



REALITY BITES

Shawn Mpsane airs her laundry Page 6



MOUNTAIN TO CLIMB

I'll be back, says cyclist Nic Dlamini insight



KING KAIZER

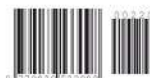
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State funerals 'rip-off'

Minister orders criminal charges after taxpayers' millions spent on VIP burials



Crocia Events owner Pheladi Mphahlele and her husband, Crocia project manager Sammy Mashita.

By GRAEME HOSKEN

● The funerals of Winnie Madikizela-Mandela and two other ANC struggle stalwarts cost taxpayers R76m in what the department of public works has branded a giant rip-off.

Public works & infrastructure minister Patricia de Lille has instructed her officials to lay fraud charges against the company that staged the funerals of Madikizela-Mandela, Zola Skweyiya and Billy Modise, who all died in 2018, for allegedly inflating their invoices.

She is also moving to cap the amount state and official funerals can cost the taxpayer.

For the funerals of Madikizela-Mandela and Skweyiya, the department spent R7m to hire padded chairs, leather couches and scatter cushions; R247m for drapery; R470,000 for services; R635,000 for orchestra equipment and R30,000 to dig three graves.

But that's not all. The huge bill, according to invoices the Sunday Times has seen, excluded venue hire such as that of Soweto's Orlando Stadium, where 37,000 people attended Madikizela-Mandela's funeral service.

However, Sammy Mashita, project manager of Crocia Events, which won a two-year tender in 2017 to provide infrastructure for all state funerals, insists that he saved the state money.

He said the department would have paid "R274m for services rendered" had his company not pointed out inefficiencies in the tender.

"This was because of the stupidity of those who compiled the tender specifications. They were more than willing to pay that amount even after we warned them of their glaring stupidity," he told the Sunday Times this week.

"We actually saved the state huge sums of money because of our business conscience. We told them if they paid us the full amount it would be robbery. For what they were prepared to pay, and what they actually paid us, they could have bought everything that they would ever need for all future funerals."

Crocia is owned by Pheladi Mphahlele, who



THE HOME STRETCH

Thobile Ndawana of Cape Town shows a perfect balance of beauty, style and flexibility at the L'Ormarins Queen's Plate horse racing event in Kenilworth yesterday. The race was first run in 1861 in honour of Queen Victoria. See Page 6. Picture: Esa Alexander

“We have given the instruction to the relevant officials to lay criminal charges against the service provider”

Patricia de Lille



In December 2018 married Mashita in a three-day society wedding at which US R&B star Anthony Hamilton performed.

De Lille said “red flags” around excessive funeral spending warranted high-level investigations by her department’s anti-corruption unit. She told the Sunday Times that she had asked the unit to investigate whether proper processes were followed in appointing Crocia, and to report back to her by next month.

“We have given the instruction to the relevant officials to lay criminal charges against the service provider,” she said.

“I have also supported recommendations to investigate possible irregularities that may have been perpetrated in other funerals supported by this service provider.”

Some of the invoices Crocia gave the Sunday Times show that:

● For Madikizela-Mandela’s 10-day, R37m memorial and funeral, taxpayers paid R624,000 to hire 12 “air coolers”; R185,990 for pot plants, greenery and flowers; R18,000 for 300m of red ceremonial rope; R420,000 for 3,500 serviettes (hiring them at R90 per napkin per day); R770,000 for 10m of temporary fencing; R638,950 for carpets and drapery; and R696,000 for orchestral equipment.

● For Skweyiya’s R28.9m funeral at the Pretoria East Christian Revival Church, the state paid R31m to hire drapery, carpets and Astro-Turf; R50,000 for 500 serviettes; and R96,792 for plants, flowers and greenery.

● The funeral of Modise, who was buried in Johannesburg’s West Park Cemetery, cost the state R10m.

The R76m figure also includes 15% in “management fees” loaded onto agreed quotes for

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BIG STORY

Power struggle: inside the latest Eskom dispute

By QANITAH HUNTER

ANC detractors of public enterprises minister Pravin Gordhan want political responsibility for Eskom to be transferred to Gwede Mantashe’s energy ministry.

After Friday’s resignation of Eskom chair Jabu Mabuza, the Sunday Times has been reliably told that more board members are expected to quit this week as load-shedding takes its toll.

