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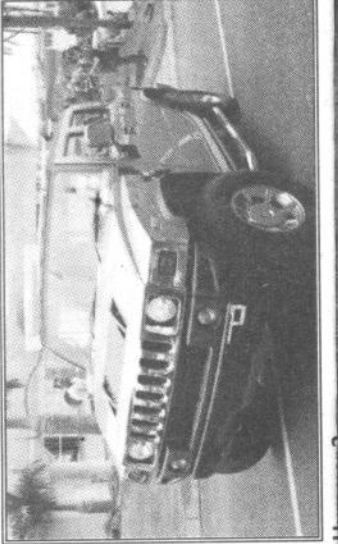
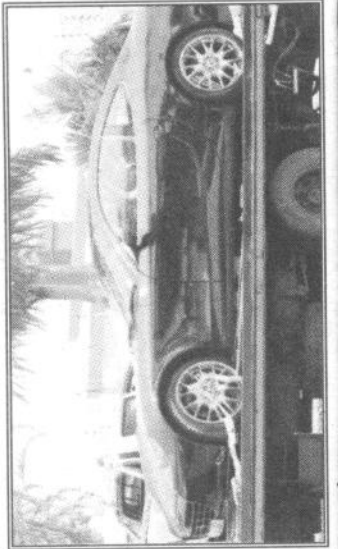
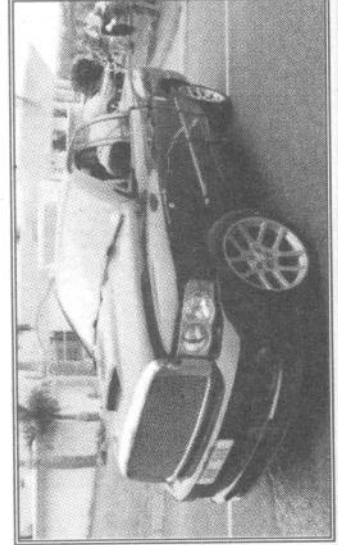
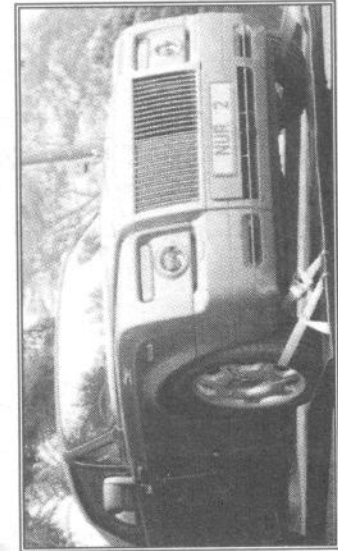
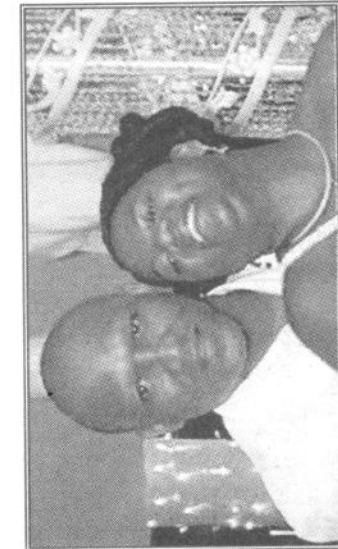
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HIGHFLYERS DOWNED

Mpisane couple's fleet of luxury cars seized in dawn operation

TANIA BROUGHTON

S'BU AND Chauwn Mpisane are now a two-car family, with only one BMW and one Range Rover, after the authorities confiscated their fleet of luxury cars yesterday.

The Asset Forfeiture Unit seized the cars, valued at around R22 million, in a dawn operation at the couple's La Lucia, KwaZulu-Natal, home yesterday.

One by one, the luxury cars - a Ferrari, two Rolls-Royces, two Porsches, a Maserati, a Hummer and a Dodge Ram - were carefully driven out of the couple's mirror-door, showroom-like garage and either lined up to be hoisted onto flat-bed trucks or driven to a warehouse under the care of Ian Wyles Auctioneers.

The operation drew a crowd of neighbours, and motorists slowed down to see what was happening,

some of them hooting. "Are they taking their cars again?" one shouted out of his window, in reference to a similar seizure by the SA Revenue Service a few years ago.

