu.

"We can't breathe here; it's hot and stuffy," he said.

Tenants asked not to be named. They had received a notice asking for their "help" in keeping the advert in good condition and making sure nobody damaged or interfered with it in any way.

"We all cut up the last one, to get some air into our homes," said the man, referring to a previous wrap-around.

Destroying this one - read the notice - would invite a R500 fine and criminal charges.

Tenants had approached the Organisation of Civic Rights, a tenants advocacy group established in response to the Group Areas Act evictions at Warwick Junction in the 1980s.

Chairman Iqbal Mohamed (no relation to Hafiz) said tenants were distraught at being "boxed-in".

"We went there... and we were astounded. We will take legal action. To add insult to injury, they willy-nilly impose a fine and threaten criminal action, that is ridiculous," he said.

The organisation has written to the eThekweni Municipality's Health Safety and Social Services unit to intervene.

Contact

He said after initial contact with tenants, many appeared to be from other countries in Africa and they did not know who the owner of the building was.

"Tasnim Centre is one of many such buildings in Durban where migrant, immigrant or so-called foreign national tenants are rendered voiceless and are exploited because they are vulnerable. It is disgusting and utterly disrespectful and to an extent we should hold KFC accountable as well."

Iqbal Mohamed said the fast-food franchise had a "moral obligation" to assess where their advertisements were being placed and that they were not interfering with the welfare of tenants.

KFC directed the *Daily News* to the owners because it had followed legal procedures in obtaining the advertising space.

Iqbal Mohamed believes the canvas poses a health risk and is hazardous, while tenants are not being allowed to enjoy the full use of the premises they rent.

"They have to have some kind of legal relief because any lease, verbal or written, means the landlord is duty-bound to ensure that the lessee has full use and enjoyment and that it is habitable."

However, Hafiz Mohamed said they had not received any complaints from the tenants.

"We are not sure why they are



The outside of Tasnim Centre in the Durban CBD with the wraparound banner.

unhappy as the material used is mesh, which allows light and air to flow through... we have never asked the tenants to not open windows. We also feel they should have raised any concerns with us or the landlord. We could have addressed these issues."

He said the advertising income was beneficial to the tenants because it helped reduce the maintenance cost for the common areas, which in turn meant the tenants would not be burdened with increased rentals.

Hafiz Mohamed said the site would continue to be marketed.

The eThekweni Municipality was asked to comment on Wednesday but had not done so at time of publication.

The *Daily News*'s sister paper *The Mercury*, reported in June last year that the city had not been laying charges against those who broke building by-laws because it was not worth the time or effort and the paltry fines for conviction made it worthwhile for offenders to take the risk.

The admission was made in the Durban High Court by a city legal adviser, Mazo Maphumulo, in an application brought by the eThekweni Municipality against a beachfront shareblock building which had allowed a massive billboard to be erected on one side. The judge ordered the billboard be removed.



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Iron Man, too



Nine-year-old Luyanda Chamane of eManzimtoti could not resist striking the same pose as this monster Iron Man, part of the Ripley's Believe It Or Not exhibition at the Galleria Mall in eManzimtoti. Yesterday, shoppers snapped pictures of themselves next to oddities, artefacts and shrunken heads. Scores of

other thought-provoking and bizarre displays are part of the exhibition, with the collection representing more than 95 years of collecting by American cartoonist and adventurer, Robert Ripley, and his corporate heirs. The exhibition is free and runs until June 26.

PICTURE: ZANELE ZULU

Fury at new k-word rant

SIHLE MLAMBO

YET another racism storm is brewing after an unidentified white woman was caught on camera referring to black people by the k-word, threatening to run them over and shoot them.

The woman - who may be from Durban - had just become the victim of a smash-and-grab incident in Johannesburg.

Broadcaster eNCA aired the video yesterday, but it remains unclear when and where the incident took place and who the woman is.

"Let me tell you something, this is the type of police force we got, we've got low calibre people working. If I see a black person, I will drive them over, if I have a gun, I will shoot them."

"I said I don't want to deal with any k***** and I'm not prepared to deal with any k*****, I've just



A screen grab of the video.

been smashed and grabbed," she said in the video.

This was one of many retorts to police officers at the scene of the crime.

"I can tell you now the calibre of blacks in this town vary from the calibre of blacks in Durban.

They are opinionated, they're arrogant and they're just plain and simply useless."

A police officer tried, in vain, to calm the woman.

"Every single person that answers the phone here is a black person and they are clueless."

On social media, many people were outraged by the woman's actions - others saying she was no better than Penny Sparrow, the racist ex-estate agent who was found guilty of hate speech and handed a R150 000 fine at the Equality Court last week.

KFC advert removed from CBD building

BARBARA COLE

THE removal of a giant advertisement enveloping a city building was a victory for the tenants "who had given up all hope", said an advocacy group yesterday.

"They are jubilant and also secure in the knowledge that the landlord's threat of imposing a fine and taking criminal action against them (if they destroyed it) was a smoke screen to silence them," said Iqbal Mohamed, chairman of the Organisation of Civic Rights, the tenants advocacy group, which the worried tenants at the Tasnim Centre building in Bertha Mkhize (Victoria) Street turned to for help last week.

The banner was removed on Saturday, the day after the *Daily News* carried a front page lead story explaining how the tenants were "Living in an advert" and the wraparound banner, advertising KFC, "gives tenants misery".

Mohamed attributed the removal of the banner to the publicity about the issue.

Tenants had complained the banner, which stretched from the fifth to the 12th floor (the residential floors) of the 13-storey building, was depriving them of fresh air.

A tenant, who did not want to be named, said the steam from cooking stayed in her home because it could not go anywhere because of the advert.

"They're suffocating us. They are making money at our expense and they can't even fix the lift for more than a year,"



The face of Tasnim Centre after the wrap-around KFC advert was taken off the building.

PICTURE: MOTSHWARI MOFOKENG

she said.

Another tenant complained his flat was hot and stuffy and said "we can't breathe".

Tenants said they had received a notice asking for their "help" in keeping the advert in good condition and making sure nobody damaged or interfered with it.

One man recalled that people had cut a previous one up to let air into their homes.

Hafiz Mohamed, an agent handling the building's non-rental income on behalf of the owners, MHT Investments, said the advert went up the week before and that it would run until "some time" next month.

No authorisation had been

sought from the eThekweni Municipality but structural and fire inspections had been carried out to ensure the site was 100 % safe. Approval had been given by engineers.

He said he had not received any complaints from tenants and was unsure why they were unhappy because the material used was mesh.

He said the advertising income was beneficial to tenants because it helped reduce the maintenance cost for the common areas, which meant tenants would not get increased rentals.

He also said the site would continue to be marketed.

However, Iqbal Mohamed said the tenants were dis-



How the *Daily News* covered the story on Friday.

traught because they felt boxed in.

He felt the canvas banner posed a health risk and his organisation would take legal action. He felt KFC had "a moral obligation" to assess where their adverts were being placed and that they were not interfering with the welfare of tenants.

The municipality was asked to comment on the issue last week, but had not done so by the time the story was published. Further queries were sent to the municipality yesterday, but no response was received.

The Organisation of Civic Rights also sent a complaint about the signage covering much of the building to the municipality and was told the complaint had been logged and sent to the relevant environmental health practitioner who would handle the issue.

Iqbal Mohamed was not sure if the municipality had taken any action "but I want to believe that the article made people uncomfortable. In any event, the advert has gone and the tenants are happy," he said.