



Eswatini pushes for global solidarity, green growth at NAM and G77 Summits

By Ncaba Ntshakala

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Lihle Lemaswati Foundation invests E4mil in Eswatini's children's future

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Stories by Noaba Ntshakala

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Prime Minister Russell Dlamini, representing His Majesty King Mswati III and the Kingdom of Eswatini at the 19th Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and the Third South-Summit of Leaders of the G77 and China, held in Kampala, Uganda, made the clarion call.

Under the themes of “Deepening Cooperation for Shared Global Affluence” and “Leaving No One Behind,” the summits saw Eswatini advocating for stronger South-South cooperation and inclusive development practices.

Addressing the G77 Summit, Prime Minister Dlamini stressed the need for collective action and solidarity to build an inclusive future.

He emphasized the importance of joint action programs and policies that address shared aspirations and ensure no one is left behind. Eswatini called for stronger commitment and responsibility from both the South and the North to achieve this goal.

The Prime Minister highlighted the challenges that hinder Eswatini’s development, including rising income inequalities. He reiterated the need for a supportive financial architecture for all countries, particularly the least developed. Additionally, he emphasized the importance of attracting and managing investments for sustainable economic growth and poverty alleviation.

Eswatini reaffirmed the urgency for global solidarity and international cooperation in addressing development



▲Prime Minister Russell Dlamini during the Summit in Kampala, Uganda.

challenges. The Prime Minister pointed to the need for innovative approaches to greening economies and achieving energy sufficiency as crucial factors for sustainable development.

At the NAM Summit, Eswatini emphasized the importance of collaborating on matters of political and international security. This includes promoting international law, peaceful conflict resolution, the fight against terrorism, and UN reform, particularly the reform of the Security Council.

The NAM Summit brings together representatives from over 120 developing nations aiming to promote global peace, solidarity, and development.

The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) is a forum that is not formally aligned with

or against any major power bloc. After the United Nations, it is the largest grouping of states worldwide.

Drawing on the principles agreed upon at the Bandung Conference in 1955, the NAM was established in 1961 in Belgrade, Yugoslavia, through the initiative of President of Yugoslavia Josip Broz Tito, President of Egypt Gamal Abdel Nasser, Prime Minister of India Jawaharlal Nehru, President of Indonesia Sukarno, and President of Ghana Kwame Nkrumah.

After the NAM Summit in Uganda, the Prime Minister is expected to head to Italy for the Italy-Africa Summit, a crucial platform for strengthening ties between the European nation and African countries.

Last year, Italy postponed the summit due to increasing global tensions. In November 2023, Italy announced its postponement of the summit and further added that it would host the summit with African nations in late January.

The postponement came in the wake of the flare-up of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Such was shared by Italy Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni.

“The Italy-Africa conference is scheduled for January 28-29,” Meloni said after a cabinet meeting in Rome which approved initial steps towards an energy cooperation plan that Italy wants to offer to African countries.

Scheduled for January 28-29, in Rome, the summit will focus on topics of mutual interest, including energy cooperation, economic cooperation, security, and migration.

The summit scheme, known as the “Mattei plan” and named after Enrico Mattei, founder of state-controlled energy group Eni (ENI.MI), opens a new tab and is expected to lay the ground for cooperation beyond energy.

Italy is expected to take over the presidency of the Group of Seven (G7) nations this year and has pledged to make Africa a central theme while it is at the helm.



▲Lihle Lemaswati Foundation Treasurer Nan Jarvis presenting during the press briefing while Secretary Mduduzi Masilela and Chairman Cyprian Nxumalo looks on.

Lihle Lemaswati Foundation invests E4 million in Eswatini’s children’s future

THE Lihle Lemaswati Foundation, established 13 years ago by HRH Prince Lindani, continues to make a significant impact on the lives of Swazi children in need.

Last year alone, the organization contributed E544,486 towards the education of 59 needy children in 36 schools across the country. This brings the total amount spent on education and other necessities by the foundation to over E4 million, directly supporting over 600 children throughout its existence.

“We are incredibly proud of the positive impact we have been able to make on the lives of so many children,” said the foundation’s Treasurer, Nan Jarvis.

The Lihle Lemaswati Foundation provides financial assistance to cover school fees, uniforms, and other essential school supplies. The foundation also works with schools and communities to identify children who are most in need of support.

The foundation’s efforts are making a real difference in the lives of children and their families.

By Noaba Ntshakala

IN a bid to unlock the potential of the mining sector and propel Eswatini's economic growth, Minister of Natural Resources and Energy, His Royal Highness Prince Lonkhokhela recently met with the Minerals and Mines Management Board (MMB).

The high-level discussion centered on aligning efforts with His Majesty the King's vision of leveraging the mining industry as a key driver of job creation and national prosperity.

Prince Lonkhokhela emphasized the Cabinet's unwavering commitment to utilizing the mining sector as a catalyst for economic progress. He highlighted the aspirations voiced by emaSwati during the recent Sibaya, the People's Parliament where constructive public engagements were made towards stimulating economic progress for the Kingdom. The Minister emphasized on the engagements where emaSwati expressed that the mining sector has potential for job creation and development.

Responding to the Minister's call for collaboration, Prince Guduza, Chairman of the MMB, pledged the Board's full support to the government's objectives. He expressed the MMB's dedication to working closely with the Ministry to implement strategies that unlock the mining sector's potential while adhering to responsible and sustainable practices.

The meeting underscores the shared vision of leveraging Eswatini's mineral wealth to create a brighter future for its citizens. By harnessing the expertise of the MMB and aligning with the King's vision, the Ministry aims to attract investment,

Ministry of Natural Resources aims to boost economy through mining



▲ Minister of Natural Resources and Energy Prince Lonkhokhela during the meeting with the Minerals and Mines Management Board.

create jobs, and diversify the economy beyond traditional sectors like agriculture and tourism.

Revenue

This collaborative approach holds immense potential for Eswatini. A thriving mining sector can generate significant revenue, foster infrastructure development,

and empower local communities through employment opportunities. However, navigating this path requires careful consideration of environmental and social safeguards. Balancing economic benefits with responsible resource management will be crucial to ensuring the sector's long-term sustainability and positive impact on the

nation.

The meeting between Minister Prince Lonkhokhela and the MMB marks a significant step towards realizing Eswatini's mining potential.

With unwavering commitment and a collaborative spirit, the Kingdom can unlock the hidden riches of its soil and pave the way for a prosperous and vibrant future for generations to come.

The MMB has been in office since March 2021. It is established in terms of the Constitution of the country. The MMB consists of the Commissioner of Mines, mine engineer, economist, a legal practitioner, and three other persons all of whom, including the Chairperson, are appointed by His Majesty King Mswati III on the advice of the Minister responsible for minerals and mines.

The MMB is composed of the following Members;

- ▶ HRH Prince Guduza - Chairman
- ▶ HRH Princess Lomajuba - Member
- ▶ Jacob Mabandla Manzini - Member
- ▶ Sihle Yvonne Mashaba - Member
- ▶ Sibusiso Samuel Ntshalintshali - Member
- ▶ Gideon Phungu Gumedze - Member
- ▶ Robert Mendo Biyela - Member and Board Secretary.



▲ Minerals and Mines Management Board members during their meeting with the minister.



▲ Principal Secretary in the Ministry Dorcas Dlamini stressing a point during the meeting with the Minerals and Mines Management Board.

Times of Eswatini employee found dead in her flat

By Nokunceda Magagula
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THE media industry in Eswatini is in mourning following the death of one of their own attached to the Times of Eswatini.

A 27-year-old proofreader (name deliberately withheld as her next of kin could not be contacted) was found dead in her flat in Mbabane on Saturday.

The cause of her death is currently unknown. According to a source close to the matter, speaking on the condition of anonymity, on Saturday he received a call

from one of the deceased's family members, asking her whereabouts.

This was allegedly after receiving a call from her workplace that she had not come to work on Saturday and was not picking up her phone. The source said he did not investigate it as he thought it was nothing serious.

In the evening, her brother who had been sent by the family to look for her, went to the flat. He found the flat locked and forced his way in. The brother found the deceased lying on her bed and he shouted her name, but she did not respond.

The brother then asked for assistance from a neighbour, who said when they got

in, they found her motionless on the bed.

"She was in her bed ice cold, which convinced us that she was dead, I then covered her with a blanket and contacted the police," the neighbour said.

Confirmed

The police came and she was taken to hospital where she was confirmed dead. Royal Eswatini Police Service Chief Information Communications Officer, Senior Superintendent Phindile Vilakati, confirmed the matter.

She said the Mbabane Police reported that on Saturday, they received information that there was a dead body found in a flat at Checkers. They rushed to assess the

situation and found the dead body of a 27-year-old female.

She was rushed to hospital where she was confirmed dead. Vilakati said she does not know much about the cause of death. The Times of Eswatini Managing Director Martin Dlamini confirmed the deceased being employed in the organisation, however, he could not say much about her death. Dlamini said he had not yet reached out to her family.

"I cannot say anything much because I have not yet reached out to her family, so it would be inappropriate for me to speak about her death to the media at this hour. But I can confirm that she was employed here," Dlamini said.

Stories by Ncaba Ntshakala

DESPITE a recent spate of suicides attributed to the insecticide Masta 900 SP, the Ministry of Agriculture has stated that it will not ban the sale of the chemical.

The Principal Secretary of the Ministry, Sydney Simelane, acknowledged the tragic misuse of the product but emphasized its importance in controlling agricultural pests, particularly the Fall Armyworm in maize and potatoes.

“We understand the immense pain and sadness caused by these suicides,” Simelane expressed. “However, Masta 900 SP plays a crucial role in protecting our crops, ensuring food security for the nation. Banning it outright would have devastating consequences for our farmers and the overall economy.”

The water-soluble powder insecticide has been linked to several suicide cases in Eswatini in recent months. While the exact reasons for this trend remain unclear, concerns have been raised about the accessibility of the chemical and the lack of readily available mental health resources.

Concerns

Simelane acknowledged these concerns and expressed the Ministry’s sympathy for the affected families. He encouraged anyone struggling with suicidal thoughts or mental health issues to seek help from relevant offices, including clinical psychologists.

Khetsiwe Dlamini, of Eswatini Campaign Against Depression (EC-ADE) based in Manzini, expressed a heavy heart on the rising cases of people committing suicide. She said that their organisation’s sessions are filled with the grief-stricken families of those lost to



No ban yet on Masta 900 SP despite suicides – Ministry



▲ Minister Agriculture Sydney Simelane.

suicide, linked to many chemicals including the readily available insecticide, Masta 900 SP.

“It’s a tragedy unfolding in plain sight,” Dlamini said “Masta 900 SP has become a grim symbol of despair, readily accessible at a time when so many are grappling with immense burdens.”

Dlamini said that she understands that there are many reasons behind this rise which is complex and interwoven. “Financial hardship, exacerbated by the high cost of living, casts a long shadow.

Loneliness and isolation gnaw at mental well-being, particularly for those living in rural areas. And for some, access to mental health services remains a distant dream, creating a void where despair can easily take root,” expressed Khetsiwe. She also advised emaSwati to seek help when they feel like everything is falling apart. “I plead with emaSwati to seek guidance and counselling from our organisations, clinics, and DPM offices,”

Substance

A recent case is one of a woman who forced her three children to take a poisonous substance. Even though it wasn’t proven if it’s Masta 900 but Khetsiwe Dlamini expressed the need to do more outreach and engage emaSwati as such numbers of suicides are worrying. The incident happened in Nsingweni one woman, Samukelisiwe Ginindza compelled her three children to take the poisonous substance before ingesting it herself. Ginidza was quickly found and taken to Dvokolwako clinic. She was later arrested after being discharged from the clinic and charged with the murder of her three children aged, five, nine and three years respectively.



▲ The Masta 900 SP insecticide.

Masta 900 SP a double-edged sword says farmer

MASTA 900 SP, a seemingly innocuous water-soluble powder, holds a paradoxical position in Eswatini’s landscape.

For farmers, it’s a potent weapon against the voracious Fall Armyworm, safeguarding maize and potato harvests, vital pillars of the nation’s food security. But for some, it has morphed into a grim tool of despair, linked to a recent rise in suicides.

Sicelo Mdluli of KaNcesi has shared that its efficacy against the Fall Armyworm is undeniable. “This invasive pest, adept at decimating crops, if removed from shops can trigger food shortages and economic hardship,” said Mdluli a farmer “Masta 900 SP, has helped in the fields, since it acts as a shield, protecting precious yields.”

Yet, its accessibility casts a dark shadow. Available over the counter, this potent insecticide has become a tragic choice for some struggling with immense burdens. Whether driven by financial woes, emotional turmoil, or a potent mix of both, individuals have resorted to its lethal properties, mistaking it for a solution to their troubles.

Mdluli said that finding a solution requires a nuanced approach. “Banning the insecticide outright cripples agricultural efforts and potentially jeopardizes food security,” highlighted Sicelo.

“Masta 900 SP, has helped in the fields, since it acts as a shield, protecting precious yields”

REPS highlights the crucial role of Station Commanders

THE Royal Eswatini Police Service (REPS) has placed the responsibility of restoring public confidence squarely on the shoulders of its Station Commanders. Senior Deputy National Commissioner Emmanuel Sula Dlamini emphasized this crucial role during the opening of the two-week Station Commanders’ Workshop held at the Police Academy.

“As Station Commanders, you are strategic deployees of the Police Service,” Dlamini declared. “Much rests on your shoulders in so far as our quest to restore public confidence in the Police Service is concerned.”

Dlamini underscored the Station Commanders’ critical position as ambassadors of the REPS in their communities. He urged them to be guided by the core values of pro-activeness, professionalism, and responsiveness in all their interactions.

The Senior Deputy National Commission-

er stressed the immense responsibility entrusted to Station Commanders. Their performance, he said, can be the deciding factor in whether the public perceives the REPS as effective and efficient or not.

Dlamini highlighted the importance of efficient management in police stations, which are essentially service delivery outlets. He emphasized the need to ensure that all clients receive the service they require, at all times.

