



# Eswatini to commence trade under E63.9tn economic bloc

By **Silindzelwe Nxumalo**  
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It is the largest free trade area in the world.

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## ICT Ministry hands over sign language translation studio to DPMO

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... AfCFTA starts January 31 in Eswatini

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The Minister of Commerce, Industry and Trade Manqoba Khumalo said this follows the issuance of a Gazette issued by the International Trade Administration Commission (ITAC), on behalf of the five SACU Member States, including Eswatini.

He stated that a copy of this Gazette will be made available on request and that it has the information pertaining to rules conferring the origin of products traded under the agreement.

## Diversion

Khumalo said these rules are agreed to avoid trade diversion, where products from outside the continent are imported into the continent and further sold within the continent as if they were manufactured in the continent, thus displacing African products.

The Minister stated that the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Agreement came into effect on January 1, 2021, following a signing and ratification process by AU Member States, with an overall plan of boosting intra-African trade.

“The Ministry of Commerce Industry and Trade has already engaged traders to take advantage of this great opportunity to penetrate the African market. As a tool to enhancing trade under the AfCFTA Agreement, Eswatini has since joined other AfCFTA partner States that are part of the Guided Trade Initiative (GTI),” announced the minister.

He stated that under this initiative, the AfCFTA Secretariat assists in connecting businesses and products for import and export amongst the Partner States.



▲ Minister of Commerce Industry and Trade Manqoba Khumalo with his Ps Siboniso Nkambule during the press conference on Thursday.

Currently, Egypt, Kenya, Cameroon, Rwanda, Ghana, Mauritius, Tanzania, and Tunisia are trading under this initiative and Eswatini is amongst the countries that are set to join the second phase of the programme.

“Eswatini traders have registered their interest in being part of the initiative and the International Trade Department of the Ministry of Commerce Industry and Trade in collaboration with the AfCFTA Secretariat, Eswatini Revenue Service (ERS) and the Eswatini Investment Promotion Authority (EIPA) will be engaging with these traders to assist them with increasing their market in the continent,” said Khumalo.

Furthermore, the minister said the minis-

try is also engaged in discussions with key exporting companies namely The Rhodes Food Group, Coca Cola (CONCO), Eswatini Sugar Association (ESA), and The Fridge Factory just to name a few.

He said these are some of the companies already exporting in the continent and are looking into expanding their exports into the rest of the continent.

“We will be reaching out to more traders including SMMEs and Women and Youth-owned businesses which are set to benefit from utilizing this agreement,” he said.

Khumalo said the ministry is ready to support traders to identify areas where they can utilize their preferences, and the Ministry together with ERS is currently planning an

event to unpack this agreement amongst other agreements that have been signed by Eswatini, to ensure that traders have all the information on accessing the African market.

Moreover, the minister announced that the ministry, through support from the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), has recently concluded the AfCFTA Implementation Strategy.

“The ultimate vision of this strategy is making Eswatini one of the Top 10 intra-regional exporters of value-added goods and services. Traders are encouraged to contact the Ministry of Commerce Industry and Trade Department of International Trade, for more information on the Agreement,” he said.

He added that traders can also visit the International Trade Department offices on Gwamile Street between Eswatini Bank and The Deputy Prime Minister’s office.

“They can also visit Eswatini Revenue Service headquarters in Ezulwini for the issuance of certificates of origin and Eswatini Investment Promotion offices at Sibekelo Building Mbabane,” he said.

According to the African Union website, this trade agreement, if implemented fully, would become the largest in the world. The AfCFTA is one of the flagship projects of the First Ten-Year Implementation Plan (2014-2023) under the AU’s Agenda 2063 “The Africa We Want.”

The website stated that the AfCFTA emphasizes the reduction of tariffs and non-tariff barriers, and the facilitation of free movement of people and labor, right of residence, right of establishment, and investment.

The aim is to enable the free flow of goods and services across the continent and boost the trading position of Africa in the global market.

