

Action promised against taxis stopping illegally

KHAYA SENGANI

METRO Police has promised stern action against taxis and buses which make dangerous or illegal stops to pick up passengers or let them alight.

"There are designated areas for the taxis to off load and pick up passengers, but drivers are ignoring them.

"Taxis operating within the CBD are not allowed to stop anywhere," said Metro Police Spokeswoman, Snr Supt Joyce Khuzwayo.

Fines for stopping in illegal zones are as follows: Stopping where there is no taxi stop – R200; stopping where there is no taxi stop sign and the taxi has no permit for the route –

R2 500; and R1 500 for obstructing a bus stop with a taxi whether by loading or off loading or by ranking.

Road closures

From 15 December to 15 January, road closures will be in force from Friday afternoon to Sunday to prevent

minibuses, buses and taxis from entering the beachfront.

"Metro Police requests taxi and bus drivers pick up passengers and let them alight only at specially marked taxi stops to ease traffic congestion," said Khuzwayo.

Police will be focusing on traffic violations, drinking in

public places, overnight sleeping, and beachfront braaiing.

Unroadworthy vehicles would be targeted and motorists who are found to be in frequent violation of the rules of the roads will have their vehicles impounded and will be fined.

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IN BRIEF

City cops bag most golds

METRO Police won 12 medals at the national metropolitan police games in Pretoria.

Team eThekweni was the best overall in the games, with women officers claiming the most medals.

Gold medals were won in darts, volleyball, shooting, cycling and golfing.

The department took home silver and bronze in soccer, cycling, pool, netball and athletics.

Metro Police spokeswoman Snr Supt Joyce Khuzwayo said the eThekweni team even excelled off the field when they foiled a robbery in the Pretoria CBD.

"It shows our members respond even when they are off duty," said Khuzwayo.

Ministers back development

THE 18th conference of African Ministers of Industry, at the Inkosi Albert Luthuli ICC this week, has adopted 49 programmes aimed at accelerating industrial development on the continent.

The programmes focus on industrial policy, upgrading production and trade capacities, promoting infrastructure and energy for industrial development, human resources development for industry, industrial innovation, research and development, technology development, financing, and resource mobilisation.

Bright idea for robots

THE eThekweni Transport Authority (ETA) has begun a campaign to replace incandescent traffic signal bulbs with energy efficient light-emitting-diodes (LEDs).

The LEDs save up to 70% of electricity used by traffic signals and have a five-year lifespan, as opposed to the three months for incandescent light bulbs.

The ETA said the LEDs required less maintenance, and would help the City meet its target of cutting electricity use by 10%.

The authority said 750 signals needed to be replaced by December.

Local muso comes tops

ASPIRING Durban gospel musician, Lungisani Ntuli, has won himself R100 000 and a recording contract in a reality television show.

Ntuli received 40 000 votes from the viewers of SABC2's *I Want To Sing Gospel*.

His debut album will be recorded live in Durban in December, and is expected to be on the shelves early next year.

Red tar for Southern Freeway

KEN MCHUNU

EFFORTS to improve public transport are under way on the Inkosi Albert Luthuli Freeway, as the laying of red tar to mark public transport lanes begins.

Red-tarred lanes were introduced on a 3km stretch of the Western Freeway last year. And the City's transport authorities said they were satisfied with the

"remarkable improvement" the lane has brought during morning and afternoon peak-time traffic.

The new 8km public transport lane would run from the Quality Street bridge to Dalbridge on the Inkosi Albert Luthuli Freeway. Red tar would be laid in both directions.

The eThekweni Transport Authority's

Deputy Head of Strategic Planning, Logan Moodley, said the red tar would be laid on a newly-created stretch of road. This, he said, would in no way decrease the road capacity.

"There has been a concern the lane would reduce capacity for private vehicles. This is not true. We will expand the road in both directions so there will be no interference with the remaining lanes by public transport vehicles," said Moodley.

He warned that private vehicles must stay clear of

the lane, or receive "friendly warnings", which would be followed by stiff fines.