Knowledge

The Station Commanders’ Workshop serves as a platform for equipping these key figures with the knowledge and skills needed to excel in their roles. The two-week program aims to induct them properly and ensure they meet the expected operational benchmarks.

Effective station management, according to Dlamini, encompasses the proper care and accountability for critical resources like vehicles and equipment. He also emphasized

the importance of a zero-tolerance approach to discipline at the station level to uphold professionalism within the REPS.

Public Concerns

The workshop will also provide a space to address concerns raised by the nation during the Sibaya. One of the key issues highlighted was the lack of feedback on reported matters, particularly in cases where suspects were identified and apprehended.

Dlamini challenged the Station Commanders to develop strategies for holistically addressing these concerns and fostering improved communication with the communities they serve.

Excellence

The Senior Deputy National Commissioner concluded his remarks by urging the Station Commanders to make the most of the workshop. He emphasized the vital role they play in ensuring the efficiency and effectiveness of the REPS, and ultimately, in restoring public confidence in the service.



▲ REPS Senior Deputy National Commissioner Emmanuel Sula Dlamini.

Stories by Ncaba Ntshakala

THE Minister of Housing and Urban Development, Apollo Maphalala, paid a visit to Manzini Municipality on Friday. The visit according to the municipality is inspired by the city’s potential and determination to turn dreams of development and affordable housing into tangible reality.

During the visit, the Minister was welcomed by the Manzini Mayor Nozipho Dlamini-Gamedze and the City’s CEO Lungile Dlamini, and other officials. Mayor Nozipho said that they were honoured by the Minister’s presence in the municipality and applauded the desire to take a tour of their vibrant city. She further assured the minister that the management, as led by the CEO, gave them a warm welcome as new councillors and exposed them to a further orientation exercise which gave them insight into the intricate functions of the municipality. “We strongly believe in the transformative power of the city’s new town planning scheme and the new city’s integrated development plan whose development is already underway,” said the Mayor.

“We firmly believe that these guiding frameworks will set the tone for the city’s development and propel us towards achieving first world status.”

The City’s CEO Lungile welcomed the minister and further appraised the minister about the critical developmental initiatives occurring in Manzini that require the guidance and support of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development and other relevant stakeholders.

Support

Manzini CEO introduced the Minister to the city’s developmental initiatives that include; Development of Manzini Arch Mall. The municipality is working as a support function on the preparation of developing the Manzini Arch shopping mall by national government and her private partners at the golf course site.

The Minister was also introduced to the Development of the Manzini regional shopping mall. The Municipality is providing support on the preparation of developing the Manzini regional mall by the national government and her private partners at the Old Trade Fair grounds. by the close of the third quarter, preparations were in progress but the municipality is awaiting the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development and her partner ministries for guidance on

Housing minister introduced to Manzini development programme

finalization of the project preparation phase. On the last development programme, the Minister was introduced to the Construction and upgrading of MR3 highway. The municipality is at consultation stage with the Ministry of Public Works & transport for the construction and upgrading of the mr-3 highway joining the Manzini interchange to the Nazarene cross junction. The project is reported to be at the preparation stage and the municipality is working on engaging the Ministry of Housing & Urban Development for support in consulting the Ministry of Public Works to integrate the project with the city infrastructure services and communities.

“We firmly believe that these guiding frameworks will set the tone for the city’s development and propel us towards achieving first world status”



▲Manzini City Council CEO Lungile Dlamini, Minister Apollo Maphalala, Manzini RA Chief Gija and Manzini Mayor Nozipho touring Manzini Market.



▲The Minister touring the newly completed state of the art Aids Healthcare Foundation (AHF) Health facility.



▲Ongoing roadworks towards rehabilitating Mhlaleni - Mahamba MR 9 road which is taking shape



▲ Government has expressed that the rehabilitation is done in phases on the MR 9 road.

Shiselweni gears up for smooth rides

PROGRESS!

Government has reported significant progress on the ongoing major rehabilitation of the Mhlaleni-Mahamba (MR9) road, a crucial artery connecting key regions within the Kingdom. The road connects the Shiselweni and Manzini regions respectively.

Smoother

This vital project promises smoother and safer journeys for motorists and communities alike.

The MR9 rehabilitation is being tackled strategically according to government, it is done in phases, to minimize disruption and ensure timely completion. The current phase focuses on completely removing the old road surface and laying a brand new. This comprehensive approach guarantees long-lasting durability and enhanced driving experiences for years to come.

Man arrested for sodomy

Stories by Nokunceda Magagula
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IN a rare occurrence, a 22-year-old man from Pine Valley has been arrested and charged with the rape of a 23-year-old man.

The 22-year-old Justice Zwane made his first appearance at the Mbabane Magistrate's Court where he was formally charged with rape. The accused is alleged to have had unlawful sexual intercourse with Sive* in the month of January at Pine Valley.

His charge sheet reads that the accused is charged with contravening Section 3(1) 3(2) as read with Section 3 (c) of the Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence Act of 2018 ." In the month of November 2023 near Pine Valley, the accused had unlawful sexual intercourse with Sive without using a condom and thus contravened the said Act" the charge sheet reads.

The accused charge is accompanied by aggravating factors which include that the accused did not use a condom during the commission of the alleged rape, thus exposing the victim to sexually transmitted diseases, like HIV and AIDS.

During Court proceedings, Zwane conducted his own defence. The crown moved an application that the accused must be remanded into custody pending his committal to the High Court.

The accused was, therefore, told that he shall remain in custody until February 9, 2024, pending his committal to the High Court and he was also advised to move his bail application at the High Court.

It is worth mentioning that a soldier has been recently arrested for allegedly raping a boy aged 13, at Lobamba, during the course of traditional activities associated with the Incwala Ceremony.

SODV

The soldier identified as Patrick Mfungelwa Magonso Masilela (37) of Dlangeni is employed by the Umbutfo Eswatini Defence Force (UEDF). Masilela is alleged to have raped a minor, without the use of protection, exposing the minor to sexually transmitted infections (STIs). The rape ordeal is said to have occurred on January 9, 2024. Details of the circumstances of the rape ordeal are expected to emerge during the trial. Masilela was formally charged under the Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence (SODV) Act No.15 of 2018. He is alleged to have contravened Section 3(1), 3(2), 3(3) (c) as read with Section 3(9) (b) of the SODV Act, by having sexual intercourse with a 13-year-old minor. He appeared at the Mbabane Magistrates Court on January 12 2024 before Senior Magistrate Sifiso Vilakati where he was remanded into custody pending committal at the High Court.

● It is worth mentioning that a soldier has been recently arrested for allegedly raping a boy aged 13, at Lobamba, during the course of traditional activities associated with the Incwala Ceremony.

Boyfriend convicted of assaulting his girlfriend

A man has been convicted to 2 years imprisonment after pleading guilty to assaulting his girlfriend causing grievous bodily harm.

Joseph Ngobese (53) who resides in Nkoyoyo made his first appearance at the Mbabane Magistrate's Court where he was charged with contravening Section 77 (1) (a) of the Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence (SODV) Act of 2018.

His charge sheet states that on January 17, 2024 at Nkoyoyo, Mbabane, the accused unlawfully and wrongfully assaulted his girlfriend Jabu* with fists on the face several times and also banged her on the wall resulting in the victim's teeth falling off.

In Court, Ngobese pleaded guilty to the charge. He also presented to the Crown that he has no previous convictions. The Court found the accused guilty as per his own plea, in his mitigation statement Ngobese asked the Court to be lenient when handing down the sentence, citing that he promises to never commit a similar offense again. He also mentioned that he is self-employed, he lives by constructing people's houses, he added that he is the sole breadwinner of his family.

Imprisonment

Putting all that into consideration Magistrate Qondile Mtetwa sentenced the accused to 2 years imprisonment or to pay E2 000 as a fine.

Just last week a man aged 30 years was also charged with assault after he allegedly hit his ex-girlfriend with a fist on the nose thus causing her bruises.

According to the charge sheet of the accused Vovo Nhleko, the accident occurred at Lobamba on January 14, 2024. It is said that the pair had a verbal fight which led to the accused assaulting the victim. The accused was then arrested by Lobamba police officers. He made his appearance at the Mbabane Magistrate's Court before Magistrate Qondile Mtetwa last Thursday.

The accused pleaded guilty to contravening Section 77(1) of the Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence (SODV) Act of 2018, the crown accepted the plea without leading any evidence and also stated that the accused had no previous convictions.

In his mitigation statement, the accused pleaded for leniency to the Court when handing down his sentence, because he had no intention to commit the crime and "May the court be lenient because what happened was a mistake," Nhleko said. Nhleko was sentenced to 13 months imprisonment or pay an E2 000 fine. ***Not real names**

● Just last week a man aged 30 years was also charged with assault after he allegedly hit his ex-girlfriend with a fist on the nose thus causing her bruises



▲ A prison cell.

58-year-old man charged with rape of minor

POLICE have arrested and charged a 58-year-old man from Sigangeni for the rape of a girl who is only 13 years old.

The accused (Bhekinkhosi Sihlongonyane) is said to have allegedly sexually assaulted the minor during the month of November 2023 in the Sigangeni area. Furthermore, Sihlonginyane did not use a condom during the alleged ordeal.

According to the accused's charge sheet, it states that Sihlongonyane is charged with contravening Section 3 (1) 3(2) as read with 3(c) of the Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence (SODV) Act of 2018. "In the month of November 2023 at Sigangeni in the Hhohho region, the said accused unlawfully had sexual intercourse once with Lethu* who is a female aged 13 years



without a condom and thus contravened the said act" part of the charge sheet reads.

It is worth noting that the accused's offense is accompanied by aggravating factors, which include that the accused did not use a condom during the commission of the alleged rape, thus exposing the

minor to sexually transmitted diseases. Furthermore, the victim was below the age of 18 years during the commission of the offense which means that by law, she was incapable of appreciating the nature of the sexual act nor consent to it.

The accused appeared at the Mbabane Magistrate's Court before Magistrate Qondile Mtetwa, where he conducted his own defense, however, he told the court that he is still going to seek services of a lawyer. The crown moved an application that the accused be remanded into custody pending his committal to the High Court.

The accused was therefore told that he shall remain in custody until February 2, 2024, pending his committal to the High Court and he was also advised to move his bail application at the High Court.

BUSINESS NEWS

BUSINESS BRIEFS

Instacash reintroduce Zero rated stokvel

IN a bid to help emaSwati save money right at the beginning of the year, Instacash has reintroduced its zero-rated Stokvel account. According to a statement published by Instacash, this innovative financial product has revolutionized the way individuals save and invest their money, by providing a convenient and accessible platform for stokvel groups to manage their funds.

West stands to lose at least \$288 bln — RIA

RUSSIA's state RIA news agency said on Sunday it had calculated that the West stood to lose assets and investments worth at least \$288 billion if it confiscated frozen Russian assets to help rebuild Ukraine and Moscow then retaliated. After President Vladimir Putin sent forces into Ukraine in February 2022, the U.S. and its allies prohibited transactions with Russia's central bank and finance ministry, blocking around \$300 billion of sovereign Russian assets in the West.

IMF team in Cairo to discuss \$3 bln loan

WASHINGTON — An International Monetary Fund team is currently in Cairo to discuss Egypt's \$3 billion IMF loan and reform program, an IMF spokesperson said on Friday amid discussions about additional funding to ease the country's Gaza war-related stresses. The spokesperson said in an emailed statement to Reuters that the team, led by IMF Egypt Mission Chief Vladkova Hollar, would "continue discussions on the first and second reviews of Egypt's reform program supported by the IMF's Extended Fund Facility."

NAMBoard calls for traders to update accounts or face permit termination

Stories by Silindzelwe Nxumalo
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THE National Marketing and Agricultural Board (NAMBoard) has embarked on a process to improve operational efficiency within the Trade and Regulation Unit by updating all customer accounts.

According to the statement issued by the board, all traders are requested to ensure that their contact details and debtors' account balances are up to date by the end of the current financial year which is 31 March 2024.

The board stated that traders who have not yet updated their details and accounts are urged to visit their Head Office in Manzini, at the Corner of Masalenkhundleni and

Mbhabha Street Manzini to update their contact details and accounts with their Finance Department.

NAMBoard added that from April 1, 2024, those traders whose debtor's account balances will still be in arrears shall not have their permits renewed.

"They will be required to make upfront payments to clear any arrears before requests for permit renewal can be processed," announced the board.

Furthermore, NAMBoard stated that applications for permits and renewals by those traders with updated particulars and financial records can be sent electronically and permits will be issued timeously upon receipt of proof of payment.

"Alternatively, hard copies may be collected



▲All traders are requested to ensure that their contact details and debtors' account balances are up to date by the end of the current financial year which is 31 March 2024.

at our Head Office. Traders with updated particulars and financial records must ensure that they obtain their updated debtors' statements from NAMBoard at the end of every month," advised NAMBoard.

The board also stated that the trade and regulation unit at NAMBoard is responsible for monitoring, researching, and analyzing the trade of scheduled products in the country.

They said it is a resource center for trade statistics and economic policy research information for scheduled products.

They explained that the purpose of this

unit is to facilitate the implementation of statutory measures or the regulation of scheduled agricultural products, a function that strengthens the local trade of agricultural products and amplifies the processes intended to promote the growth and efficiency of the marketing of agricultural products in the country.

"Through ongoing stakeholder engagements with traders, vendors, farmers, processors, retailers, and consumers, we can execute decisions that create a fair-trade environment for all value chain players," they said.

Municipal Council of Mbabane issues tender for annual sources supply in 22 categories

THE Municipal Council of Mbabane (MCM) has invited local tenderers for the annual sources supply tender in 22 categories.

According to the Prequalification, its purpose is to register suitably qualified suppliers and service providers into the MCM vendor database to be contacted through requests for quotations and selective tendering as and when the need arises for any of the listed product categories.

The MCM stated that the tenders will be the basis for contract negotiations and ultimately for a signed contract with the selected tenderer.

"This Tender document is not a recommendation, offer, or invitation to enter into a contract, agreement, or any other arrangement in respect of the goods to be supplied," read the invitation.

The invitation explained that the supply and delivery of goods is subject to observance of the selection process and appropriate documentation being agreed between the



Council and any successful Tenderer as identified by the Council after completion of the selection process.