# All eyes are on Central Bank Governor Dr Phil Mnisi

... as SA Reserve Bank leaves interest rate unchanged

By EDN Reporter

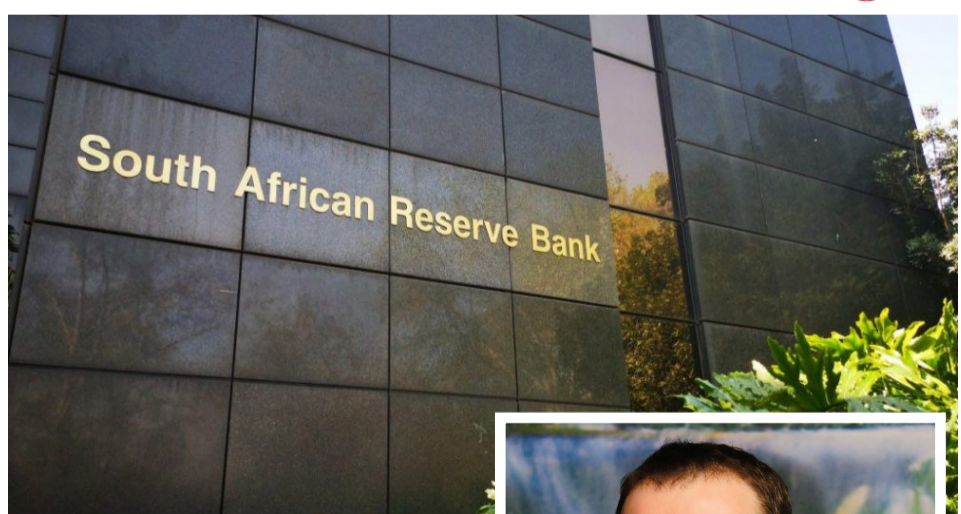
FOLLOWING that the South African Reserve Bank (SARB) expectedly kept its repo rate at 8.25 per cent on Thursday, following the central bank’s first Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) meeting for 2024, all eyes are on the Central Bank Governor Dr Phil Mnisi today (Friday) and are

waiting with bated breath on his decision.

The Central Bank of Eswatini’s (CBE) Monetary Policy Consultative Committee (MPCC) will be meeting today (Friday) afternoon to decide on the country’s monetary policy stance for the almost first two months of 2024. In its November 2023 meeting, the CBE governor in consultation with the MPCC decided to leave the Discount Rate unchanged at 7.5 per cent and the prime lending rate also remained unchanged at 11.0 per cent. The CBE Governor and the MPCC are going to the meeting with the acknowledgement that the inflation cooled to 4.3 per cent in December. It is yet to be seen what the CBE’s decision after the meeting on Friday afternoon would be.

## SARB Governor introduces David Fowkes as new MPC member

After announcing the monetary policy stance, SARB Governor Lesetja Kganyago revealed the new member of the MPCC, David Fowkes, who replaced Kuben Naidoo on the committee, following Naidoo’s resignation from the SARB last year.



▲ The South African Reserve Bank.

Naidoo was also deputy governor of the SARB. However, President Cyril Ramaphosa has yet to decide on who will fill this post.

Kganyago said Fowkes was appointed to the MPC as of 11 January this year and “was a full participant” in the latest MPC meeting.

The repo rate decision comes despite inflation cooling to 5.1 per cent in December as the SARB continued to follow a cautious note.



▲ New member of the MPC, David Fowkes.



▲ Central Bank Governor Dr Phil Mnisi.

By **Nokunceda Magagula**  
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# ICT Ministry hands over sign language translation studio to DPMO

THE Ministry of Information Communication and Technology (ICT) has handed the first of its kind sign language studio to the Deputy Prime Minister's Office.

The event was held at the Bible Society at Lobamba Lomdzala and the studio was presented by Minister of ICT Savannah Maziya and it was received by Deputy Prime Minister Thulisile Dladla. After handing over the studio, Maziya said that the facility will enable Eswatini's deaf community to use technology for findings, calculations, and communication dimensions, thus assessing the many opportunities available in the digital world.

Receiving the studio, DPM said with the partnership with the Ministry of Education, it will help among other things, translation of a Sign Language curriculum ensuring that important educational information available in English and SiSwati is translated into Sign Language accurately.

It will also strengthen Sign Language literature classes for Deaf children to ensure that they communicate effectively in sign language grammar. Translation and development of a wider Sign Language Interpreter's curriculum for effective communication.

"This facility shall be used for the continuation of translation of the Bible into Sign Language. This is another important aspect of the lives of the deaf, having the Bible in your own language. As a country we are proud to have this facility" DPM said.

She further appreciated the Eswatini Communications Commission (ESCCOM) stating that she is aware that Persons with Disabilities across the world face different

challenges which include a lack of adequate support services, including healthcare, rehabilitation, assistive technologies, and accessible infrastructure. To overcome these barriers, they need commitment from everyone.

"May I applaud the Eswatini Communications Commission for setting a good example in this regard by providing support to the National Association for the Deaf. There could not be any other gift than this noble gesture" she said.

### Commended

DPM commended the Bible Society of Eswatini for believing in Persons with Disabilities and employing four of them. She said the Bible Society has led by example by taking concrete and practical steps towards disability mainstreaming and inclusion. "The Bible Society of Eswatini has set a good practice worth emulating by other organizations in the pursuit of disability mainstreaming and inclusion which has become a motto for my Office" the DPM said.

She mentioned that as the DPM's office, they preach this gospel of inclusion of Persons with Disabilities across all sectors of life, both in the public and private sector, ensuring that no one is left behind." I recall with great joy that religious institutions have been at the helm of disability mainstreaming and inclusion for many years. Churches, such as the Roman Catholic and many others, have played a great role in empowering persons with disabilities in the country" DPM asserted.