Among them is Sindiswa Mahoso-Koyana who tendered her resignation on Thursday.

Deputy President David Mabuza brought simmering tension with Gordhan to a head this week by accusing the minister and the Eskom board of misleading President Cyril



Pravin Gordhan

Ramaphosa into announcing there would be no load-shedding between December 17 and January 13.

Eskom imposed stage 2 power cuts on Wednesday, embarrassing the president and precipitating Jabu Mabuza’s apologetic resignation.

Sources close to Gordhan said the deputy president was disgruntled because the minister had blocked his allies’ appointments at state-owned companies.

ANC Women’s League president Bathabile Dlamini is one of the leading figures campaigning for Eskom to move to the energy department. Page 2

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INSIDE
Three pages on Matric 2019, plus comment and a vision for education’s future
Pages 8&9, Insight and Lifestyle



READY TO GO
New Absa boss itching to get stuck in Business Times

Christmas is for giving, and giving away

By ALEX PATRICK

● Men who gave their partners vacuum cleaners for Christmas have discovered that their ideas sucked.

Vacuum cleaners and kitchen utensils top the list of presents being returned to Takealot, suggesting domestic bliss was in short supply in many households on Christmas Day.

One woman told the online retailer: “My husband bought kitchen appliances but doesn’t know what the house needs.”

Another said she had underestimated her partner’s festive appetite when she gave him an article of clothing for Christmas: “Bought it as a gift for my hubby but it doesn’t fit after holidays.”

The country’s biggest buying and selling site, Gootree, said thousands of January list-

ings were unwanted presents, many still in sealed packaging.

On Boxing Day, a dozen hoverboards were listed for sale “after the boys failed to live up to the hype and started receiving bad press about injuries that they caused”, said spokesperson Estelle Lethe.

The most unusual listing she spotted was an engagement ring.

“I guess it didn’t go as planned.”

For the third year, a charity store in Johannesburg amassed a mountain of new stock with a December 28 Facebook appeal for unwanted presents.

Oliver Quambusch, founder of the Hope Charity Shop in Melville – which supports

Hotel Hope Ministries foster homes – said:

“You can see the gifts have been unwrapped. The person looked up, said ‘thanks’, and immediately rewrapped them.”

“So far we’ve received a lot of books and kitchenware. One example is an ice bucket – still perfectly enclosed in the box. That’s one thing I’ll definitely re-member.”

The shops have received kitchen appliances that were given as Christmas presents in the 1970s and 1980s, many of these still in the original packaging.

Said Quambusch: “People are so afraid to let go. These items could have been cleared out years ago and made other people happy.”



Years ago, when Treviso was home for 15 months, I could thread my way unfurling through its winding streets at 2am, dizzy on local prosecco. A recent flying trip meant packing in the key sights enclosed by the Italian town's stone walls – and revisiting old routes. Treviso can't compete with nearby Venice for treasures, but here, tour groups and tourist tat are rare in comparison to cobbled streets, frescoes and arcaded streets.

8am to 10am

The peal of bells rolling across town is an ambient alarm clock. The early hours are for coffee and pastries (try Cooole on Via Martiri della Libertà) and exploring shadowy churches.

The Duomo or cathedral is a bubble of green-hued domes. Pause to gaze upon pixelated sea creatures in a small courtyard to the church's right: mosaics that date back to Roman times. The nearby baptistry is said to be built on a pagan temple. Seek out the Titian (an Annunciation) and the crypt inside.

A coin or two in a box will illuminate the crypt's frescoes and a few immaculate marble tombs for recently deceased bishops and town heavyweights that stand in stark contrast to the fading script and symbols on tombstones underfoot.

Also worth a visit is the mighty San Nicolò (1348) where the seminary has a painting of a person wearing spectacles for the first time in art history, and the Loggia dei Cavalieri, a "covered square" where knights and nobles once gathered for a bit of R&R. One can still see remnants of friezes dating back to the 1300s, stylised horsemen galloping about the exterior.

10am to 11am

Boutiques and shops will be open, and your wallet may be sorely tempted by the latest summer sandals at €730 a pair. Via Calmaggiore is the main vein for shoppers to tap. Treviso is also the hometown of silver-haired Luciano Benetton and a flagship store stands near the Piazza dei Signori.