The impounding of the cars yesterday, authorised by Pietermaritzburg High Court Acting Judge Nkosinathi Chibi, follows an intensive investigation by the Hawks into allegations that Chauwn, as the sole member of Zikhulise Cleaning Maintenance and Transport CC, had submitted false documents to obtain Construction Industry Development Board gradings that were then used to obtain tenders from the Department of Public Works valued at more than R140m.

The court order authorises the restraint of property to that value, including their houses, 62 vehicles, household goods and money in their bank accounts.

If they are convicted, the prop-

erty can be forfeited to the state.

The order was granted secretly "in chambers" last week, but the couple got wind of it, and S'bu was waiting, freshly showered at their monogrammed gate to greet Asset Forfeiture Unit investigators, who arrived with armed police, at 6am. Chauwn left for work soon afterwards. S'bu stayed until the towing began.

The home consists of two sea-view properties that have been merged as one, with one half as the garage for the vehicles.

Investigators who went inside to draw up an inventory of assets said there were rows upon rows of shelves of women's shoes spread over two rooms and "more television sets than Dion Wired".

Court-appointed curator Trevor White - who is tasked with finding all the couple's known assets, restraining them and ensuring they are kept safe - confirmed that only

the luxury cars were seized yesterday, and the couple had been left with two. They can continue to live in their home and use their household goods, but they cannot dispose of them. Vehicles used in the two businesses, Zikhulise Cleaning and Zikhulise Auto Restorers CC, would also not be seized, so that business could continue.

Asset Forfeiture Unit investigator Akbar Ally, who conducted an investigation into their assets, said the couple, married in community of property, had two bonds on the R20 million Addison Road property, one for R5.2m and another a suretyship of R7m in favour of Sars.

Chauwn also owned another property in Cowies Hill, worth R1.4m. This property was also substantially bonded.

Ally said most of the luxury vehicles were "freehold", with no money owing on them.

The Ferrari, he said, was worth

about R1.8m, two Rolls-Royce Phantoms worth R6m and R4.8m, a Porsche Cayenne R880 000, a Maserati R950 000, and two Lamborghinis (which have recently been sold) were worth about R2.2m each.

It is understood that some of the cars could not be started because they had flat batteries and many of them were not insured because they were not driven regularly.

The couple also have two armoured BMWs and two Hummers. While it was recently reported that S'bu had become the "face of Bentley" in KZN, it is understood that this car was on loan and he has not purchased it.

The order also covers a property in Briardene owned by Zikhulise Cleaning and the Mpisanes' interests in Zikhulise Auto Restorers.

Ally estimates the value of assets restrained by the order to be about R50m, and White has been tasked with identifying further assets.

Businesswoman due in court on 119 fraud counts

BUSINESSWOMAN Chauwn Mpisane is expected to be in the dock of a Durban court this morning, facing fresh charges that she fraudulently secured contracts valued at R140 million from the Department of Public Works by submitting false and forged documents.

Mpisane and her company Zikhulise Cleaning, Maintenance and Transport are submitting false invoices to the taxman, fraud involving R4.7m for allegedly submitting false invoices to the taxman. She is also charged separately with defeating the ends of justice arising from allegations that she attempted to persuade a State witness to alter evidence in the tax matter.

It is understood that Mpisane was to be arrested during yesterday's early-morning asset forfeiture operation at her La Lucia home during which eight luxury vehicles belonging to her and her husband were seized and other assets, including the house, its contents and their bank accounts were "preserved".

Instead, a source close to the investigation told Independent

Newspapers, she has been told to hand herself over to Hawks investigators this morning and will appear in the Durban Magistrate's Court for a bail application.

The details of her alleged crimes are spelled out in the application for the asset forfeiture order filed in the Pietermaritzburg High Court.

In his affidavit, Col Kubenthen Naidoo said that between September 2005 and September 2012, Mpisane or people acting on behalf of her company had submitted tenders to the provincial Department of Public Works for construction projects which were awarded based on Construction Industry Development Board (CIDB) grades.

"The evidence establishes that various documents were submitted to the CIDB which were fraudulent and grades were based on misrepresentations. The department then unknowingly accepted these fraudulently obtained grades."

Among the fraudulent documents submitted to the board, he alleged, were tax clearance certificates in 2005 and 2006. - Tania Broughton