DPM added that such examples include Emakhonweni at St. Joseph Mission in Man-



▲ The Deputy Prime Minister Senator Thuli Dladla and Minister of ICT Savannah Maziya being shown how things work in the studio.

zini. She went on to implore all organizations, companies, and businesses to learn from such institutions and ensure that Persons with Disabilities are employed and supported in the best possible way so that they also live sustainable and fulfilling lives. She emphasized that persons with Disabilities do not require handouts but opportunities to make them thrive and live their lives to their fullest potential.

Dladla reaffirmed the Office's commitment to disability inclusion across all sectors because they believe that disability inclusion is vital for upholding human rights, fostering social cohesion, driving economic growth, promoting innovation, ensuring health and

well-being, fulfilling legal obligations, and advancing social justice. "By embracing disability inclusion, as a country we can create a more equitable, inclusive, and prosperous society for all their EmaSwati," Dladla said.

She added that they are also committed to ensuring that no one is left behind, with or without disability, this commitment is shown in the recent appointment of Senator Stukie Motsa into the House of Senate.

She said that step in the right direction and shows that the nation values Persons with Disabilities and acknowledges and reaffirms that like all people, they can meaningfully contribute to the country's decision-making structures.



## National Data Protection Awareness Day

### Take Control of Your Data

28 January 2024



## Join us in celebrating the National Data Protection Week 2024 by taking control of your data.

The Eswatini Data Protection Act came into force in March 2022 and espouses the Right to Privacy as enshrined in the Eswatini Constitution, 2005. The object of the Act is "to provide for the collection, processing, disclosure and protection of personal data; balancing competing values of personal information privacy and sector-specific laws and other related matters". The Act designates the Eswatini Communications Commission as the Eswatini Data Protection Authority (EDPA) charged with the responsibility to enforce compliance thereto.

On Friday, 26 January 2024, Eswatini joined the world in commemorating the International Data Protection Day by hosting an event under the theme "Take Control of Your Data". The Data Protection Day is internationally celebrated each year on 28 January, which marks the anniversary of the Council of Europe's 'Convention 108' on the protection of personal information - the first legally binding international law on data protection which was open for signature in 1981.

However, other countries soon embraced the initiative, and now Data Protection Day is globally recognized. It is an international effort to create awareness about the importance of respecting privacy, safeguarding data, and enabling trust.

The National Data Protection Day is also a chance to catch up with new developments in the Data Protection area.

As the EDPA we recognise the week of 22-28 January as the National Data Protection Week, during which we urge entities (data controllers and data processors) and other actors to organise activities to raise awareness about the importance of data protection and to promote best practices with regards to processing personal information. Data protection concerns mainly individuals (the data subjects) whose personal information is processed by entities in their line of business. Still, many people lack knowledge about how their personal data is being collected, used, and shared.

As this year's theme indicates, taking control of one's data begins with the data subjects themselves. It is important to make informed and calculated decisions when sharing your personal data, especially with entities. Your personal data such as age, gender, data related to children, health records, National Identity number, financial records, purchase history, location have great value and may be used for unintended purposes. It is important to keep that in mind when deciding what you share and with whom.

Entities who in terms of the Act are data controllers and

data processors on the other hand need to make sure that they keep their customers' data always protected and in accordance with the data protection principles and

other applicable legal frameworks on data protection. Risk should always be managed, and to create trust, the entities should be transparent on how they are collecting, using, and sharing personal data. A data breach where an individual's personal data is leaked or accessed by unauthorised persons can lead to a loss in both reputation and customer trust, in addition to potential financial sanctions which may be imposed by the EDPA.

In this regard we invite the public to join us as we create awareness and discuss important privacy-related topics to remind organizations and individuals why they should care about data privacy.

**ESCCOM Chief Executive**  
Mvilawemphi Dlamini



Cholera outbreak:

# Ministry of Foreign Affairs urges emaSwati to be safe

It is crucial that emaSwati travellers remain vigilant and informed on health and other matters as monitored by those countries visited

By Noaba Ntshakala

THE Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation has issued a crucial reminder to emaSwati planning international travel and emphasised that obtaining health or travel insurance is essential for financial protection against unexpected emergencies and health risks in destination countries.

In a statement shared, the Ministry emphasises safety for emaSwati as they travel.

The Ministry also highlighted the importance of vigilance and awareness, urging travellers to stay informed about health advisories and other relevant updates issued by the countries they plan to visit. Recent global health pandemics, the Ministry observes, often require immediate action, and having proper insurance can significantly ease the burden of unforeseen medical expenses.

“The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation wishes to inform

the general public, parents, and students planning to travel outside of the Kingdom of Eswatini about the continued importance of obtaining health or travel insurance in order to be financially protected against unforeseen and undesirable circumstances that may arise in that country of destination, and at times of transit.” Read the statement.