"Tenderers should familiarise themselves with local conditions, the Kingdom of Eswatini Procurement Act of 2011, Public Procurement

Regulations of 2020 and take them into account in preparing their Tender document," advised MCM.

The MCM further encouraged tenderers to visit the Council before submitting their Tender, and tenderers should contact the Council Representative to arrange their visit or to obtain additional information.

They stated that the main objective of this exercise is to allow vendors an opportunity to work with MCM and for MCM to benefit from such a working relationship.

"Tendering will be conducted through the Pre-qualification Tendering procedures specified in the Public Procurement Act 7, 2011 and policies laid down by the Eswatini Public Procurement Regulatory Agency (ESPPRA)," read the document.

They said the pre-qualification document can be downloaded from the ESPPRA website; www.esppra.co.sz or on their website, www.mzcitycouncil.sz and submitted before January 24.

FX RATES

Notes/Cash	Buy	Sell
U.S. Dollar	18.5591	19.0255
G.B. Pound	23.4827	24.1667
EURO	20.1808	20.7895
Bank Rate	(July 2023)	7.50%
Prime Rate	(July 2023)	11%
Inflation	(July 2023)	4.5%
Petrol	E20.50/Litre	
Diesel	E21.80/Litre	
Paraffin	E16.75/Litre	

By Nokunceda Magagula
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IN a bid to help emaSwati save money right at the beginning of the year, Instacash has reintroduced its zero-rated Stokvel account.

According to a statement published by Instacash, this innovative financial product has revolutionized the way individuals save and invest their money, by providing a convenient and accessible platform for stokvel groups to manage their funds.

The statement mentions that the zero-rated stokvel account has garnered widespread attention and praise for its unique features and benefits, making it a popular choice for many individuals looking to grow their savings and achieve their financial goals.

One of the key reasons for the widespread popularity of the Zero-rated Stokvel account is its accessibility and convenience. Instacash has made it incredibly easy for individuals to open and manage their stokvel accounts, eliminating the hassle and paperwork typically associated with traditional banking processes. With just a few clicks, individuals can set up their Zero-rated Stokvel account and start saving towards their financial objectives.

“In an attempt to continue with our user-friendly approach to finances, we are happy that this product resonated with the general public, many of whom have found the process of joining a Stokvel and managing their contributions to be seamless and hassle-free,” Instacash Managing director Mandla ‘Cheeks’ Nxumalo said.

Nxumalo further mentioned that the Zero-rated Stokvel account offers a range of benefits that have made it an attractive option for savers. He said one of the most notable features of the account is its zero-rated fees, meaning that members can save and transact without incurring any additional costs. He said this is a significant advantage for stokvel groups, as it allows them to maximize their savings without having to worry about fees eating into their contributions. Additionally, the account offers competitive interest rates, enabling members to grow their savings over time and achieve their financial objectives more effectively.

The statement adds to its practical benefits, stating that the Zero-rated Stokvel account has also garnered attention for its innovative approach to financial inclusion. By providing a platform for stokvel groups to save and invest their money, Instacash has made it possible for individuals from all walks of life to participate in the formal financial system. This has had a positive impact on financial inclusion, as it has enabled more people to access the benefits of saving and investing, ultimately contributing to greater economic empowerment and stability within communities.

The success of the Zero-rated Stokvel account is a testament to the growing demand for innovative and inclusive financial products. Instacash’s commitment to providing accessible and affordable financial solutions has struck a chord with the general public, who have embraced the Zero-rated Stokvel account as a valuable tool for achieving their financial goals. As the popularity of the account continues to grow, it is clear that Instacash has tapped into a significant market need and is poised to make a lasting impact on the way individuals save and invest their money.

the introduction of the Zero-rated Stokvel

Instacash reintroduce Zero rated stokvel



▲A customer at an Instacash Service Centre.

account by Instacash has been a resounding success, capturing the attention and approval of the general public. The account’s accessibility, convenience, and range of benefits have made it a popular choice for individuals looking to save and invest their money, while its innovative approach to financial inclusion has had a positive impact on communities. As the popularity of the Zero-rated Stokvel account continues to grow, it is evident that Instacash has effectively addressed a significant market need, and is well-positioned to continue making a meaningful impact on the financial landscape.

... Further introduces paperless funeral cover

In a groundbreaking move, Instacash has also introduced a paperless funeral cover, underwritten by Liberty Insurance, marking a significant step towards the future for Eswatini.

According to the statement this initiative has opened doors for the unbanked population, enabling them to access funeral cover of up to E10,000 at a mere E15 subscription. This innovative offering, known as Instacash Funeral Cover Insurance, powered by Liberty Life, promises exclusive benefits for Instacash customers within the age range of 18 to 70 years.

“The introduction of paperless insurance through Instacash represents a paradigm shift in the insurance industry. By leveraging technology and strategic partnerships, Instacash has not only made insurance more accessible but has also streamlined the entire process, making it convenient and hassle-free for its customers,” Instacash Managing Director Mandla ‘Cheeks’ Nxumalo said.

The statement mentions that one of the most striking aspects of this offering is the simplicity of the

sign-up process. Prospective policyholders can easily enroll by dialing *365# and following a few straightforward steps. By selecting the ‘Insurance’ option, followed by ‘Liberty’ and ‘Opt-in’, individuals can swiftly proceed to accept the terms and conditions and provide necessary beneficiary details.

Once these steps are completed, policyholders can confirm the information, enter their Intacash PIN, and expect to receive their policy number within a few days via SMS. This efficient process allows individuals to commence premium payments promptly, with the added convenience of prepayments being

accepted.

The statement emphasizes that the significance of this development cannot be overstated. By embracing a paperless approach, Instacash has not only reduced its environmental footprint but has also eliminated the need for cumbersome paperwork, making the entire experience seamless and eco-friendly. Moreover, the affordability of this funeral cover, with a substantial E10,000 member-only benefit at a minimal monthly premium of E15, underscores Instacash’s commitment to providing valuable and accessible insurance solutions to its clientele.

On the impacts, the statement mentions that the impact of this initiative extends beyond mere convenience and affordability. By extending funeral cover to previously underserved segments of the population, Instacash is contributing to the financial inclusion of the unbanked society.

This move has the potential to provide a safety net for families during times of bereavement, ensuring that they are not burdened by the exorbitant costs associated with funerals. Furthermore, the availability of this service exclusively for Instacash customers further strengthens the bond between the company and its clientele, fostering loyalty and trust.

The introduction of paperless funeral cover by Instacash, underwritten by Liberty Insurance, represents a significant milestone in the insurance landscape of Eswatini. This innovative offering not only simplifies the process of obtaining funeral cover but also extends its reach to previously underserved segments of the population. By embracing technology and strategic partnerships, Instacash has demonstrated its commitment to providing accessible, affordable, and eco-friendly insurance solutions. As the world continues to evolve, Instacash’s paperless funeral cover stands as a testament to the power of innovation and inclusivity in shaping the future of insurance.

▲Instacash Managing Director Mandla ‘Cheeks’ Nxumalo.





▲Miniatures of solar panel and electric pole are seen in front of SolarEdge logo in this illustration

SolarEdge to lay off 16% of workforce to trim operating costs

SOLAREEDGE Technologies said on Sunday that it would lay off about 16% of its global workforce as it tries to reduce operating costs.

The reduction, which would affect roughly 900 employees, follows the firm’s discontinuation of manufacturing in Mexico, reduction of manufacturing capacity in China, and termination of light commercial vehicle e-mobility activity.

“We have made a very difficult, but necessary decision to implement a workforce reduction and other cost-cutting measures

in order to align our cost structure with the rapidly changing market dynamics,” CEO Zvi Lando said in a statement.

The renewable energy firm trimmed its fourth-quarter revenue expectations in November on weak demand for its solar inverters.

Growth for solar in Europe has slowed in the last year due to excess inventories and weakening demand. While in the United States, higher interest rates and a metering reform in California, the country’s largest solar market, have led to lower demand for solar. (Reuters)

Royal Caribbean, MSC cancel cruises due to Red Sea attacks

NEW YORK/MADRID — Some cruise operators have cancelled or adjusted their itineraries to avoid the Red Sea due to attacks on ships by Houthi militia, but the overall impact on the multi-billion dollar industry is not expected to be significant.

The attacks by the Iran-backed militia in Yemen since November have slowed trade between Asia and Europe and raised concerns about an escalation of the war between Israel and Palestinian Hamas militants in Gaza.

Royal Caribbean said in a statement on Thursday it had cancelled two voyages so far.

One from Muscat to Dubai was meant to take place Jan. 16-26, and another from Dubai to Mumbai was scheduled for Jan. 26-Feb. 11.

It also amended last week the itinerary of a cruise between Aqaba and Muscat to disembark guests in a port city near Athens.

“Our global security team continues to closely monitor the situation in the region and we will make additional changes if required,” Royal Caribbean said.

Swiss-Italian operator MSC Cruises said on Wednesday it had cancelled three trips in April from South Africa and the United Arab Emirates to Europe due to the Red Sea crisis.

“The safety of passengers and crew is the number one priority and as there was no viable alternative itinerary, the company has regrettably had to cancel the voyages,” MSC Cruises said. “The three ships will transfer directly to Europe without any passengers on board and avoid transiting through the Red Sea.” Although thousands of passengers are



▲The MSC World Europa cruise ship passes behind Fort Ricasoli as it departs from Grand Harbour in Valletta, Malta.

affected, the impact on cruise operators at a global level is not expected to be significant, said Todd Elliott, CEO of Florida-based travel agency Cruise Vacation Outlet.

“This is a small part of their overall fleet and multi-year itineraries so they will be able to overcome this easily,” Elliott said.

Italy’s Costa Cruises told Reuters on Thursday that routes “remain unchanged” and only two of its cruises scheduled to transit through the Red Sea in March and April could be affected, including the last leg of a round-the-world trip.

Carnival said its global security team was working with global security experts and governments to prioritise safety, including adjusting its itineraries if needed. (Reuters)

IMF team in Cairo to discuss \$3 billion loan program



▲The logo of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), is seen during a news conference in Santiago, Chile.

By David Lawder

WASHINGTON — An International Monetary Fund team is currently in Cairo to discuss Egypt’s \$3 billion IMF loan and reform program, an IMF spokesperson said on Friday amid discussions about additional funding to ease the country’s Gaza war-related stresses.

The spokesperson said in an emailed statement to Reuters that the team, led by IMF Egypt Mission Chief Vladkova Hollar, would “continue discussions on the first and second reviews of Egypt’s reform program supported by the IMF’s Extended Fund Facility. We will communicate at the end of the visit.”

The IMF’s Middle East and Central Asia director, Jihad Azour, also was in Cairo earlier this week on an annual retreat with the division’s regional offices, and met with Egyptian authorities and regional stakeholders, the spokesperson added.

Egypt has been hit hard by Israel’s war against Hamas in neighboring Gaza, which has hurt tourism bookings and natural gas imports and prompted attacks on Red Sea shipping.

IMF chief spokesperson Julie Kozack told reporters last week that additional financing was “critical” to the success of the Egypt program, but amounts and potential disbursements were under discussion. Also under discussion was the need for tighter fiscal and monetary policy. (Reuters)

West stands to lose at least \$288 bln in assets if Russian assets seized — RIA

RUSSIA’s state RIA news agency said on Sunday it had calculated that the West stood to lose assets and investments worth at least \$288 billion if it confiscated frozen Russian assets to help rebuild Ukraine and Moscow then retaliated.

After President Vladimir Putin sent forces into Ukraine in February 2022, the U.S. and its allies prohibited transactions with Russia’s central bank and finance ministry, blocking around \$300 billion of sovereign Russian assets in the West.

Russia has accused Washington of trying to strong-arm countries in Europe, where most of the Russian assets are, into signing up to similar measures, and the Kremlin has said that Moscow has a list of U.S., European and other assets that would be confiscated if Western countries press ahead.

RIA cited data which it said showed that direct investment by the European Union, the G7 nations, Australia and Switzerland in the Russian economy at the end of 2022

totalled \$288 billion.

It said EU nations held \$223.3 billion of the assets, of which \$98.3 billion was formally held by Cyprus, \$50.1 billion

by the Netherlands and \$17.3 billion by Germany.

It said the top five European investors in the Russian economy also included France with assets and investments worth \$16.6 billion and Italy with \$12.9 billion.

Among the G7 countries, it named Britain as one of the largest investors, citing data at the end of 2021 which showed British assets in Russia were worth about \$18.9 billion.

It said the United States had \$9.6 billion worth of Russian assets at the end of 2022, Japan \$4.6 billion and Canada \$2.9 billion.

Switzerland and Norway, which RIA said usually signed up to anti-Russian measures, had \$28.5 billion and \$139 million respectively at the end of 2022, it said, while data showed Australia had \$683 million invested at the end of last year.

Reuters could not verify the data cited by RIA. (Reuters)

Ancient temple filled with gold, silver jewels discovered in Greece

ARCHAEOLOGISTS excavating a sanctuary honoring the ancient Greek goddess Artemis have announced they discovered a significant number of structures, as well as plentiful relics, including gold and silver jewels.

A “monumental building in the heart of the sanctuary” was first found in 2017, according to a recent social media post from Greece’s Ministry of Culture.

Another temple was found in 2023. Excavating this second temple turned up “rich relics” and jewelry, the ministry said. Other excavations found buildings from the ninth and eighth centuries B.C.

The excavations are conducted annually by a group of Swiss and Greek archaeologists, the Ministry of Culture said in a news release. The research project began about 15 years ago, the ministry said.

The temple found in the 2023 excavations dated back to the seventh century B.C. The temple was nearly 100 feet long, a size seen in other temples built during this time period. Inside the temple were multiple constructions, including hearths used as altars and a horseshoe-shaped altar that was covered in ash that proved to be rich in charred bones. Some of the altars may predate the temple, the ministry said, noting that the horseshoe-shaped altar had pottery

dated as far back as the eighth century B.C.

Inside the temple, archaeologists found vases, jewelry made of gold, silver, coral and amber, amulets brought from Asia and other parts of the East, and bronze and iron fittings.

