

# ‘Oscar got no special treatment in prison’

Jail boss wants to open doors to assure the public

TANKISO MAKHETHA

OSCAR Pistorius didn't receive preferential treatment while in jail at the Kgosi Mampuru II Correctional Centre in Pretoria. And the authorities plan to open the facility to prove their case. "We will start opening the doors of our facilities to allow the media to see that we did not give him preferential treatment," said Correctional Services acting regional commissioner Mandla Mkabela. He was speaking at the Gauteng regional 30-year service recognition ceremony yesterday morning. Warders from various Correctional Services facilities across the country were given awards. Mkabela said the department had been on the receiving end of negative publicity from the media, and opening the facility would change the public's perceptions of what prisons did. "We want people to see what we are doing. People think that Oscar was in a fancy cell while he was here, but he wasn't; it

was a normal cell. "There are perceptions and myths about the department. Those are just myths," Mkabela said. There were numerous claims about the former Paralympian who was serving a five-year sentence after being convicted of culpable homicide for killing his girlfriend Reeva Steenkamp in February 2013. He is serving the remainder of his term under house arrest. Beeld newspaper showed a picture of him enjoying his 29th birthday at the weekend with a group of young children, relatives of his aunt and uncle, and their friends. The State has appealed Pistorius's conviction, and the outcome of the appeal will be revealed in the next few weeks. Mkabela said being a prison warder was a difficult calling that went unappreciated and attracted a great deal of negative publicity, and that was one of the reasons it was important for the department to honour its long-serving members. "What you do is not a simple feat," Mkabela told the



NO PICNIC: Oscar Pistorius was in an 'ordinary prison cell'.

warders. "One has to overlook the challenges that come with being a warder, especially for as long as 30 years. "Being responsible for convicts and overseeing their rehabilitation to make sure that they go back into society as better people is not an easy task," Mkabela said. He added that the department was embarking on a project which would focus on nurturing scarce skills in order

for it to improve its services. These skills were attributed to the medical profession, nursing and social workers. "What you are doing is a scarce skill in itself; what you need is skill, experience and knowledge that cannot be found anywhere else," he told the warders. His sentiments were echoed by one of the recipients of the awards, Richard Malebane, who served at a number of Correctional Services centres across the country and is now in a senior position at Kgosi Mampuru. "The most challenging thing about Correctional Services is that it is dynamic, and one does not stop learning. It has all the professions in one," Malebane said. He added that one of the most challenging aspects of his profession was the unpredictability of convicts. "These are humans. We have to deal with them, their families and normal civilians on a daily basis. You have to switch characters between all three of them. But it's part of the job," he said.

## It's back to the past for Newtown Junction

LERATO MBANGENI

NEWTOWN Junction has unveiled a new side to the young mall in the hope of luring back the creatives and artists who had moved away from the space. Last night, the former Market Square became WORK SHOP NEW TOWN, and the legendary potato sheds were revamped to join Newtown's cultural and architectural history to modern trend. The retail project houses over 100 local fashion, design and lifestyle brands. Guests sipped sparkling wine and took in the colourful and edgy creations on sale. Adri van Zyl of Atelier Interiors, who created the architectural concept of the revamped space alongside Julian McGowan, said: "Working within a heritage space, you're given the rare opportunity to take something old and familiar and create something exciting, new and relevant. "But the trick is to add to the story and not just retell it. The potato sheds, which were built in 1911, and the surrounding neighbourhood are steeped in significance, and our goal was to celebrate that within this listed, magnificent structure." McGowan said they wanted to confront visitors with a sophisticated homage to past glories. The retail space is divided into designated areas, shops and booths, which he said "pay tribute to the gold mines, markets, livestock stalls, cultural icons, industry and office workers that made Newtown the gateway to the city more than 100 years ago."

## Funny you should say that...



ON A ROLL: Stand-up comedian and new *Daily Show* host Trevor Noah on a visit back to South Africa for the Comedy Central festival hosted at Silverstar Casino yesterday.

PICTURE: DUMISANI DUBE

KATE MORRISSEY

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THE RED carpet for Trevor Noah's opening night at the International Comedy Festival teemed with South African comedians, Comedy Central execs and a couple of shrubs. While the shrubs, who refused interviews because they are shrubs, entertained red carpet goers with their antics, both the comedians and executives celebrated the opening night as the beginning of big things to come for African comedy. Alex Okosi, senior vice-president for Viacom, the parent company of Comedy Central, acknowledged the representation from across Africa in the line-up for the 60-comedian festival. "I think people will get to recognise the amazing talent we have on the continent," he said. Evert van der Veer, head of Comedy Central in Africa,

said that they'd been dreaming of starting an international festival on the continent since Comedy Central Africa launched in 2011. "I can't really believe I'm standing here," he said. He echoed Okosi's excitement for the potential exposure for African comedians. "There is a lot of good comedy in South Africa," Van der Veer said. "I don't think the world knows." John Vlismas, one of the comedians performing later

in the week, had nothing but compliments for the line-up Comedy Central has chosen. He saw this as a pivotal moment for local comedy. He called Noah the "tactical boom" that could draw attention to South Africa. "It's letting the comedy world know to come here," Vlismas said. "People haven't thought of it." Tickets are still on sale at Computicket for shows happening later in the festival. @bgirledukate

## Red carpet fit for King Mswati only

MBABANE: If the Oscars or Golden Globes ever desire an African venue for their star-studded shows, they won't be choosing Swaziland now that police have banned walking on red carpets by anyone other than King Mswati. "The use of red carpets has come under strict monitoring as the Royal Swaziland Police service has been removing such carpets

during glamorous social events," the Times of Swaziland reported on Tuesday. Carpets of any colour that are used to evoke status and privilege for those who walk them run afoul of the kingdom's police, reports state. "There is no law that gives the police the basis for their actions," the newspaper noted. For several years, a red carpet has been rolled out for

Mswati as he attends special events and boards or disembarks from his private jet at the national airport. The ban on commoners walking the red carpet has never been publicly announced. Police simply show up and remove any carpet before it's used. At last year's Businesswoman of the Year Award gala presentation, organisers "rolled out a red carpet,

which was however removed by the police", the newspaper reported. When this year's event was held, the event organisers chose to use a white carpet for guests, who included the country's prime minister. However, the colour change made no difference. The police also confiscated the white carpet. - Foreign Service



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