CCTV cameras with number plate detecting technology would be installed to cover the lanes, as has been done on the Western Freeway.

"Contractors are now ready to move in and get started with work," he said.

The R150-million project is expected to encourage more people to use public transport ahead of the 2010 World Cup. Moodley said the lane would cut travel time for public transport vehicles.

He said about 4 000 buses and minibus taxis travelled in both directions on the freeway during morning and afternoon peak hours.

"The proposal to open the lane to private vehicles during off-peak times has been evaluated and is problematic from an operational perspective.

"There is little congestion during off-peak hours and so no need to open the public transport lane to private vehicles," he said.

Drivers are urged to drive with caution on this route while construction is under way.

"Minor delays can be expected due to lane closures," said Moodley.

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BON VOYAGE: Tracey Collier and Emelda Mhlongo are among a delegation of Durban crafters who are off to a trade expo in Berlin

Beaders pack for Berlin

METRO REPORTER

A TEAM of crafters from Durban is getting ready to leave for a big international trade expo in Germany where they will promote local crafts, sell their goods and return with new contacts and export orders.

"I am so excited to be going overseas," said Emelda Mhlongo, one of the eight crafters who will attend Import Shop Berlin, courtesy of Tradepoint South Africa Durban, a United Nations and City-backed organisation that helps small businesses access global markets.

"I am grateful Tradepoint is giving us this opportunity to compete in an international market. I am looking forward to seeing what other exhibitors are showing and what the European women wear. It will help us with our colour choices and selection."

The annual exhibition runs from 12 to 16 November and brings together arts and craft retailers and manufacturers and buyers of high-quality ethnic and natural products.

This is the second year that a Tradepoint South Africa Durban delegation is going to Berlin.

Wonderful

Mhlongo's small business, Ngentokozo, employs five other women part-time doing beadwork. "It will be wonderful if I can generate a steady income so that I can employ the other beaders full-time," she said.

"This trip has a special meaning for me. My younger sister Nonhlanhla, who taught me beading, was going to go to France on a similar trip, but she died last year before she could go. So I feel there is a spiritual reason as

well that I am going to Berlin." Monique Labat, General Manager of Tradepoint South Africa Durban, said: "What pleases me most is the level of professionalism that is developing and growing in our top crafters – not only in the production of their crafts, but also in presentation and in their business skills.

"International trade shows such as Import Shop Berlin have a value beyond selling crafts and making contacts. These crafters will be part of the international market for a week.

"The eight crafters will absorb that knowledge, bring it back and understand the importance of maintaining contact with potential buyers in Germany. The follow-ups directly after the crafters return will be monitored by Tradepoint and we will assist with export orders," Labat said.

New rank for Umlazi's Z-section

KEN MCHUNU

THE City last week opened the R3.5-million KwaMnyandu taxi rank at Umlazi's Z-section, one of 35 to be built from a budget of R150-million in the next few years.

Deputy Head of public transport at the eThekweni Transport Authority, Erik Moller, said, this was part of the City's commitment to

changing the face of the taxi industry for the benefit of commuters.

He said the taxi industry deserved to be treated with dignity, as it was the most popular mode of transport, with some 16 000 minibus taxis carrying 60% of the commuters who travel to and from central Durban. During the Remant Alton strike, this figure shot up to 80%.

"Had it not been for taxis, the city would have come to a virtual standstill during the strike," Moller said.

He said the biggest hurdle to the City building new taxi ranks was getting property owners to release land. An example had been the lengthy tussle with the Ingonyama Trust over land for the KwaMnyandu rank.

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R63m in fines collected

THE City has collected about R63-million of the R700-million it is owed in outstanding fines, thanks to its "half-price" amnesty campaign, said Metro Police spokeswoman, Snr Supt Joyce Khuzwayo.

"The city has a successful collections rate thus far and we are still working on reaching the 100% target.

"We hope to collect half of

the R700-million owed before the cut-off date, 30 November."

Khuzwayo was particularly impressed with the reaction of taxi owners to the campaign.

"The amount of money they are paying is high because most of them own more than one taxi.

"They are being very cooperative." – Metro Reporters