**Crucial**

“It is crucial that emaSwati travellers remain vigilant and informed on health and other matters as monitored by those

countries visited.” Again, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that recently, it has noted that the Republic of Zambia’s National Public Health Institute reported an outbreak of cholera in Lusaka in October 2023.

As the outbreak continues and cases rise in that country, the Ministry appeals to parents, students and visitors to take caution and monitor any symptoms that may develop. These include; profuse watery diarrhoea, thirst, vomiting, restlessness or irritability, and leg cramps, amongst other symptoms. “Should a person develop any of these, medical attention should be sought immediately,” reads the statement “The Ministry remains committed to serving emaSwati and providing any assistance possible,”

A cholera outbreak in Zambia, first reported in October 2023, has seen a dramatic increase in transmission since mid-December. The country has now recorded more than 10,000 cases and 400 deaths, with over 500 new cases daily.

## Kingdom of Eswatini celebrates World Education Day

Stories by Noaba Ntshakala

MARKING World Education Day on Wednesday, January 24th, the Director of Education at the Ministry of Education and Training, Dr Ntombenhle Dlamini, reaffirmed the Ministry’s unwavering commitment to empowering vocational training within schools.

She said that equipping the youth with practical skills through vocational training remains a cornerstone of the educational vision. This approach not only fosters self-reliance and employability but also contributes to the nation’s economic

development by nurturing a skilled workforce.

The director’s remarks come amidst continued efforts to integrate vocational training into the mainstream curriculum, offering students diverse pathways to success. This emphasis resonates with the global theme of World Education Day 2024, “Investing in People, Investing in the Future.”

Dlamini further emphasised another crucial aspect of the Ministry’s agenda which is prioritising sign language education. She said that ensuring inclusivity for all learners is paramount since integrating sign language into the educational landscape aids in inclusiveness and breaking down communication barriers.

The United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 24 January as the International Day of Education, in celebration of the role of education in peace and development.



▲ Some pupils from Somnjalose High School making a presentation.

## Cabinet Ministers visit schools for assessment

STARTING today, January 26, some Cabinet ministers will embark on a series of school visits across the nation, focusing on two distinct sets of institutions; those facing ongoing challenges after underperforming last year, and those struggling to recover from recent storm damage.

This initiative is expected to span four days until January 29th.

Schools identified as underperforming based on past academic indicators will receive visits from ministers responsible for education and related fields. These visits will serve as an opportunity for open dialogue, allowing ministers to gain firsthand insight into the challenges faced by these schools and communities. Discussions are expected to centre around identifying root causes of underperformance, exploring potential solutions, and offering targeted support measures.

Meanwhile, schools still reeling from the devastating effects of recent storms will also welcome the ministers. The Minister of Education and Training Owen Nxumalo said that these visits will prioritise assessing the extent of damage, ensuring the timely allocation of resources for repairs and reconstruction. The schools were hit by the disastrous hailstorm that rocked seven constituencies in the country hitting mainly some parts of Manzini.

Minister of Education Owen Nxumalo and Acting PS Ms. Naniki Mnisi will visit St Philomena High School, Mhubhe High



▲ Minister of Education and Training Owen Nxumalo.

School, Mgebiseni Primary School, Joy Mission Primary School and Vulamehlo Primary School.

Minister of Commerce Manqoba Khumalo and Schools’ Manager Lungelo J. Nhlengetfwa will visit St John Bosco High School, St Christopher’s High School, Ncabaneni High School, and Ngcoseni High School.

On the other hand, Deputy Prime Minister Thulisile Dladla, Minister of Education Owen Nxumalo and Acting PS Ms. Naniki Mnisi are said to visit Lukuntu Primary School, Mncomaneni Primary School, Mahlabaneni Secondary School, Makhulusihlengi Primary School.

**STEM Education:**

### ... World Bank applauds Eswatini’s efforts to empower young girls

THE World Bank has commended the Kingdom of Eswatini for its commitment to closing the gender gap in the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) fields.

The Bank’s praise comes following the government’s efforts and revision of the primary education curriculum in 2023 to ensure inclusivity and encourage girls to pursue STEM careers.

The revised curriculum is a significant step towards creating a more equitable education system in Eswatini. According to the 2023 Global Gender Gap Report, the Kingdom ranked 46th out of 146 countries in terms of gender equality. By promoting STEM education for girls from a young age, Eswatini is taking concrete steps to address this gender gap and unlock the full potential of its female citizens.

One of the key initiatives highlighted by the World Bank is the joint program where the World Bank and the government initiated the high school job shadowing program. This program, supported by the Bank, provided students with firsthand experience of

STEM careers through placements at government institutions and private companies. “This exposure is crucial for girls who may not otherwise have the opportunity to envision themselves in STEM roles.” Asserts the bank.