Below the temple, archaeologists found dry stone walls that belonged to a building built similarly to the temple itself. Here, researchers found bronze figurines from the Geometric period, which ran from 900 to 700 B.C., and a clay bull head from the Mycenaean period, which lasted from 1,750 to 1,050 B.C.

The temple was partially destroyed in the sixth century B.C., likely by a fire, the ministry said. Another temple was built in the area towards the end of that century.

The research into the sanctuary and the temples within it is being conducted in parallel with a survey of the surrounding area. The research “aims to understand the inclusion of the sanctuary in the ancient landscape” by studying the area, its rural settlements and agricultural land, and the communication and connections between ancient cities, officials said.

Earlier this week, Greek archaeologists announced they had uncovered an ancient aqueduct built by a Roman emperor along with more than two dozen silver coins.

(CBS News)



▲ The temple found in the 2023 excavations dated back to the seventh century B.C.

TikTok usage is starting to slow

... is TikTok Shop to blame?

TikTok may have been the world’s top app by downloads and consumer spending in 2023, but it was not the top by actual usage.

Last year, Facebook again maintained its No. 1 position by monthly active users, followed by other Meta-owned apps WhatsApp, Instagram, and Messenger — all of which were ahead of TikTok at No. 5. Now new data indicates that TikTok’s growth has started to slow, begging the question of whether the app’s move into e-commerce via TikTok Shop is to blame.

According to new data from market intelligence firm Sensor Tower, while TikTok’s growth remains positive, that growth is decelerating. In 2022, TikTok’s monthly active users grew an average of 12% year-over-year per quarter, but this figure fell to 3% year-over-year per quarter in 2023.

The change comes on the heels of TikTok’s launch of TikTok Shop in the U.S.

The video app began testing Shop in the U.S. in November 2022 and those tests expanded at the beginning of last year as more brands came on board, including PacSun, Revolve, Willow Boutique, and beauty brand KimChi Chic, among others. While the Shop didn’t “officially” launch in the U.S. until September 2023, it was only one of several efforts to translate the influence of TikTok videos — essentially the whole “TikTok made me buy it” meme — into real-world sales.

Last summer in the U.K., for example, TikTok experimented with an in-app shopping section called “Trendy Beat,” which offered products sold by TikTok parent ByteDance. TikTok also offers an affiliate program that allows creators to earn commissions from products, as the AP and others have reported.



▲ While TikTok’s growth remains positive, that growth is decelerating.

But sellers’ embrace of the shopping platform has started to lead to complaints, as Business Insider noted in November, with some lamenting that TikTok Shop was turning the app into an “ad-filled wasteland” and a “dystopian” space. Elsewhere on the web, Redditors have been debating whether TikTok Shop has “ruined” the app, which is now filled with “people dropshipping/selling cheap products,” as one Reddit user put it.

“Personally, I’m starting to get really annoyed by how almost every other video on my [For You Page] is someone overhyping a product from the Shop feature to try to get it to go viral and make a lot of commissions,” wrote Redditor u/megg-salad-sammich in September. “It’s great that it’s a new avenue for creators to make money, but I find myself scrolling less and less because I know pretty much every video is just trying to get me to buy some random thing,” they said.

A search across Reddit finds many more threads complaining of the same thing throughout last year — saying how TikTok is “annoying” now because of TikTok Shop and seeing ads every few videos is a frustrating experience.

While TikTok users are adapting to their favorite social network turning into an online mall, TikTok’s Shop Seller app, which powers its e-commerce initiative, has grown.

Sensor Tower data indicates the Shop Seller’s growth has been “robust” since the fourth quarter of 2022, rising 230% year-over-year as of the fourth quarter of 2023. However, the app has only a fraction of TikTok’s active user base — currently 1.4 billion as of the first quarter of this year. Shop Seller, meanwhile, has just around 6 million monthly active users, the firm reported.

(TechCrunch)

After Netflix says no, other apps debate a Vision Pro launch

YOUTUBE is following in Netflix’s footsteps as it decides not to release a dedicated app for the Apple Vision Pro’s upcoming launch. Like Netflix subscribers, viewers will have to go to the web browser version if they want to watch YouTube videos.

“We’re excited to see Vision Pro launch, and we’re supporting it by ensuring YouTube users have a great experience in Safari,” a YouTube spokesperson said in a statement to TechCrunch. The company didn’t state its reasoning for opting out. It’s also unclear if YouTube plans to support Vision Pro in the future.

YouTube is the most popular video-sharing platform in the world, so it’ll be disappointing to customers when they’re forced to go to Safari to get their YouTube fix. It also means they can’t access YouTube’s offline downloads feature, which defeats the purpose of using the headset on planes. Notably, YouTube provides an app on rival headset Meta Quest.

Netflix confirmed to us yesterday that it isn’t planning on launching a dedicated app for the device. The company also isn’t modifying its iPad version.

According to MacStories, a slew of other companies may also be staying away from launching compatible apps, including Meta-owned platforms Instagram, Facebook, Threads and WhatsApp. However, this could change by the time Vision Pro launches on February 2. Meta wasn’t immediately available to respond to our comment request. Other missing apps include YouTube Music, Roku, Snapchat, DoorDash, Bumble and Lyft, among others.

(TechCrunch)

Egypt will not allow any threat to Somalia or its security – President Sisi

CAIRO - Egypt's president said on Sunday it will not allow any threat to Somalia after Ethiopia said it would consider recognising an independence claim by Somaliland in a deal that would give it access to a seaport.

The remarks by President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi were the strongest yet made on the issue by Egypt, which already has frosty relations with Ethiopia, and were a sign that Cairo may get involved in a dispute that has raised fresh tensions in the volatile Horn of Africa. Somaliland declared independence from Somalia in 1991 but has not won recognition from any country.

The port lease deal, which was agreed earlier this month but not yet finalised, would be a boon to landlocked Ethiopia and has enraged Somalia.

"Egypt will not allow anyone to threaten Somalia or affect its security," Sisi said, speaking at a news conference with visiting Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud.

"Do not try Egypt, or try to threaten its brothers especially if they ask it to intervene," he added.

In a Jan. 1 memorandum of understanding, Ethiopia said it would consider recognising Somaliland's independence in return for the port access. It would lease 20 km (12 miles) of coastland around the port of Berbera, on the Gulf of Aden, for 50 years for military and commercial purposes.

Ethiopia's current main port for maritime



▲ Egypt's president Abdel Fattah al-Sisi

exports is in the neighbouring country of Djibouti.

"My message to Ethiopia is that ... trying to seize a piece of land to control it is something no one will agree to," Sisi said, saying cooperation on development was a better strategy.

Representatives for Ethiopia did not immediately respond to requests for comment

on his statements.

Egypt's foreign minister last week called Ethiopia a source of instability in the region, which the country's foreign ministry said was "irrelevant".

Relations between Egypt and Ethiopia, which share use of the Nile River, have been tense for years over a major dam Ethiopia has built on the Blue Nile. (Reuters)

Tshisekedi sworn in for second term after disputed vote

KINSHASA - Democratic Republic of Congo President Felix Tshisekedi was sworn in for a second five-year term on Saturday after a landslide victory his opponents have refused to recognise due to widespread irregularities over the December general election.

Authorities have acknowledged there were issues but dismissed allegations the vote was stolen. The fractious standoff echoes previous electoral disputes that fuelled unrest in Africa's second-largest country, with protests breaking out in two eastern cities.

Tshisekedi took the oath of office in a stadium in the capital Kinshasa packed with flag-waving supporters, government officials, African heads of state and foreign envoys including from the United States, China, and France.

In a speech, he acknowledged the nation's hopes of better living conditions and economic opportunities. Around 62% of Congo's 100 million people live on less than a dollar a day.

"I am aware of your expectations," he said. "A goal of this new five-year term is to create more jobs."

He also promised "a profound restructuring of our security and defence apparatus" and further diplomatic efforts to address Congo's long-running security crisis in eastern provinces.

Choirs singing the Hallelujah chorus from Handel's Messiah, marching military bands



▲ Democratic Republic of Congo President Felix Tshisekedi was sworn in for a second five-year term on Saturday

and a 21-cannon salute marked his inauguration.

With armed military police deployed throughout the capital, there was no immediate sign opposition supporters were heeding a call from two of Tshisekedi's main opponents to protest his re-election across the country.

In the eastern city of Beni, protesters set

up makeshift barricades in the early hours and burned tyres - a demonstration that police dispersed without major incident. Similar small-scale protests broke out in the eastern city of Goma and other urban centres, but were contained by the mass deployment of security forces, Reuters reporters said.

(Reuters)



▲ Excluded: opposition leader Ousmane Sonko

Senegal's final presidential candidate list excludes opposition leader Sonko

DAKAR - Senegal's constitutional council on Saturday released a final list of 20 candidates for February's presidential election that excluded opposition leader Ousmane Sonko and Karim Wade, the son of former president Abdoulaye Wade.

President Macky Sall will hand over power after ruling out a third term in July, ending lengthy speculation that helped fuel some of the deadliest violence in the normally stable West African nation's modern history.

The council's list of approved candidates includes Sall's hand-picked successor, Prime Minister Amadou Ba, former Dakar mayor Khalifa Sall, and former prime minister Idrissa Seck.

It said opposition firebrand Sonko's bid was ineligible due to a suspended sentence linked to a defamation case.

Sonko, 49, has been battling various court cases since 2021 and the authorities deny his accusations they are politically motivated, although public backlash to his treatment has fuelled unrest.

Fears that his exclusion could lead to more protests have waned since Sall's announcement he will not use a 2016 constitutional reform to reset his mandate - a tactic used by other rulers in the region to extend power.

As a result, the Feb. 25 contest is the first since Senegal's independence in which an incumbent president does not seek re-election after serving two terms.

Another notable exclusion from the final list of candidates is Karim Wade. He and Khalifa Sall saw their hopes of running in the last presidential race scuppered by legal convictions. Both have since received presidential pardons, but Wade is allegedly ineligible this time due to being a dual citizen when he submitted his candidacy.

With Sall and apparently Sonko out of the race, there is no clear frontrunner yet.

Attention is focused on Sall's chosen successor Ba, as well as long-time Sall opponents Khalifa Sall and former premier Seck, who is running for the fourth time.

The final list also includes Bassirou Diomaye Faye, whom members of Sonko's now-dissolved Pastef party in November nominated as a back-up candidate in the event of Sonko's disqualification.

Like Sonko, Faye is in detention but he remains eligible to run as there has been no ruling yet on the case against him. He faces charges including defamation and contempt of court.

(Reuters)

‘Escalating tensions amid Houthi attacks and US strikes are dangerous’

WASHINGTON - Saudi Arabia’s foreign minister said the kingdom was “very worried” that tensions in the Red Sea amid attacks by Yemen’s Houthis and U.S. strikes on Houthi targets could spiral out of control and escalate the conflict in the region.

“I mean, of course, we are very worried. I mean, you know, we are in a very difficult and dangerous time in the region, and that’s why we are calling for de-escalation,” Prince Faisal bin Farhan told CNN ‘Fareed Zakaria GPS’ in an interview that will be aired on Sunday.

Attacks by the Iran-aligned Houthi militia on ships in and around the Red Sea for the past several weeks have slowed trade between Asia and Europe and alarmed major powers in an escalation of the war in Gaza.

The Saudi foreign minister said the kingdom believed in freedom of navigation and wanted tensions in the region to be de-escalated.

“We of course, believe very much in the freedom of navigation. And that’s something that needs to be protected. But we also need to protect the security and stability of the region. So we are very focused on de-escalating the situation as much as possible,” he told CNN.

The Houthis, who control most of Yemen, say their attacks are in solidarity with Palestinians under attack from Israel in Gaza.

Since last week, the United States has been launching strikes, opens new tab on



▲ Saudi Arabia’s foreign minister Faisal bin Farhan Al-Saud.

Houthi targets in Yemen, and this week returned the militia to a list of “terrorist” groups. President Joe Biden said on Thursday that air strikes would continue even as he acknowledged they may not be halting the Houthi attacks.

The confrontation risks an expansion of the conflict beyond Hamas-governed Gaza,

where the local health ministry says over 24,000 people - or more than 1% of Gaza’s 2.3 million population - have been killed in Israel’s assault. Israel launched its offensive following Oct. 7 attacks on Israel by the Palestinian Islamist group, which Israeli officials say killed 1,200 people.

(Reuters)

Russian flight carrying six disappears over Afghanistan

KABUL/MOSCOW - A Russian-registered charter plane with six people on board disappeared from radar screens over Afghanistan a day earlier, Russian aviation authorities said on Sunday, after Afghan police said they had received reports of a crash.

The plane was a charter ambulance flight travelling from Thailand’s Utapao Airport in Pattaya to Moscow via India and Uzbekistan on a French-made Dassault Aviation (AM.PA), opens new tab Falcon 10 jet manufactured in 1978, Russian aviation authorities said in a statement.

About 25 minutes before the plane vanished from radar screens, the pilot warned that fuel was running low and that the plane would try to land at an airport in Tajikistan, Russian news outlet SHOT reported, citing an unnamed source.

The pilot then reported that one engine had stopped, and then that the second one had also stopped, SHOT reported. Reuters could not immediately confirm the details shared by SHOT.

India’s civil aviation authority said the plane was not a scheduled commercial flight or an Indian chartered aircraft and that it awaited more details.

The flight was carrying out a private medical evacuation from Thailand’s Pattaya, a popular tourist destination for Russians, to Moscow, Russian state-run TASS news agency reported, citing the Russian embassy in Bangkok.

(Reuters)

DOHA/GAZA - The toll of Palestinians killed in Israeli strikes on Gaza since Oct. 7 has passed 25,000, health officials in the enclave said on Sunday, amid heavy Israeli strikes and street battles raging across the Hamas-run Strip.

Israeli forces and Hamas fighters clashed in several locations, from Jabalia in the north to Khan Younis farther south.

Gaza’s health ministry said 178 Palestinians were killed in the past 24 hours, one of the deadliest days so far of the war. Israel’s military said a soldier was killed in fighting.