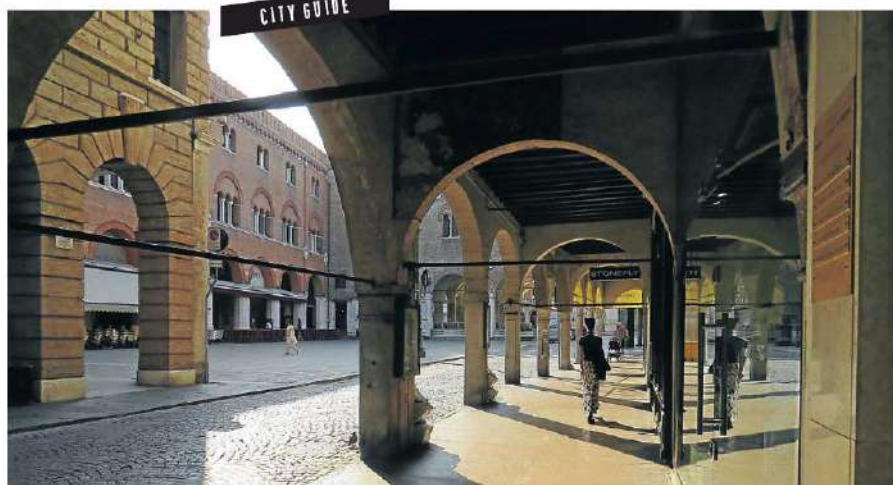
If in museum or gallery mode, newer sites include the renovated Museo Luigi Ballo, with 20th-century works including many by Arturo Martini, and the Gallerie delle Prigioni, designed by architect Tobia Scarpa, Carlo Scarpa's son.

Lunch

Stroll through the alleys behind Piazza Dei Signori and either begin or end at the pasticceria or morning fish market – on a small island in the middle of Cagnan river. A vegetable market sets up in the adjoining Piazza San Paolo. Muscoli's (Via Pescheria 23) is an old osteria with locals ordering the odd ombra or small glass of wine and snacks like crostini.

Nap time

Riposo Treviso believes in slowing down over lunch. Much is closed, (some places as late as 3.30pm) to the ire of tourists who only got out and about at 10.30am.



Above, Treviso's stone sidewalks and cobbled streets are just a 30-minute train ride from Venice. Below left, the domes of the Cathedral; a display of sweets in a shop window, and entering Treviso through of the ancient 'gates' in the city wall. Pictures: Connor Cullinan & Janine Stephen

OFF THE WALL

Make the most of 24 hours in Treviso, birthplace of sweet tiramisu and arches to rival Venice, writes **Janine Stephen**



sections of river flow alongside, and one can take a shady walk on top of the section between Porta Santi Quaranta and Porta San Tomaso (finish up with a spritz at one of the bars here, a lively sundowner gathering spot). The evening stroll or passeggiata fills the streets with well-dressed Trevisans looking to window shop and socialise.

Dinner

The heart of Treviso is Piazza dei Signori and a drink under the lovely arches of the war-scarred Palazzo dei Trecento, at Bar Beltrame, is a pleasure in itself. Wherever one dines, dessert has to be fluffy tiramisu, claimed to be invented in Treviso at Le Beccherie by one Ada Campeol as a pick-me-up after her son's birth. Le Beccherie (lebeccherie.it) remains open, although reportedly with new owners, but we missed it in the end. For real pudding fans, the Tiramisu World Cup finals will be held in November.

And so to bed

A well-regarded option for those wanting the conveniences of a hotel is Maison Mathilda (maisonmathilda.com). But thanks to Airbnb, Treviso is affordable even for South Africans and we stayed in a stylish architect's apartment with a sliver of a Duomo dome visible from the window.

3.30pm to 7pm

Hire a bicycle (try andrealeonzi.it) and pedal about town – or on a track along the River Sile that winds out of town and ends in a marshy area where ruined barges are quietly returning to nature. There are swans and graffiti on route. Perhaps start at Dante

Bridge, where a memorial is testimony to the words written in Dante Alighieri's Divine Comedy of this very place: "where [the river] Cagnan and the Sile meet".

Alternatively, stroll around (or atop) the city walls that kept Treviso largely safe until it was bombed in World War 2. Canals and



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