The first cohort of the job shadowing program joined the energy sector instituted in May 2023 and consisted of 40 high school students with 30 females and 10 males from 27 high schools in four regions. Their placement was facilitated by the Junior Achievement Institute.

The student interns were attached to ten state-owned and privately-owned companies for 10 days. Upon completion of the job shadowing program, the interns received a certificate from

The companies participating in the job shadowing were: Royal Eswatini Sugar Corporation (RESCorp), Ubombo Sugar Limited, Total Energies - Eswatini, Eswatini National Petroleum Company ENPC), Engen - Eswatini, Eswatini Water Services Corporation (EWSC), Eswatini Energy Regulatory Authority (ESERA), Energy Department and Eswatini Electricity Company (EEC).

# Soldier stabs best friend over woman

Stories by Bahle Gama

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A soldier is facing an attempted murder charge after he 'mistakenly' stabbed his best friend over a woman.

The Umbutfo Eswatini Defence Force (UEDF) member said he was entangled in a fight with his friend and colleague whom he found in his girlfriend's house resulting in the stabbing.

In his bail application, the accused person Nkosinathi Zwane told the court that on January 6, he was arrested and charged with attempted murder. He allegedly stabbed his friend who is also a UEDF member Bongani Malaza.

On the day in question, Zwane in the presence of his girlfriend and Malaza went to have some alcoholic beverages at Mathangeni in Matsapha.

He stated that they ran out of drinks, and he went to the counter to purchase more alcohol, leaving the complainant with his girlfriend who resided in the same area (Mathangeni).

Upon return, he found them gone. He tried searching for them but were nowhere to be found.

"I proceeded to my girlfriend's house and when I arrived, I knocked and demanded that she open the door because I could hear that there were some people inside. It was dark and there was no light outside," he said.

According to Zwane, a man opened the door and charged towards him carrying a knife.

Zwane said he immediately disarmed and stabbed the man, only to realise afterwards that it was his best friend.



▲ The accused person further undertook to adhere to all bail conditions, adding that in the event bail is granted he would not evade bail or abscond trial.

He told the court that he was so intoxicated that he did not quickly identify the person who was coming out of his girlfriend's one-room flat, only to realise after the incident had occurred.

Zwane said the bail application was based on sufficient grounds warranting the High Court to release him on bail upon terms it deems fit and appropriate.

Zwane said he would plead not guilty to the charge as he did not commit it and was advised and believed that for the application the foregoing suffice in the establishment of his defence thus entitling him to bail.

The accused person further undertook to

adhere to all bail conditions, adding that in the event bail is granted he would not evade bail or abscond trial.

"I am employed by the Eswatini Government as a member of the Umbutfo Eswatini Defence Force and if my incarceration persists, I stand to lose my employment," he stated.

Zwane said this would be great prejudice to his dependents including three minor children and his elderly parents who are solely dependent on him as the breadwinner in the family.

He further stated that in any event, even in terms of the Common Law, such matters

are by their very nature urgent, and submitted that he could not be afforded substantial redress at a hearing in due course particularly because there is no prejudice to be suffered by the Crown if the matter is dealt with on an urgent basis.

He also stated that he did not intentionally delay making the application but was waiting for the complainant (Malaza) to fully recover from the injuries sustained.

Bail was granted at E15,000 and Zwane was ordered to pay E3,000 cash and E12,000 surety. In the event he successfully pays bail, he is expected to report at the Matsapha Police Station every last Friday of the month.

## 'Emabenzamin forced me to kiss girlfriend in their presence'

A teenager accused of stabbing and killing a supposed emabenzamin member at KaMchoza alleges he was forced to kiss his girlfriend in their presence resulting in the incident.

The murder suspect, 18-year-old Melusi Mthobisi Gama told the court that the stabbing incident on December 26, 2023, was instigated by an emabenzamin member, now deceased Almon Zwane.

In his bail application, Gama stated that on the day in question, he was walking with his girlfriend near KaMchoza. They were holding hands when they came across a group of boys commonly known in the community as emabenzamin who were very intoxicated. The boys were each carrying brown beer bottles. Gama said he told his girlfriend that the guys approaching might give them a problem because they are notoriously known to be troublesome in the community.

"True to my word, when we were very close to them, they started harassing me and my girlfriend making derogatory remarks to us. One of them, the deceased (Zwane), was persistent in harassing us, saying that ngekeinja idle polony akhona yena. He then ordered us to kiss each other in front of him," he stated.

He stated that the others were not as persistent to the point that they left the young couple and

ordered Zwane to come along, however, he did not listen.

The suspect said Zwane continued to order them to kiss, which he refused to do making the emabenzamin member furious that he allegedly assaulted Gama with a beer bottle.

His girlfriend fled the scene, and he remained trying to fight Zwane back.