A total of 25,105 Palestinians have been killed and 62,681 have been injured in Israeli strikes since Oct. 7, the Gaza ministry said in a statement. It does not differentiate between civilian and militant deaths but says most of those killed have been civilians.

Israel launched its campaign to eliminate Hamas after the Islamist group burst into Israel on Oct 7. and rampaged through southern towns and bases killing 1,200 people, most of them civilians, and dragging 253 hostages back to the enclave.

Israeli forces have said they have cleared much of northern Gaza of Hamas’ military network and more than a million residents of that part of the enclave have moved south to flee the bombardment. However fighting has continued in the Jabalia refugee camp and other areas around Gaza City.

Palestinian still in the area described dire conditions.

“We struggle to survive bombs, but frankly we try to survive hunger more. Finding food for the family, for the children, has become a more challenging adventure than surviving

Gaza death toll from Israeli strikes over 25 000



▲ The toll of Palestinians killed in Israeli strikes on Gaza since Oct. 7 has passed 25,000

war,” Amer, 32, a father of three who lives in northern Gaza, told Reuters. He messaged via eSIM card, Gazans’ only tool to connect with the outside world amid a ninth day of disruptions to communications.

The price of flour, for example, has surged along with other food items that are hard to come by in the already impoverished territory.

“Amid the famine threatening residents of northern Gaza, the people began to grind what is available to make flour, starting with

corn and reaching to animal food,” Anas Al-Sharif, a Palestinian freelance journalist reporting from northern Gaza, posted on X.

Israel’s military said its soldiers had killed 15 Palestinian gunmen during fighting in the northern Gaza Strip, while snipers, backed by air support, had “eliminated a number of terrorists” in Khan Younis.

Hamas official Sami Abu Zuhri dismissed the Israeli account and the reported death toll, saying it was meant to “portray fake and delusional victory”.

Palestinians said fierce fighting has raged in Jabalia for the past three days. The sounds of shelling from the air and the ground were non-stop, they said. Some buildings caught fire and smoke rose where bombs had fallen.

Along Gaza’s southern coast, witnesses said Israeli naval boats shelled the beach.

In the southern city of Rafah, where over a million displaced people are concentrated, three Palestinians were killed in an Israeli air strike on a car.

(Reuters)

Mthandeni to ignite Makoti Festival

Stories by Siphesihle Dlamini
siphesihled@rubiconmedia.group

SOUTH African Maskandi sensation, Mthandeni SK, is gearing up to set the stage on fire at this year's Makoti Festival.

This fascinating event, now in its third edition, promises to be an unforgettable experience for all fun-loving individuals.

Taking place at Malkerns Country Club on April 27, 2024, the festival is set to showcase the best of Eswatini culture while paying tribute to modern women. Whether married or unmarried, the Makoti Festival embraces all women and young girls who aspire to be proud makotis in the future.

Early bird tickets for the festival are now available for purchase. Priced at E250, these tickets can be found at Howler, Computickets, and Galitos outlets.

Beyond the captivating music performances, the Makoti Festival offers a vibrant array of fashion and food stalls. This provides a platform for local entrepreneurs to showcase their creativity and culinary skills. From traditional attire to contemporary fashion trends, the festival celebrates the diversity and beauty of women from all backgrounds.

Mthandeni SK, also known as Igcokama Elisha and Indlabeyiphika, is a multi-talented South African vocalist, singer, songwriter, artist, performer, and director. With his unique voice that radiates positive energy and inspiration, Mthandeni SK has earned the title



▲ Maskandi sensation Mthandeni SK will on this year's Makoti Festival line-up.

of the best South African vocalist.

Since his debut album, "I Thousand," released on June 10, 2017, under his independent record label, Mthandeni Music Production, the singer has seen tremendous success.

Album

The album, consisting of 15 tracks written and produced by Mthandeni himself, sold over 5 million copies across

various digital music platforms.

Continuing his streak of success, Mthandeni SK released his latest album, "Amakhothangqoko," on August 12, 2023. The project, comprising 11 tracks, showcases the artist's growth and versatility. Released under his independent label, Mthandeni Music Production, the album has already garnered widespread acclaim.

Dr Shakes, Ndosh to face off in epic eating competition

IT is set to be a side-splitting showdown as local comedy legends, Dr Shakes and Ndosh WebeNguni, prepare to engage in an epic eating competition at the Cypress Basket.

This highly anticipated event, scheduled for January 27, 2024, promises to be a feast, both literally and figuratively. The Cypress Basket, renowned for its delectable cuisine and vibrant atmosphere, will play host to this double birthday celebration for the comedic duo. Dr Shakes and Ndosh WebeNguni, beloved for their hilarious punchlines and quick wit, will now put their gastronomic prowess to the test.

The challenge is no small feat - the comedians will be tasked with devouring an entire unchopped chicken, accompanied by four rolls and a refreshing liter of cold drink. This formidable feast will undoubtedly push their appetites to the limit.

In an exclusive interview with Ndosh Webenguni, he revealed that he has been diligently preparing for this monumental event. He said he has been following the Daniel fast, abstaining from meat since December 26, 2023, to prime his stomach for the impending gastronomic clash.

Confident and ready for the challenge, Dr Shakes expressed excitement, assuring fans that this competition will be a spectacle to remember. He extended gratitude to Cypress



▲ Dr Shakes and Ndosh WebeNguni.

Basket for organizing such a unique and thrilling event.

He emphasized that he is not only representing himself but also his



hometown of Mbabane. Determined to emerge victorious, he has even embarked on a rigorous exercise regimen, determined to conquer the "Goliath of Manzini."



▲ Rapper Mr Kangaroo.

Mr Kangaroo throws shades at Lisulumane in a diss track

ESWATINI'S music scene is heating up as rapper Mr Kangaroo took aim at fellow musician Lisulumane in a scathing diss track that has sent shockwaves through social media.

Titled "Umdanti we-illuminati," Mr Kangaroo's latest release takes direct aim at Lisulumane's ostentatious display of "Illuminati"-inspired tattoos. The song not only questions Lisulumane's belief in these supposed dark powers but also accuses him of using them as a publicity stunt.

Diss track

On the song, Mr Kangaroo revealed that Lisulumane has been targeting him for years, releasing a total of five diss tracks. However, instead of retaliating with anger, Mr Kangaroo took a different approach. He also boldly claimed that this diss track would help revive Lisulumane's career and propel him into the limelight.

The release of this diss track has caused a major stir on social media, with users divided into two camps. Some applaud Mr Kangaroo for his clever wordplay and lyrical prowess, while others defend Lisulumane and criticize Mr Kangaroo for his audacity.

Social media platforms have been flooded with posts and comments, with fans and critics alike engaging in heated debates about the merits of both musicians.

While some argue that this diss track is simply a publicity stunt or a way to generate controversy, others believe it highlights the competitive nature of the music industry and the importance of artistic expression.

Stories by Siphesihle Dlamini
siphesihled@rubiconmedia.group

FUN lovers are set to be stunned as South African Amapiano sensation, Young Stunna, takes centre stage as the headliner for the highly anticipated third edition of ‘The First Assembly.’

Joining Young Stunna on stage will be a lineup of talented local acts, including Linda Dlamini, Zulu D, Sbu Drum DJ, The Prefect, Supa CDQ, Tilungu, Matamza, The Bishops, and the Mega Lounge All Stars. With such an impressive lineup, the atmosphere is sure to be pulsating with energy and excitement.

Mega Lounge will be transformed into a vibrant schoolyard on January 27, 2024, as ‘students’ from all walks of life gather for this back-to-school-themed event. Attendees are encouraged to dress in school uniforms, adding a nostalgic twist to the festivities and creating a unique and immersive experience.

To enter this extraordinary gathering, ‘school fees’ have been set at E150, while those seeking a more exclusive experience can opt for the private class ticket priced at E250. The event will commence at noon and continue late into the night, ensuring

‘Principal’ Young Stunna for the First Assembly

that partygoers have ample time to revel in the excitement and enjoy the non-stop entertainment.

However, The First Assembly is not just about having a good time. This three-year-old initiative also aims to make a positive impact on the community. Attendees are encouraged to bring donations such as old school uniforms, clothes, shoes, sanitary towels, and food parcels for the less privileged.

By doing so, they can contribute to creating a brighter future for those in need.

Young Stunna, known for his chart-topping hits “Bopha” and “Adiwele,” is a South African singer who has taken the music scene by storm. His debut studio album, “Notumato,” released in 2021, reached number one in South Africa, solidifying his position as a rising star. The album’s commercial success led to it being certified Platinum by RiSA, further cementing Young Stunna’s status as a musical force to be reckoned with.

► Young Stunna slated for Mega Lounge’s First Assembly.



Mdura added to ‘Love & Laughter’

LOCAL comedy sensation Mdura has been announced as the latest addition to the highly anticipated Love & Laughter event.

Set to be headlined by the renowned Simunye Church Boy, this annual Valentine’s show promises to be a night filled with humor, joy, and unforgettable performances.

Scheduled to take place on February 23, 2024, at Happy Valley Hotel, Love & Laughter aims to kickstart the year with a delightful blend of comedy and entertainment. Simunye Church Boy, a sought-after comedian known for his unique approach that intertwines his Christian faith with his craft, is set to take center stage and captivate the audience with his witty humor and relatable anecdotes.

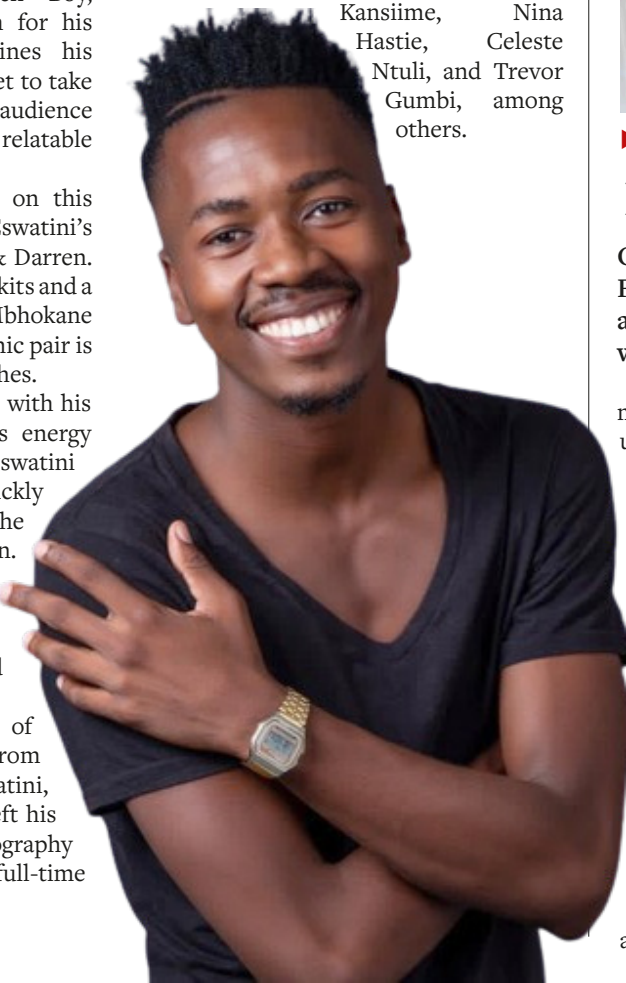
Joining Simunye Church Boy on this laughter-filled night will be Eswatini’s beloved comedy duo, Bongiswa & Darren. With their hilarious social media skits and a nod to the legendary radio duo, Mbhokane and S’gcokos’yancinca, this dynamic pair is sure to leave the audience in stitches.

However, stealing the spotlight with his undeniable talent and infectious energy is Mdura. Bursting onto the Eswatini comedy scene in 2015, Mdura quickly made a name for himself in the “LOL” comedy competition. With his comedy inspired by everyday life experiences, relationships, stereotypes, and his journey, Mdura impressed both judges and audiences alike.

Having obtained a Bachelor of Arts in Social Science degree from the esteemed University of Eswatini, Mdura took a leap of faith and left his full-time job as a high school geography teacher to pursue comedy as a full-time

career. In doing so, he became the first professional comedian in Eswatini, paving the way for future talents in the industry.

Mdura’s rise to fame continued as he became the first Eswatini comedian to host a one-man show. In 2016, he released a DVD for his second one-man show titled “Zero Chill,” solidifying his status as a comedic force to be reckoned with. His talent has taken him across borders, performing in countries such as South Africa, Botswana, Ethiopia, and Nigeria. Along the way, he has shared the stage with comedy greats like Sifiso Nene, Thenjiwe, AY Comedian, Kansiime, Nina Hastie, Celeste Ntuli, and Trevor Gumbi, among others.



► Comedian Mdura.



► Saxophonist Fakazi Samuel will perform at the inaugural Cheese and Wine event.

Fakazi Samuel billed for Cheese and Wine

ONE of Eswatini’s best saxophonists, Fakazi Samuel, is set to grace the stage at the inaugural Cheese and Wine with Kings and Queens event.

Hosted by Eclipse, this elegant and masquerade-themed affair promises an unforgettable evening of music, dance, and indulgence. The event will take place at Sibayeni Lodge on February 10, 2024.

Cheese and Wine with Kings and Queens is not only a celebration of music but also a fusion of dance styles. In addition to Fakazi Samuel’s captivating performance, the event will feature captivating Salsa, Ballroom Latin American, Bachata, and Kizomba dance routines. Audiences can expect a night of elegance, enchantment, and rhythmic bliss. The event also revealed poet Majaha Nkonyane as a performer and comedian Mdura as a program director.

Tickets for the event are priced at E250 for general admission and E500 for VIP access, available exclusively at Galitos.

As the Cheese and Wine extravaganza promises to be a night to remember, attendees are encouraged to secure their tickets early to avoid missing out on this remarkable experience.

Fakazi Samuel’s musical journey began in 2010 when he joined the renowned band G-Light. Since then, he has continuously honed his craft, captivating audiences with his mesmerizing saxophone melodies. His exceptional talent has led him to become an integral part of the esteemed church band, Praise Unlimited.

