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End of the road for an untamed icon

consideration in the unfolding of a great tragedy, the tarring of Sani Pass, that the lobby just doesn't get.

For years now, the proponents behind tarring the pass have been skirmishing with a rainbow coalition of adventurers, 4x4 enthusiasts, environmentalists and the like over its future.

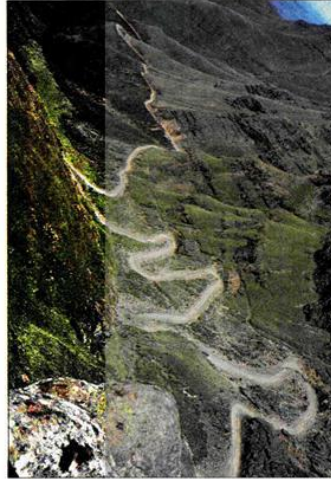
And the future, it seems, is a tarred surface according to the recommendations of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) that was released on Monday.

While the report – conducted by Arcus GIBB on behalf of the KZN Department of Transport – presents a comprehensive case in favour of tarring the pass, it also ignores some key objections to a hardened surface. Its principal flaw is that the report is premised on a set of assumptions that, as we write, is failing the test of what is likely to happen in the future.

Firstly, the report breezily implies that a tarred surface spells an end to the maintenance challenges associated with the pass currently. The report writers know better, and if they don't, they haven't done their homework and see how tarred roads are crumbling on the Lesotho side of the border, or they have turned a blind eye to the realities of road funding in South Africa.

Put bluntly, if the road authorities struggle with maintaining roads in urban areas, how will they cope in remote areas?

In this regard, negotiating a



potholed tarred road is infernally more dangerous than a gravel road, not to mention the practical matter of dealing with ice on a hardened surface.

What price then, we wonder, for stretching the truth to suit the paymaster?

Lean, mean and green

A conference on improving efficiency in the workplace is currently underway at the Royal Showgrounds. Brought to the city through the kind offices of the Pietermaritzburg Chamber of Business, the conference concerns itself with practices and procedures that ultimately leads to greater productivity. Contrary to perceptions, the workplace does not only refer to the factory floor or machine shop, but in fact all working environments, including the office.

Naturally, the elimination of waste and wasteful elements catapults the Lean process into the green realm.

Farm fresh

Is South Africa following the American trend of growth in local farmer's markets? A US Department of Agriculture report highlights a 17% growth in Farmer Markets over the last year, representing more than 1 000 new markets. There's now a total of 7 175 farmers' markets operating throughout the United States as more farmers are marketing their products directly to consumers than ever before.

Child 7Bn

The population of the world is expected to reach seven billion by October 31 amid warnings it could more than double by the end of the century. Child number seven billion is most likely to be born in the Asia Pacific region, where population growth is higher than anywhere else in the world.

Dotty car

It's all in the dot, say the brains behind a scheme to microdot cars in South Africa to deter thieves. Microdots, smaller than a size of a full-stop, are laser-printed dots that are superimposed across the body of the car and contain vital vehicle information that can be used to determine if a vehicle is stolen or not.

Last word

Do not argue with an idiot. He will drag you down to his level and beat you with experience.