"Seeing that I was being rebellious, he then drew out a man-made knife and attempted to stab me with it, however missed the shot as he was heavily intoxicated and staggering. I tried to fight him back until he fell whilst still carrying the knife in his hands," he said.

When Zwane fell, he was whimpering in pain and Gama realized he had stabbed the intoxicated man.

Gama told the court that he quickly ran home to report to his mother what had happened.

Days later he was told by his mother that Police officers had come looking for him and he requested that she accompany him to the station.

Upon arrival, he was informed that the person he was involved in a fight with had passed on, and subsequently was arrested and charged with murder.

Gama told the court that he had been advised and verily believed that in terms of Section 96(1) of the Criminal Procedure and Evidence Act (67/1938), as amended, read together with Section 16(7) of the



Constitution Act (2005), he is entitled to be admitted to bail at any stage of the proceedings unless it is shown, as provided for in Section 96(4).

He stated that he recently completed high school, however, he did not do well, hence desirous of restarting for better results.

"My continued incarceration is prejudicial to me as schools are already open, yet I was in the process of preparing to restart and I might find myself unable to be admitted in any school," he said.

The accused person said there was nothing that indicated a likelihood of him endangering the safety of the public and further undertook to adhere to all bail conditions and attend all trial proceedings.

Gama was granted bail at E15 000 and was ordered to pay E3 000 cash and the rest as surety.

He is expected to report at the Ezulwini Police Station every last Friday of the month.

## Neighbours fight over hammer

By Nokunceda Magagula

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A fight between two neighbors which was sparked by a hammer resulted in one being arrested and charged for assault with intent to cause grievous bodily harm.

The accused, Thabo Khumalo of Sibebe, Mbabane on January 18, 2024, unlawfully assaulted Siyabonga Manana with a Tommy bar on the head several times thus causing him severe injuries.

On Thursday, the accused stood before Magistrate Xolile Nxumalo for trial. The crown paraded the complainant Manana as its first witness. Manana told the court that he and the accused live in the same compound, and they are neighbours, adding that a week before the accident, he had borrowed a hammer from the accused.

However, he forgot to bring it back and left it at his workplace, and days later the accused began sending threats to Manana stating that if he did not bring back his hammer, he was going to kill him. Manana said that he tried to explain to him that he had

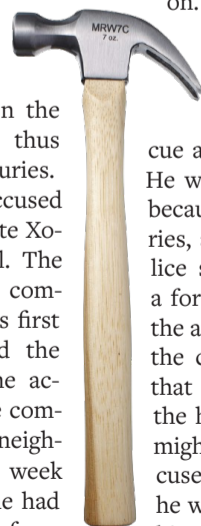
forgotten it at work and would bring it back when they opened for work as they were in the December holidays.

The following day which was a Friday, Manana said the accused attacked him as promised, he trucked Manana with a Tom Bar on the head several times. The witness says he fell and the accused went on to beat him on the knees with the same weapon.

While lying down on the ground Manana said a man identified as

Zwide came to his rescue and the accused ran away. He was then taken to hospital because he had severe injuries, and later went to the police station where he opened a formal criminal case against the accused. He emphasized to the court that the only thing that ignited the assault was the hammer. He added that it might also be because the accused had once told him that he was the reason why he and his girlfriend broke up.

In cross-examination Khumalo questioned the witness if he had borrowed the hammer or he had stolen it, Manana maintained that he had borrowed it from the accused, Manana added that the accused had been telling people that he stole the hammer.



# KaZondwako gang war: One man charged with attempted murder

Stories by Nokunceda Magagula  
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A fight which broke out between two youth criminal gangs on December 3, 2023, at Dambathi drinking spot situated in KaZondwako, in the Manzini region has led to a 20-year-old man being charged with attempted murder.

The man who is currently facing the charge is Mlonde Vilakati. In his bail application affidavit submitted to the High Court, Vilakati told the Court that he was charged with the attempted murder of Mphilwenhle Msibi for allegedly stabbing him with a sharp object several times all over the body with the intent to kill him.

Detailing what sparked the fight, Vilakati said on that fateful day, he was in the company of his friend identified as Mthokozisi Vilakati and they were at the Dambathi drinking spot when a fight suddenly ensued between Tom Dlamini and Gciba Vilakati.

The accused told the Court that the fight was ignited by Dlamini having once stabbed Gciba and he had just come out of prison after serving his sentence for the crime. He mentioned that the release of Dlamini from prison caused a palpable and very tense division among the youth of KaZondwako. He submitted to the Court; "There are now two camps in the community, one camp is for Gciba and another one belongs to Dlamini."