Known for his versatility, Fakazi Samuel has collaborated with numerous local artists, showcasing his ability to seamlessly blend his saxophone prowess with various genres. From working alongside Nduduzo Matse, Linda Dlamini, and Harmony Trinity to sharing the stage with Sunshine Em, France Dlamini, Symphony, and Amanda Mo, Fakazi Samuel has established himself as one of Eswatini’s most celebrated musicians.

‘Barbenheimer’ sitting pretty as Oscar nominations to be unveiled

NOMINATIONS for this year’s Oscars will be unveiled on Tuesday, with the ‘Barbenheimer’ juggernaut expected to roll on to the climax of Hollywood’s awards season with multiple chances at glory.

After a combined \$2.4-billion global box office take, ‘Barbie’ and ‘Oppenheimer’ - two films linked only by their simultaneous release last July - are seen as locks for a suite of nods for the 96th Academy Awards, which take place on March 10.

“It continues to be their year, and we expect them to dominate the nominations,” Pete Hammond, columnist for industry site Deadline, told AFP.

With its clutch of five Golden Globes and momentum on its side, ‘Oppenheimer’ - Christopher Nolan’s masterly portrait of the father of the atomic bomb - appears to have the edge in the race for best picture, the Academy’s top prize.

Greta Gerwig’s popular ‘Barbie’ - a sharp satire about misogyny and female empowerment - is playing catch-up after an initial burst of awards optimism faded.

The film, which had nine nominations for the Globes, left with just two consolation prizes - best song and a newly created trophy for box office achievement.

And, said Hammond, it faces an uphill battle to turn its audience gold into major Oscars success.

“Comedies, or something considered lighter, are generally at a disadvantage against something a little heavier,” he said.

“So in the world of Barbenheimer, ‘Oppenheimer’ definitely has the advantage because it’s got gravitas; it’s important.”

Rounding out the best picture category, nominations are widely expected for Martin Scorsese’s crime saga ‘Killers of the Flower Moon’ and Venice Film Festival winner ‘Poor Things,’ a female-focused take on the Frankenstein myth.

Christmas boarding school tale ‘The Holdovers’ is already being spoken of as a durable seasonal classic, while Leonard Bernstein biopic ‘Maestro,’ which sees Bradley Cooper in front and behind the camera, also appears well placed.

A year for women directors?

Between Justine Triet’s ‘Anatomy,’ Gerwig’s ‘Barbie’ and ‘Past Lives,’ a Korean-American drama by Celine Song, the fight for the best picture Oscar could include three works directed by women, a historic first.

Over nine-and-a-half decades of awards, only 19 films by female directors have been nominated for the top prize.

“It could be the biggest year ever for women, in terms of the best picture race,” said Hammond.

In the acting categories, the two summer blockbusters seem likely to garner nominations for their stars -- Cillian Murphy as scientist J. Robert Oppenheimer, consumed by the devastating consequences of his creation, and Margot Robbie as a perfect doll tormented by morbid thoughts.

The two films’ supporting actors could also be recognized - Robert Downey Jr shines as a foil to Oppenheimer more concerned with his own political fortunes than understanding quantum physics, while Ryan Gosling is remarkable as an emasculated Ken.

(AFP)



▲ Margot Robbie, who stars in Barbie (l) and Cillian Murphy who stars in Oppenheimer.



▲ Nominations for this year’s Oscars will be unveiled on Tuesday, with the ‘Barbenheimer’ juggernaut expected to roll on to the climax of Hollywood’s awards season with multiple chances at glory.

Fans accuse Madonna of ‘flippant difficulty,’ sue her for late gigs

TWO Madonna fans are suing the megastar for damages over concerts in New York that started two hours late, accusing her of “flippant difficulty,” court documents show.

Michael Fellows and Jonathan Hadden are suing Madonna as well as touring giant LiveNation and New York venue the Barclays Center for an unspecified amount over late starts of her ‘Celebration Tour’ gigs in December 2023.

“The concerts at the Barclays Center were advertised to start at 8:30pm, but Madonna did not take the stage until after 10:30pm on all three nights, with most concert attendees leaving the Barclays Center after 1am,” read the court documents obtained Friday.

“Madonna had demonstrated flippant difficulty in ensuring a timely or complete performance... (that) resulted in the ticket holders waiting for hours for the concerts to begin.

“Others were left stranded in the middle of the night because they missed their arranged ride home or public transportation.”

The complaint, filed in a Brooklyn federal court on Wednesday, alleges that “Madonna has a long history of arriving and starting her concerts late, sometimes several hours late.”

The Barclays Center, LiveNation



▲ Two Madonna fans are suing the megastar for damages over concerts in New York that started two hours late, accusing her of “flippant difficulty,” court documents show.

and a representative for Madonna did not respond to requests for comment.

Madonna was admitted to hospital in June 2023 with a bacterial infection that saw her treated in an intensive care unit. The illness required Madonna to postpone her near sell out, 84-date ‘Celebration’ tour that was due to start July 15, forcing the

delay of the New York dates at the centre of the litigation to December.

The Grammy-winning icon behind classics including ‘Like A Virgin’ and ‘Material Girl’ has asserted incalculable influence as one of music’s top stars. In 2020 she underwent hip replacement surgery following an injury sustained on her ‘Madame X’ tour.

Kristen Stewart threatens to quit Hollywood

KRISTEN Stewart has threatened to quit Hollywood if she fails to secure funding to get her directorial debut off the ground.

The ‘Twilight’ star is hoping to step behind the camera to make her first movie as a director but she has yet to secure a deal to bring ‘The Chronology of Water’ to the big screen - and Stewart has now declared she’s not going work in the business again until she finds support for the film.

Speaking to Variety ahead of the Sundance Film Festival in Utah, she explained: “I’m going to make this movie before I ever work for someone else.

“Yeah, I will

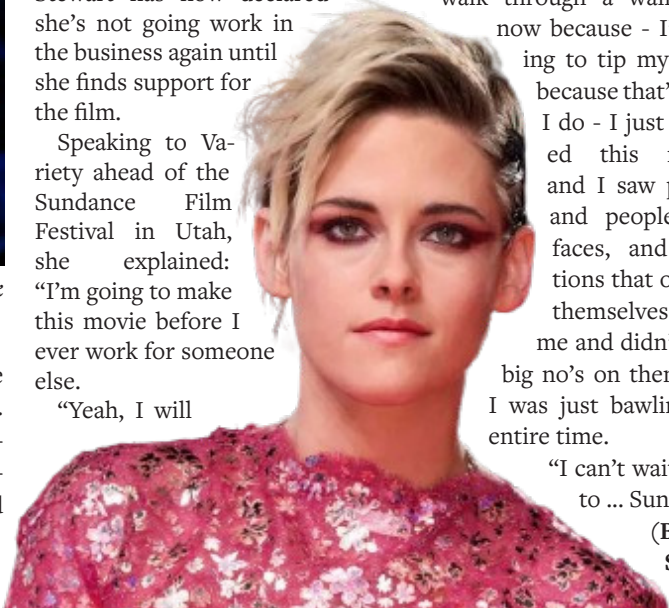
quit the ... business. I won’t make [another] movie until I make this movie. I will tell you that, for sure. I think that will get things going.”

Stewart went on to reveal she broke down in tears while working on her plans for the film, and she’s really hoping the project comes together during her time at Sundance.

She added: “I feel like I could walk through a wall right now because - I’m going to tip my hand, because that’s what I do - I just scouted this movie, and I saw places, and people, and faces, and locations that opened themselves up to me and didn’t have big no’s on them, and I was just bawling the entire time.

“I can’t wait to go to ... Sundance.

(Bang Showbiz)



▲ Kristen Stewart has threatened to quit Hollywood.



THE best way to start a running routine is to keep it simple.

Don't worry about following a complicated program.

So, you've caught the running bug and want to get into a regular running routine. But where do you start, and how do you pace yourself?

Not to worry. We've got the tips, strategies, and training plans you need to get started and stay motivated. And if you think you're ready to tackle a 5K, we have training advice for that, too.

What you need to get started

Running is simple, right? All you need is a pair of shoes, and out the door you go. Well, not so fast.

Yes, you do need a good pair of running shoes, but other essential items can help make your training more successful and more enjoyable, too. And, let's face it, if you enjoy an activity, you're more likely to stick with it.

Invest in a good pair of running shoes

Hitting the pavement requires more than a pair of Vans or Converse. To reduce injuries and increase comfort, you need shoes that are designed specifically for running.

Ideally, you should get fitted for shoes at a running specialty store or with a podiatrist. If that's not possible, do some research and look for a pair of running shoes that fits your needs.

Opt for comfortable, sweat-wicking clothing

When it comes to clothes, comfort is key. Stick with lightweight pants, shorts, and shirts designed for fitness activities.

Look for sweat-wicking material and also consider the weather. Wearing layers in the winter helps keep you warm and allows you to remove clothing as necessary once you start warming up.

Cushioned running socks are also essential. Again, look for labels that say "sweat-wicking," and consider wool running socks in the winter. And finally, don't forget a supportive sports bra.

Use technology to track your progress

Activity and fitness trackers like Fitbit, Garmin, and others can help keep you motivated and on track with your running goals.

Many of these wearable gadgets can keep track of:

- The distance you've run
- How many steps you've run
- How many calories you've burned
- Your running pace
- Your heart rate

Create a running playlist

A great way to stay motivated is to listen to your favorite tunes while running. Create a playlist with the music most likely to keep you moving. That said, be sure to use your headphones wisely. You may want to use just one earbud, which allows you to stay alert and aware of what's going on around you.

A beginner's week-at-a-glance running routine

Your initial goal is to build confidence and stamina. To do this, Steve Stonehouse, NASM CPT, USATF run coach and director of education for STRIDE, suggests aiming for

Tips, strategies for starting a running routine



two to three runs each week at an easy to moderate pace.

"You can always add techniques like speed work and tempo runs later, but right now, it's just about getting your body used to the work," he said.

For example, a beginner's week-at-a-glance running routine might look like this:

Beginner's training routine

► **Monday:** Run 2 miles at a moderate pace with a walk/run technique. For the first mile, run for 1 minute and walk for 1 minute. For the second mile, run for 90 seconds and walk for 1 minute.

► **Tuesday:** Focus on full-body strength training.

► **Wednesday:** Make this an active rest day. Take a walk, or do some light yoga and stretching.

► **Thursday:** Run 2 miles at a moderate pace with a walk/run technique. Try to increase your pace slightly from your previous run. For the first mile, run for 1 minute and walk for 1 minute. For the second mile, run for 90 seconds and walk for 1 minute.

► **Friday:** Focus on full-body strength training.

► **Saturday:** Do 30 to 60 minutes of cardio, such as walking, cycling, or

swimming.

► **Sunday:** Make this an active rest day. Take a walk, or do some light yoga and stretching.

As you gain strength and stamina, you can gradually start increasing the distance you run, or you can add an extra day of running to your weekly routine. Decide what works best for you, but do it slowly.

How to train for a 5K

While it might be tempting to go all out, it's not the best way to get started.

"Following a structured training plan that increases your mileage over several weeks is essential for your health, safety, and motivation," Stonehouse said.

This advice is based on the fact that he's seen many first-timers crank out too many miles during the early days of their training.

"Those extra miles can take their toll, and I've seen more new runners injured in training than in the race," he explained. To avoid this, Stonehouse suggests increasing your weekly mileage by 10% at a time, at the most.

"While this may not seem like much of a weekly increase, the No. 1 rule is to stay healthy, and being conservative usually helps you accomplish that," Stonehouse said.

Many online 5K training plans for beginners use 4, 6, 8, and 10-week cycles.

To get started, you can follow the sample training plan outlined above, but add the following:

► **Weeks 1-2:** Follow the sample training plan outlined above.

► **Weeks 3-4:** Swap out the cardio day on Saturday for a 3-mile run. Run/walk this day.

► **Weeks 5-6:** Swap out the cardio day on Saturday for a 3-mile run. Try to run with minimal walking.

How to stay motivated

Running, like many other activities, has a honeymoon period — a time when everything feels great, and you can hardly wait to lace up your shoes and hit the trail.

Then, you may find that this enthusiasm starts to wane.

Whether you're already struggling in the motivation department or you want to get in front of it, it's helpful to know how to prevent getting burned out.

► **Keep it simple:** Rule No. 1 to staying motivated, especially in the beginning, is to keep it simple. Stick to a fitness plan that includes 2 days a week of running.

► **Increase miles gradually:** As you gain stamina and confidence, you can



adjust your running schedule from 2 days of running to 3. You can also add mileage to your running days — but don't add an extra day and miles simultaneously.

► **Run with a partner:** If you need some accountability to keep you motivated, try enlisting the help of a friend, family member, or running group. Meeting with others who share a common goal can help you feel energized.

► **Set and track goals:** When you set goals and challenge yourself to meet them, it can keep you motivated. When you reach your goal, reward yourself, then set a new goal.

► **Monitor your progress:** Keeping track of your running progress can inspire and motivate you to reach new goals. You can use an activity tracker to log your weekly miles, running pace, or calories burned.

How to stay safe while you run

Food and hydration: Sticking to a running routine requires proper fuel in the form of food and liquids, preferably water. Be sure to stay hydrated by drinking fluids before, during, and after your run.

No headphones or maybe just one: Whether it's cars, cyclists, or other runners, Stonehouse says hearing what's happening around you is key to staying safe. If you want to listen to music, he recommends wearing only one headphone or ditching the headphones and using the speaker on your phone.

► **Slow and steady wins the race:** Ask any seasoned runner about their biggest training mistake, and you'll likely hear they ran too much too soon. Whether running as part of an overall fitness plan or training for a race, increasing mileage gradually over time is key.

► **Cross-train for overall fitness:** Running shouldn't be your only form of exercise. To reduce your risk of injury and increase your running performance, it's important to cross-train. Strength training, swimming, cycling, and yoga are excellent additions to your weekly workouts. Aim for 2 days a week of strength training, focusing on major muscle groups.

► **Stretching before and after running:** Carve out 5 to 10 minutes before and 5 to 10 minutes after your run to stretch. Focus on dynamic stretches before exercise and static stretches, such as the quad stretch afterward.

► **Rest up:** Rest days not only help you recover, but they also allow you to become a better runner. Active rest days and total rest days can help prevent overtraining syndrome (OTS). According to the American Council on Exercise, OTS can cause your fitness levels to decrease and increase your risk of running-related injuries.

