

Top cops earmarked for dismissal in ‘witch-hunt’

It is sinister and it makes no sense, says general

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THE PURGE of high-ranking police officials seen as too close to suspended national commissioner General Riah Phiyega appears to have started in earnest – two officials have been targeted so far for dismissal.

This week, police spokesman Lieutenant-General Solomon Makgale was slapped with a notice of intention of suspension and given seven days to respond – this despite an incomplete parliamentary inquiry into his conduct.

Yesterday deputy national commissioner of corporate service management Lieutenant-General Christabel Nobulele Mbekela was also served with a notice of suspension.

In a move she described as a witch-hunt, she was served a Section 35 discharge is known within police circles as a golden handshake because those who receive it are paid out the rest of their contract

in full. Soon after being slapped with the notice, Mbekela applied for an interdict against acting police commissioner Lieutenant-General Khomotso Phahlane and Police Minister Nathi Nhleko in the Labour Court.

After The Star sent Phahlane questions about this, Mbekela received the suspension notice. The Star understands the Labour Court case was withdrawn two weeks ago as Phahlane told the court Mbekela's termination was not imminent.

According to the court papers, Mbekela was attempting to interdict the acting commissioner from restructuring the top management of the police while he was in a temporary position.

"The first respondent is holding the post temporarily but his arbitrary haste and malicious acts and intentions must be stopped before more damage is done," Mbekela said in the papers.

She said that at a meeting, Phahlane told her even though he was aware the minister had signed and approved an application she had made to defer her retirement for three years, he wanted to release her from the service.

"That the first respondent had me in his sight as his first victim shows his malicious, arbitrary intention. He is a law unto himself," Mbekela said.

She said she wanted her retirement deferred because she was working on four projects that hadn't been completed.

Mbekela told The Star she felt that she had no choice but to take the matter to court.



FIGHTING FOR HER JOB: Christabel Nobulele Mbekela



NOTICE OF SUSPENSION: Solomon Makgale

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."

Trevor Noah has Silverstar in stitches



ON A ROLL: Stand-up comedian and new *The 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

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TREVOR Noah had the crowd rolling last night at the opening for Comedy Central's first International Comedy Festival.

Despite intense criticism from some American viewers of *The Daily Show* and a recent magazine article that called his presence on the show a "train wreck", the audience at the Silverstar Casino, west of Joburg, had nothing but praise for the golden boy of South African comedy.

"LAUGHING OUT LOUD is tiring. What a night, Trevor Noah was hilarious," tweeted Elle Franco.

Leander Kock (@LeaLeaLea) agreed, writing "@TrevorNoah Fantastic show last night. Good to have you home for a bit".

The topics of Noah's performance ranged from the Pikitup protests and Zuma jokes, to difficulties with his neighbour's dog in New York.

Pikitup workers, he said, trashed the city when protesting, only to pick up the garbage they toppled once they returned to work.

Keeping with what he is known for, Noah also produced a gamut of voice impressions.

Rob Forbes (@RobForbesDJ) tweeted his approval, saying: "So @trevor-noah singing baritone as a sad taxi driver in an opera is one of my favourite comedy bits in ages. Look out for it."

Other audience members were just as impressed with Noah's co-performers – Tats Nkonzo, Will Sylvince and Schaulk Bezuidenhout.

"What a great night! Comedy is alive! Trevor Noah was superb but MAN @TatsNkonzo... Never saw that coming. I was in tears!" tweeted Zweli B Mbhele (@TheZweli).

John Vlismas, a comedian performing later in the evening, praised Noah's ability to select the "best new comedians" to perform with him.

The show, called *Nation Wild*, kicked off a historic festival for South African comedy.

With over 60 comedians from across Africa performing over the next week, the festival hopes to make Africa an annual destination for comedians worldwide.

The head of Comedy Central in Africa, Evert van der Veer, said the festival had been a dream for the company since it launched in 2011, but it only came together in the past three months. "I can't really believe I'm standing here," Van der Veer said before the show.

He said he hoped the festival would open doors for other African comedians.

"There is a lot of good comedy in South Africa. I don't think the world knows," he said.

Alex Okosi, the senior VP

at Viacom, the parent company for Comedy Central, echoed Van der Veer.

"We want to build this as a definitive comedy festival for people to come from around the world," Okosi said.

Vlismas called Noah the "tactical boom" that thrust South African comedians into the spotlight. Now the Comedy Central festival is letting comedians around the world know they can come here and find an audience, he said.

On the red carpet, a pair of shrubs entertained the crowd along with comedians like Dusty Rich until Noah arrived.

When asked about the issues with his ratings in the US, Noah said gathering and holding an audience was something he had to work on daily.

"It's a marathon," he said.

Noah's show, which runs until Saturday, is sold out.

@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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