He said during the commotion at the drinking spot, he was accosted by Mnisi



(the victim). Vilakati said Msibi assaulted him with an iron bar on the chest, in retaliation and self-defence, he (Vilakati) took a knife and stabbed the Msibi on his arm which caused him to stumble and fall. Vilakati said he then fled the scene for safety after stabbing

## Arrested

After the accident, the accused went to Zondwako *umphakatsi* to seek help from the chief to initiate a meeting between the two parties in the area. He said after hearing the accused side of the story, instead of calling a meeting between the two camps, the chief called the police, and the accused was arrested.

The accused further mentioned in the affidavit that he cooperated with the police. The accused said he had applied to the court during one of his hearings that he wanted to enrol at Vulamsango High School because he is only 20-years-old, however, the Magistrate informed him that he could not be enrolled because he is over 18 years old. He emphasised that if he is released on bail, he will reside in the Sigcineni area to avoid being involved in any conflict. He added that he would not commit any similar offence. The accused was therefore granted bail at E15 000 and was ordered to pay E3 000 cash and E12 000 as surety.

## Traditional healer charged with attempted murder

A traditional healer is facing an attempted murder charge after allegedly shooting a 20-year-old man.

Theminkosi Johane Simelane (43) of KoNtjingila was on January 22 arrested and charged with attempted murder after he allegedly shot 20-year-old Mabhooyane Tsela with a 12-bore shotgun on the back of the head.

According to a source, the traditional healer allegedly shot Tsela in an attempt to break a fight he (Tsela) was involved in outside Simelane's gate at Mathangeni where he resides. "Two boys were fighting outside and Simelane said they were making noise. He came out with the gun

and fired in the boys' direction resulting in Tsela being shot," said the source briefly.

He was arrested and charged under the fourth schedule of the offences listed in the Criminal Procedure and Evidence Act 67 of 1938. In his bail application, Simelane said he did not commit the offence and therefore would plead not guilty to the charge and his innocence would be proven during trial.

He told the court that he was desirous to be admitted to bail on any conditions imposed by the court.

"I state that I am self-employed as a traditional healer, I have seven children who are solely dependent on me, as well

as their mother and entire family. I am presently kept at Zakhele Remand Centre where it is difficult for me to survive," he said.

Simelane further submitted to the court that his health condition was so bad in a way that he could not stand a cold place like prison because he suffered from arthritis.

He further submitted that he resides at Ka-Hlobile whilst the victim (Tsela) resides at Ebhawini therefore would not interfere with the witness, as they reside far apart from each other.

Bail was granted at E15 000 and was further ordered to pay E3 000 cash and the rest as surety.

## Woman accused of poisoning twins granted bail

THE woman accused of poisoning her two children has been granted bail by the High Court.

Xolile Nomphumelelo Ndzimandze (24) of Mzilikazi area, was on December 30, 2023, arrested and charged with two counts of attempted murder after she allegedly put a poisonous substance in water and gave it to her twins with the intent to kill them.

The children were rushed to the hospital where they were reportedly admitted and treated. In her bail application, Ndzimandze said she did not commit the alleged crime and will not plead guilty to the charge.

She said she is unemployed and lives off piece jobs to feed her family which is solely



dependent on her. "I am presently kept at Big Bend Correctional Facility where it is difficult for me to survive. I have no property or other financial interest outside Eswatini. I am so desirous to be admitted to bail on such conditions as the Court may

impose. I am not a flight risk and I have nowhere to run as Eswatini is my only home. I will abide by all conditions when admitted to bail and I will surely stand trial," she submitted.

She told the court that she resides at Ematjeni whilst the children stay at Mlindazwe poses no threat to them. The suspect also undertook not to evade trial when admitted to bail, adding that she strongly believes that she is innocent and not shaken by trials, "as I feel that I will be acquitted." Ndzimandze was granted bail at E15 000 and was ordered to pay E4 000 cash and the E11 000 as surety. In the event she posts bail, she is expected to report at Siteki Police Station.



▲ Magistrate Innocent Motsa presided in the case of a mechanic allegedly stealing a customer's car parts worth E14 500.

## Mechanic steals customer's car parts worth E14 500

A man who had entrusted a mechanic, Zakhele Mamba to fix his car suffered a loss of E14 500, as it is alleged that Mamba stole the car parts.

According to Mamba's charge sheet the owner of the car, Mfundo Sacolo, had brought his car to Mamba to be fixed, since it had mechanical problems, however, instead of fixing the car, the accused stole some of the car parts which include tyres and rims.

On Wednesday, Mamba made his brief appearance at the Mbabane Magistrate's Court before Magistrate Innocent Motsa, where he was formally charged with contravening Section 12(1) as read with Section 12(2) Act of Motor Vehicle. "On July 18, 2023, at Buka area in the district of Hhohho, the said accused unlawfully stole four tires worth E10 000 and four rims worth E4 500.

In Court, the accused conducted his defence and the Crown applied that he be remanded into custody until February 2, 2024, pending the trial at Lobamba Circuit Court, and his bail was not opposed.