The bottom line

A regular running routine offers a wide variety of benefits. Not only will it help boost your cardiovascular fitness, but it can also improve your blood flow and brain function while reducing stress and lowering your risk of certain health conditions.

Finding success with a running routine requires patience, persistence, and time. Making a commitment, following a plan, and being consistent with your training are great places to start. Make sure to check with your doctor before you start a running program, especially if you have a health condition. Your doctor can help you decide how much and what activity is safe for you. **Healthline**

Most important diet changes for anyone new to Type 2 diabetes

Overview

EATING a well-balanced diet is an important part of managing type 2 diabetes.

In the short-term, the meals and snacks you eat affect your blood sugar levels. In the long term, your eating habits may affect your risk of developing complications from type 2 diabetes. Read on to learn about some of the healthy changes you can make to your diet.

Practice portion control

If you're overweight, losing 5 to 10 percent of your bodyweight may help lower your blood sugar levels, according to researchers in the journal Diabetes Care.

► Losing weight might also reduce your risk of developing heart disease, a common complication of type 2 diabetes.

► To help you achieve and maintain your target weight, your doctor will likely encourage you to practice portion control.

► Depending on your current weight, eating habits, and medical history, they may advise you to try to cut back on the number of calories in your meals or snacks.

► Practicing portion control can also help keep your blood sugar levels within target range.

Choose foods that are rich in nutrients

Eating a wide variety of nutrient-dense foods can help you meet your body's nutritional needs. In general, "nutrient-dense" food means a food that contains a high number of nutrients — such as vitamins and minerals — for its size or caloric value.

Nutrient-dense foods include:

- Fruits and vegetables
- Legumes, such as beans and lentils
- Whole grains, such as whole wheat and brown rice
- Nuts and seeds, such as almonds and sunflower seeds
- Lean sources of proteins, such as chicken and lean cuts of pork
- Fish and eggs
- Dairy products, such as unsweetened yogurt

However, depending on your health needs, your doctor or dietitian might advise you to limit some of these foods.

For example, some people with type 2 diabetes might benefit from following a low-carbohydrate diet that limits fruits, starchy vegetables, dried legumes, and grains.

If that's the case for you, stick to nutrient-rich foods that are also low in carbohydrates, such as lean proteins, nuts, and seeds. Certain vegetables — like leafy greens or broccoli — are chockful of nutrients but low in carbohydrates.

Regardless of the specific eating pattern that you follow, it's best to eat foods that contain lots of nutrients at every meal.



Limit your intake of refined carbohydrates

Refined carbohydrates tend to be low in nutrients but high in calories. Eating too many of them may raise your blood sugar levels and contribute to weight gain.

Foods that are rich in refined carbohydrates include:

- Sugar-sweetened foods and drinks, such as candy, cookies, and soda
- Refined grain products, including white rice, white bread, and white pasta
- Fruit juices

To help manage your blood sugar levels and weight, it's best to save these foods for the occasional treat. Instead, reach for whole grain products or other foods that are high in nutrients and fiber.

Choose foods with heart-healthy fats

According to the American Diabetes Association, the types of fat that you eat are more important than the total amount of fat that you eat. To lower your risk of heart disease, the organization recommends eating foods that are rich in monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats.

Common sources of these healthy fats include:

- Avocado
- Nuts, such as almonds, cashews, walnuts, and peanuts
- Seeds, such as pumpkin seeds, sunflower seeds, and sesame seeds
- Fatty fish, such as tuna, salmon, sardines, and mackerel
- Soybean products, such as tofu
- Olive oil
- Canola oil
- Cottonseed oil
- Corn oil
- Flaxseed oil
- Peanut oil

- Safflower oil
- Soybean oil
- Sunflower oil

On the other hand, the organization recommends limiting your intake of saturated fat and avoiding trans fat.

Sources of saturated fat to avoid include:

- High-fat meats, such as regular ground beef, sausage, bacon, bologna, and hotdogs
- High-fat dairy products, such as cream, whole milk, and full-fat cheese
- Poultry skin, such as chicken skin or turkey skin
- Butter
- Lard
- Coconut oil
- Palm oil and palm kernel oil

Sources of trans fat include:

- Processed snack foods, such as potato chips
- Stick margarine
- Shortening

Make an appointment with a registered dietitian

Beyond these basic principles, there's no one-size-fits-all eating pattern for when you're living with type 2 diabetes.

Some people find it helpful to follow the Mediterranean or DASH eating pattern. These eating patterns are rich in whole grains, legumes, and other complex carbohydrates. Other people have reported success with low-carbohydrate eating plans. This style of eating focuses on foods that are high in protein and low in carbohydrates.

The best approach is likely one that's customized to your needs and preferences.

To help you develop an eating plan that works for you, consider asking your doctor for a referral to a registered dietitian.

A dietitian can help you design a personalized plan that meets your health needs, while taking your food preferences, cooking habits, and budget into account.

Healthline

AROUND THE WORLD IN PICTURES



▲ A Ukrainian serviceman of the Rarog UAV squadron of the 24th Separate Mechanized Brigade operates a first person view (FPV) drone at a position near the town of Horlivka, n Donetsk region, Ukraine



▲ Homeless people who live at the Suhrawardy Udyan light a fire to warm themselves, as temperature drops significantly during winter in Dhaka, Bangladesh.



▲ An aerial view of a snow-covered Highmark Stadium during the 2024 AFC wild card game between the Pittsburgh Steelers and the Buffalo Bills in Orchard Park, New York.



▲ Ice swimmer Fenwick Ridley takes a cold water swim class into a manmade ice channel in Sweethope Loughs ahead of open water practise, in Harle, Northumberland, Britain



▲ A girl sits in a makeshift cart as Palestinians wait to receive food amid shortages of food supplies, in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip.

SA's Du Plessis new UFC middleweight champion

TORONTO - Dricus du Plessis outpointed Sean Strickland to claim a split-decision win and the UFC middleweight title at UFC 297 at the Scotiabank Arena on Saturday, becoming South Africa's first world champion in the promotion.

In the co-main event, Raquel Pennington came on strong over the final two rounds to secure a unanimous decision win over Mayra Bueno Silva to take the vacant women's bantamweight crown.

Despite some stiff jabs from Strickland, who won the belt in September with a huge upset of Israel Adesanya, Du Plessis had the better of the opening exchanges.

The 30-year-old continued to push the American back in the subsequent rounds but while he enjoyed plenty of success with takedowns he could not keep Strickland on the mat for any length of time.

Du Plesis continued to mix up his striking, aiming thudding kicks to the body and landing several left high kicks to keep Strickland guessing. With a stream of blood running from a cut on his left eye, Strickland opened up late in the final round with a series of huge punches but was unable to find a finish and the fight went to the judges' scorecards.



▲ Dricus du Plessis outpointed Sean Strickland to claim a split-decision win and the UFC middleweight title at UFC 297 at the Scotiabank Arena on Saturday, becoming South Africa's first world champion in the promotion.

Du Plessis earned the split decision victory and sank to his knees in tears before thanking his coaches.

"I honestly thought with the take-downs, I made sure in every round. I

could feel it was a close one, I definitely gave him the first round," a triumphant Du Plesis said in a post-fight interview before calling out former champ Adesanya. (Reuters)

Bayern suffer shock loss, drop seven points behind

MUNICH, Germany - Bayern Munich slumped to a 1-0 home loss to Werder Bremen on Sunday after a Mitchell Weiser goal to stay seven points adrift of leaders Bayer Leverkusen in the Bundesliga title race.

It was Werder's first victory in Munich since 2008 and the champions' second league loss of the campaign.

Bayern have now failed to score in a home league game for the first time since February 2020, ending a run of 65 consecutive home games with at least one goal.

The result leaves them on 41 points in second place with a game

in hand. Leverkusen are on 48 following their last-gasp 3-2 win over RB Leipzig on Saturday. VfB Stuttgart are in third place on 34.

The hosts, who face Union Berlin in their postponed league game on Wednesday, looked far from fresh following a short training camp in Portugal earlier this week.

They had possession but struggled throughout to break down a disciplined Werder backline.

The visitors also put the ball in the net with a quick 25th-minute break only for Justin Njinmah's effort to be disallowed for a foul at the start of the move.

Former Bayern player Weiser, however, did open the scoring in the

59th minute, charging into the box, then shaking off Alphonso Davies and firing an unstoppable shot past keeper Manuel Neuer.

The hosts then poured forward but had no clear plan with top scorer Harry Kane missing the target with a close-range header in the 72nd.

Werder keeper Michael Zetterer then palmed a Leroy Sane shot wide in the 79th before tipping the ball away from Kane's head a little later.

Bayern substitutes Eric-Maxim Choupo Moting and Mathys Tel also had their share of chances but Zetterer stood firm as the visitors held on to secure the win.

(Reuters)



▲ Bayern Munich's Thomas Mueller and teammates look dejected after the match.



▲ FIFA president Gianni Infantino has called for harsher penalties, including automatic forfeits, against teams whose fans commit racist abuse, following two incidents on Saturday.

Infantino calls teams to take on automatic forfeits if their fans commit racist abuse

FIFA president Gianni Infantino has called for harsher penalties, including automatic forfeits, against teams whose fans commit racist abuse, following two incidents on Saturday.

Coventry City's Kasey Palmer was allegedly subject to a racist gesture during their Championship game against Sheffield Wednesday, while AC Milan's players walked off in solidarity after Mike Maignan reported monkey noises from a section of Udinese supporters.

gestures towards him, leading to a stoppage in play.

The 27-year-old appeared upset at the full-time whistle where he was comforted by team-mates and manager Mark Robins.

Palmer addressed the abuse in a post on social media following the match, writing: 'Disappointed to even have to come on here and write this.

'Racism is a disgrace...it has no place in the world, let alone football.

'I'm black and proud and I am raising my three kids to be the exact same.

In a post on X (formerly Twitter), Infantino said he believed that there had to be sterner punishments for clubs whose fans are racially abusive.

The statement, published on behalf of FIFA, read: 'The events that took place in Udine and Sheffield on Saturday are totally abhorrent and completely unacceptable. There is no place for racism or any form of discrimination - both in football and in society. The players affected by Saturday's events have my undivided support.

'I'll be honest, it feels like things will never change, no matter how hard we try.

'Couple fans doing monkey chants don't define a fan base - I appreciate all the love and support I've received.'

Sheffield Wednesday stated they were 'shocked and saddened' by the incident, which came during a game Coventry won 2-1.

In Italy, AC Milan goalkeeper Maignan and his team-mates walked off the pitch during the first half of their Serie A match at Udinese on Saturday evening.

The 28-year-old left the action shortly after his team had taken the lead, apparently indicating to referee Fabio Maresca he had heard racist abuse from the crowd at the Stadio Friuli.

The French goalkeeper is the first player to ask for the match to be suspended due to racist abuse.

On Sunday, AC Milan said they would not post on social media as a show of support for Maignan.

'Following the unacceptable events during the match against Udinese, AC Milan has decided to not post any social media content today, 21 January 2024, in support of Mike Maignan and the fight against racism. #WeRespect,' the club said in a post on X.

(Daily Mail)

'We need ALL the relevant stakeholders to take action, starting with education in schools so that future generations understand that this is not part of football or society.

'As well as the three-step process (match stopped, match re-stopped, match abandoned), we have to implement an automatic forfeit for the team whose fans have committed racism and caused the match to be abandoned as well as worldwide stadium bans and criminal charges for racists.

'FIFA and football shows full solidarity to victims of racism and any form of discrimination. Once and for all: No to racism! No to any form of discrimination!'

Palmer reported to referee Anthony Backhouse that a supporter had made monkey



AFRICA CUP OF NATIONS

Côte d'Ivoire 2023



DR Congo deny Morocco perfect start in thrilling 1-all draw

ACHRAF Hakimi's early opener was cancelled out as DR Congo held highly-rated Morocco to a pulsating 1-1 draw at the TotalEnergies CAF Africa Cup of Nations on Sunday. The Atlas Lions took the lead inside just six minutes when Hakimi rifled home after being teed up by Hakim Ziyech.

Penalty

But DR Congo were handed a route back into the Group F clash when VAR awarded a penalty after a Moroccan handball in the box on 42 minutes. Cedric Bakambu stepped up but squandered the golden opportunity to equalise as Yassine Bounou dived in the right but the ball went wide even before the Moroccan

goalkeeper could intervene. However, the Leopards finally drew level with 15 minutes left when Silas Katompwa Mvumpa converted Elia Meschack's assist. The sides could not be separated in an entertaining encounter as both retained hopes of reaching the knockouts. The draw leaves Morocco top on four points, DR Congo second on two and all still to play for in Group F.

Matches

Morocco face Zambia next while DR Congo tackle Tanzania in their final pool matches on Wednesday. After this compelling match between the group's leading lights, both still have AFCON qualification in their own hands.

(Reuters)



▲Acraf Hakimi celebrates after scoring against DR Congo during the 1-all draw.



▲Bafana Bafana players celebrate one of their goals in the 4 - 0 thrashing of Namibia.

Bafana bounce back with emphatic win

SOUTH Africa have revived their Africa Cup of Nations campaign with an emphatic 4-0 win over regional rivals Namibia in a Group E match played at the Amadou Gon Coulibaly Stadium in Korhogo on Sunday night. Percy Tau opened the scoring before Themba Zwane added two outstanding goals, as Bafana Bafana blitzed the wasteful Brave Warriors and effectively had the game wrapped up inside the first 40 minutes. Thapelo Maseko added a fourth in the second half to round out a fine display from the 1996 continental champions.

The result sees South Africa rise to second place on the log on three points, one behind leaders Mali, with Namibia dropping back to third place (three points), and Tunisia (one point) rounding out the quartet.

Namibia had early attacking salvos from Prins Tjjeza and Peter Shalulile – neither of which was capitalised on.

South Africa were then awarded a penalty – via a VAR review – for an inadvertent handball from Namibia defender Riaan Hanamub.

Percy Tau, who missed a spot kick in the first match against Mali, secured redemption with a ruthless finish from the penalty to make it 1-0 in favour of Bafana Bafana in the 14th minute.

The Brave Warriors created fine chances to equalise, with Hanamub putting in a couple of great crosses from the left, but they again

failed to convert and were punished by a second South African goal.

On 25 minutes Bafana opened space down the right for Thapelo Morena – he provided a low cutback to pick out the late run into the box of Themba Zwane, who swept home a superb first-time finish to make it 2-0.

Ten minutes later Sphephelo Sithole had an opportunity to put South Africa three goals up, as Teboho Mokoena's corner kick evaded the goalkeeper's grasp, but his downward header from close range bounced up and over the crossbar.

Yet Bafana Bafana only had to wait until the 40th minute to make it 3-0, with Zwane picking up a pass from Evidence Makgopa, powering down the left of the penalty area and providing another classy finish past Lloyd Kazapua. Namibia made two changes at the start of the second half, introducing Ngero Katua and Bethuel Muzeu off the bench, but they were unable to gain a foothold in the match and South Africa ultimately added to their advantage in the 75th minute when substitute Thapelo Maseko ran onto Mokoena's long ball and fired a drive through the grasp of the goalkeeper.

The teams will wrap up their Group E campaigns on Wednesday 24 January, with South Africa tackling Tunisia in Korhogo, at the same time that Namibia face Mali in San-Pedro.

(Supersport)

Salah's fitness unclear as statement expected

ABIDJAN : Egypt's Mohamed Salah said a statement on his injury at the Africa Cup of Nations will be made by his country and Premier League club Liverpool, leaving up in air whether he will be able to compete further at the tournament in the Ivory Coast.

The Liverpool forward and Egypt captain limped out of his country's last match on Thursday and has already been ruled out of their last Group B game against the Cape Verde Islands in Abidjan on Monday.

But he did not give clarity on the prospect of his continued participation if Egypt advance to the knockout stage, which starts at the weekend. "There will be a joint statement between the national team and Liverpool regarding the injury today or tomorrow at the latest," Salah told Sunday's press conference.

It suggests there might be a return to Liverpool in the next days for Salah, 31, to continue treatment on the injury.

"My injury is still there but the most important thing now is to speak about the game," he

told reporters. "Our primary goal is to secure qualification for the next round, with skilled players, a good coach and a clear vision.

"We're fully committed to giving our best in the tournament and we just need to fight and see what will happen," he added of the game with Cape Verde, who despite being the smallest country at the finals have already secured top place in the group.

Salah also spoke about the fact he has yet to win a trophy with Egypt, having twice been a runner-up at the Cup of Nations.

"I have won everything possible but not this one yet. It will happen somehow, that is what I believe, and whatever I believe I achieve, so sooner or later it will happen.

"Everybody knows what it means to any player to win an Africa Cup. We were unlucky at the last one and also in Gabon. The players are very motivated to win the tournament. We all want to win it." Salah, who has 96 caps, was in the side that lost to Cameroon in the 2017 decider in Gabon and again at the last edition in Cameroon two years ago, where Senegal edged them on post-match penalties. (Reuters)



▲ Egypt's Mohamed Salah in action with Ghana's Gideon Mensah.

INGWENYAMA CUP LAST 16, ‘BIRDS’ VS T. CELTICS IN PICS



▲ Mbabane Swallows’ Sandile Hlasthwako scores past Tambankulu Celtics’ goalkeeper Mciniseli Vilane.



▲ Mbabane Swallows players celebrate the goal that sent them through to the quarter-finals of the Ingwenyama Cup.



▲ Mbabane Swallows’ Felix Badenhurst being attended after sustaining a dislocated shoulder during the Ingwenyama Cup last 16 match against Tambankulu Celtics.



▲ Mbabane Swallows’ Nhlanhla Ngwenya tries to win the ball from Tambankulu Celtics’ Vusi Ndlovu.



▲ Tambankulu Celtics’ Zweli Sihlongonyane clears the ball away from Mbabane Swallows’ Neliswa Dlamini.



▲ Mbabane Swallows’ Sandile Hlasthwako scores past Tambankulu Celtics goalkeeper Mciniseli Vilane.



▲ Mbabane Swallows’ Newman Philuso fights for the ball with Tambankulu Celtics’ Zweli Sihlongonyane.



▲ Mbabane Swallows fans in song after the final whistle.



▲ Mbabane Swallows supporters in song after the victory.

Thabiso promises good performances in African Games



▲National team Boxer Thabiso Dlamini in action against Nito Larchers on Saturday at Olymp Africa Centre.

Stories by Sibusiso Masilela
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TOP boxer Thabiso Dlamini has promised good performances in the upcoming 2023 African Games scheduled for March in Ghana.

Dlamini said he was going to give his best during the continental assignment.

This was after his victory over Nito Larchers in the Eswatini Boxing Association African Games qualifying tournament held on Saturday at Olymp Africa Centre.

"I want to reward my country investment in me with some performances in the African Games. I have been getting overwhelming

support from the local sports bodies such as EOCGA and EBA. I am also happy with my performance in the tournament which was my first fight since I returned from Russia," he said.

Dlamini also stated that the local tournament would help him to prepare for the next two 2024 Olympic Games qualifying tournaments.

"I still have a lot of work to do which include qualifying for the Olympic Games. I am still having two tournaments in Italy and Thailand which I have to win in order to qualify for Paris,".

Dlamini has previously represented the country in two international assignments such as the 2023 World championships and African championships, among others.



▲National Boxer Zweli Dlamini declared a winner against Mukelo Dlamini.

EBA to introduce national league

THE Eswatini Boxing Association (EBA) is planning to introduce a national league.

EBA President Webster Lukhele said the new initiative will be staged every three months in the country.

This was during the African Games qualifying tournament.

"We will soon kickoff a national league that will have participating boxers within the various categories. The new tournament

is aimed at keeping our boxers active and we are still currently in talks with a sponsor for the new league,".

The President further stated that they were happy with the performance of local boxers.

Meanwhile, Eswatini Sports and Recreation Council Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Darius Dlomo applauded the standard of Boxing in the country.

"We are happy with the talent which are having as a country. This is a sign of good work that is being done by EBA," he said.

Muzi, Msimisi shine in table tennis tournament

By Ntokoza Magongo
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THE duo of Muzi Dube and Msimisi Dube were the best in the Whistle Stop Engineering Table Tennis tournament.

Dube won in the senior section while Msimisi was crowned champions among the juniors. The tournament played in the rural area, Matsetsa, was sponsored to the tune of E4 000 by Whistle Stop Engineering.

It attracted 20 players, 11 seniors and nine juniors. Dube beat the Eswatini Table Tennis Association (ETTA) President Percy Zulu in the finals to take home the E1 000 first prize money while Zulu got E600 for coming second.

In the juniors, Msimisi Dube beat Cance Simelane to pocket E800 with the latter getting E500 and third was Luyandza Simelane who was presented with E200.



▲Some of the juniors who played in the Whistle Stop Engineering Table Tennis Tournament in Matsetsa.

STTA President Percy Zulu said they were happy with the progress of the sport especially as they were able to host a successful tournament in the rural areas. He said it was part of their goals to take the sport outside the Mbabane-Manzini corridor.

"Thanks to our sponsor and we had a

great day as 20 players around Matsetsa registered for the tournament. We were able to also assist the juniors as part of the development and we hope to continue with such tournament," he said.

Prize breakdown:

Seniors:

1. Muzi Dube	E1 000
2. Percy Zulu	E600
3. Wandile Nxumalo	E400
Juniors :	
1. Msimisi Dube	E800
2. Chance Simelane	E500
3. Luyandza Maziya	E200

Wanderers bite the dust!

By Sibusiso Masilela
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Madlenya FC.....(o) o,
Manzini Wanderers.....(o) o,
(Madlenya won 7-6 after penalties)

IT was the case of lightning striking in the same place twice at Mavuso Sports Centre on Sunday.

Barely four months after Madlenya FC booted Manzini Wanderers out of the Trade Fair Cup, the unfashionable Siphofaneni-based outfit did it again, sending the throngs of hub giants fans into perpetual agony with a 7-6 defeat in the dreaded penalties in the Ingwenyama Cup Last 16 clash. It was so close yet-so-far for the luckless Manzini Wanderers in yet another lucrative cup tournament.

This was during a tension-filled Last 16 encounter played at Mavuso Sports Centre on Sunday. Madlenya also maintained their dominance over the resurgent hub giants after their early season league win.

The football gods seem to have turned against the crowd pullers after they missed crucial spot-kicks during the lottery shootouts through the likes of Banele ‘Banny’ Mdluli, Sandile Maseko and Linda Msibi.

The ‘Weslians’ have now joined the likes of Royal Leopard, Denver Sundowns, Moneni Pirates, Illovo and Sea Birds on the list of elite teams that have been sent packing in the prestigious knockout tournament that blend football with culture.

The two teams created little chances in both halves, forcing the contest to be decided on penalties. Madlenya were determined on the day, as they were backed by Mbabane Highlanders fans, who sympathised with them



▲Madlenya celebrate the 7-6 win over Manzini Wanderers after penalties in the Ingwenyama Cup last 16.

on the day.

The Siphofaneni-based side netted their spot-kicks through the likes of Melusi ‘Vardy’ Tfwala, Gift Gamedze, Lucky Gamedze, Lindelwa Gamedze and Sehluko Nkabindze.

The match was marred by off-the-field commotions during the penalty shoot-outs, where the two set of supporters scuffled on the Eastern grand-stand, known as Etjeni, which however did not disturb the match proceedings.

THE TEAMS:

Wanderers:

Sandile Ginindza, Ndumiso Dlamini, Sihle Mkhonta, Linda Msibi, Khulekani Manana, Thabo Langa, Phathizwe Mabuza, Mlamuli Nkhambule, Banele Mdluli, Sandile Maseko, Jabulani Mavimbela.

Madlenya:

Dumisani Dlamini, Luoky Gamedze, Sehluko Nkabindze, Mfundoy Gamedze, Sethu Ngoamphalala, Thabiso Dlamini, Melusi Tfwala, Thobelani Gamedze, Gift Gamedze, Mbusiseni Motsa, Mfundo Simelane



INGWENYAMA CUP LAST 16 RESULTS

Played on Sunday:

Green Mamba 4-3 Sea Birds after penalties.
Nsingizini 2-0 Sundowns
Wanderers 6-7 Madlenya after penalties.
Highlanders 4-2 Louis XIV after penalties
Played on Saturday:
Swallows 1-0 Tambankulu Celtics.
Buffaloes 7-1Illovo.

Khanyakwezwe transports Bull to quarter-finals

(At Mavuso Sports Centre)
Mbabane Highlanders.....(o)1,
Sibusiso Tfwala 8th
Louis XIV..... (1)1
Sakhile Shongwe 44th
(Highlanders win 4-2 after penalties)

MBABANE Highlanders captain Khanyakwezwe Shabalala was an instant hero after he transported the capital city giants into the Ingwenyama Cup quaterfinals.

The Sihlangu goalminder rescued the misfiring crowd pullers from a possible shocker with some sheer individual brilliance against a stubborn National First Division Louis XIV at Mavuso Sports Centre on Sunday.

The lanky ex-Moneni Pirates shot-stopper netted the winning penalty kick and saved one spot kick which ended the minnows dream in the round of 16 of the prestigious knockout tournament.

Louis XIV gave a gallant display and showed no respect to the much-fancied opponent with their never-say-die attitude.

The Mancoba Mahlindza-led side silenced the close to 1 000 Highlanders fans when they took the lead a minute before halftime through winger Sanele Shongwe, who finished off a Sunrise Sihlongonyane rebound.

Shongwe strike gave the visitors a slender lead going to the breather.

Highlanders had a gusty display and

missed numerous glittering chances in the second half with the likes of Kenneth Moloto and second half Sibusiso Tfwala failling to beat the brave opposition goalkeeper Wandile Mbhamali.

Thwala, who came in for Kwado Frimpong early in the second half levelled matters for the two times finalists three minutes from time with a slide in from a Banele ‘Pupu’ Sikhondze rebound forcing the match to be decided on the lottery shootouts.

THE TEAMS:

Highlanders:

Khanyakwezwe Shabalala, Vusi Vilakati, Delisa Gama, Mpendulo Tfomo, Thamie Zulu, Emmanuel Owusu, Banele Sikhondze, Menzi Sithole, Kwado Frimpong(SibusisoTfwala),Philani Mkhonto, Kenneth Moloto(Bonginkhosi Dlamini)

Louis XIV:

Wandile Mbhamali, Mbongeni Nkhambule, Zweli Mdlovu, Kwazi Nkhambule, Bandzile Mdluli, Bongani Myeza, Colani Dvuba, Sanele Shongwe, Goina Dlamini, Sunrise Sihlongonyane, Menzi Hlatswako



▲Mbabane Highlanders goalkeeper Khanyakwezwe Shabalala leads the celebrations after the victory against Loius XIV.

We were unlucky – Coach Nyanga

MANZINI Wanderers head coach Nyanga’ Crooks ‘ Hlophe says they were unlucky during their match against Madlenya FC.

The veteran mentor said this after their 7-6loss to the Siphofaneni based side in the Ingwenyama Cup last 16 on Sunday at Mavuso Sports Centre.

“We did well on the day as the boys showed resilience on the day but mother luck was not on our side. We need to focus in the league and ensure that the survive relegation at the end of the season,” he said.

Rally

The former Sihlangu assistant Coach further urged the team supporters to rally behind the team.

“We are in a very critical position where we really need the support of the entire Wanderers family to achieve our goals,”

Meanwhile, Madlenya FC coach William Gamedze commended their brave performance.

“I am proud of my team performance as we have managed to reach our target for the tournament which is the quarter-finals. We will continue taking one game at a time and see what we will get in the end,” he said.



**SA's Du Plessis
new UFC
middleweight
champion**

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**'Bull' in
Ingwenyama
Cup Last
Eight**

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Sport



**Wanderers
bite the dust!**

... Hub giants Manzini Wanderers have been booted out of the Ingwenyama Cup after losing 7-6 on penalties to Madlenya FC on Sunday at Mavuso Sports Centre. **Page 23**