When moving his bail application Mamba said the Court should release him on bail because he has children who are dependent on him. He also submitted that he is a liSwati and does not have relatives outside of Eswatini and he mentioned that he is willing to hand over his passport to Lobamba Police Station. The accused was therefore granted bail fixed at E2 000.

In the same Court, a 22-year-old woman has been charged with theft. The woman from Corporation, Mbabane, is accused of stealing 5Y standard droppers valued at E650 which belonged to Dr Musa Mtseftwa at Fonteyn, Mbabane. Shabangu pleaded guilty to the offence and the crown presented that the accused had no previous conviction. In her mitigation statement, the accused mentioned that she wanted money to buy nappies for her 10-month-old infant. She further asked the court to be lenient when handing down the sentence. She was sentenced to five months imprisonment and paid a fine of E500.

... the owner of the car had brought his car to the mechanic to be fixed, since it had mechanical problems, however instead of fixing the car, the accused stole some of the car parts which include tyres and rims

3,500  
3,000

**BUSINESS NEWS**

+19.5%



**BUSINESS SNIPPETS**

**SA central bank wants clearer disinflation**

PRETORIA - South Africa's central bank maintained its key lending rate as economists expected on Thursday, saying it did not yet see a clear disinflation trend that would justify cutting rates.

It was the fourth meeting in a row that the bank left its repo rate (ZAREPO=ECI), opens new tab on hold at 8.25 per cent. All 20 economists polled by Reuters had forecast that the rate would be left unchanged.

**Sasol warns on quarterly coal output**

SOUTH Africa's Sasol, opens new tab on Thursday reported lower output at its coal mining division in the October-December quarter citing safety-related incidents, tough geological conditions and delays in sourcing spares for maintenance.

Output in the quarter was cut by 5% or 394,000 metric tons as a result, said Sasol, the world's biggest producer of fuels and chemicals from coal and gas.

**Port woes risk has subsided**

JOHANNESBURG - South Africa's Mr Price, opens new tab, a budget fashion and home-ware retailer, said on Thursday the high level of risk caused by the country's port congestion has subsided slightly but it will continue to take necessary action to prevent impact on trade. South African state-owned logistics company Transnet has said backlogs at ports were due to factors including adverse weather and under-investment in equipment and maintenance. (All stories Reuters)

# International expert for BE's annual labour law seminar 2024

Stories By Silindzelwe Nxumalo  
silindzelwen@rubiconmedia.group

HAVING announced that they will be hosting their highly anticipated labour law seminar, Business Eswatini (BE) has, by popular demand, lined up experienced Industrial Relations expert and CEO of Employment Relations Exchange, Nerine Khan.

Khan has been actively involved in advising governments and organizations on formulating inclusive and sustainable wage policies.

Business Eswatini Chief Executive Officer (CEO) E. Nathi Dlamini said they are extremely excited that the specialist will be coming back to Eswatini to share her wealth of insights spanning many years in the industrial relations space.

He stated that the labour market was dynamic and a major determinant for the success of any business enterprise.

"As such, there is a need for constant engagements to ensure that the local labour market adopts best practices used internationally. The seminar is themed "Embracing Change in the Workplace," said the CEO.

Explaining the rationale for the theme, Dlamini said there are several topical issues which necessitate critical discussions between employers and employees as a result of the changes in the work environment.

He said these issues inevitably influence productivity and ultimately place the government in the best position to formulate informed policies.



▲ Robinson Bertram partner Zweli Jele.

"We therefore encourage all stakeholders to join us in this seminar because over and above having a dialogue on important topical issues, participants benefit from valuable insights on emergent issues and trends within the industrial relations space," he said.

The CEO added that as the landscape of labour laws evolves, keeping abreast with the latest developments in the international labour market becomes imperative for both employers and employees.

He stated that the seminar is expected to draw professionals such as business leaders, trade unions, human capital practitioners, labour market experts, legal minds, industry experts and policymakers from across the country to attend.

"The seminar will have a particular focus on topics such as an evaluation of the Eswatini Collective Bargaining Framework; Constructive, Meaningful and Informed Negotiation; Strikes and Lockout as well as the effectiveness of NEDLAC as a social dialogue forum-lessons for

Eswatini," he said.

He also stated that it will also look at the National Minimum Wage Debate where there will be an update on what employers have been working on so far, which will entail discussions on progress and the next steps.

"Another focus will be the Labour Law Updates 2024 Legislation and Case Law," he said.

Furthermore, Dlamini said joining Nerine on the podium for the seminar is Zweli Jele, a partner at Robinson Bertram who is also a heavy-hitter in advancing workers' rights and constructive employer-employee relationships.

He said attendees are guaranteed a thought-provoking session, which Mr. Jele is well-known for in the legal fraternity.

**Instalments**

"In previous instalments, he has well-articulated developments in relevant cases relating to matters of collective bargaining in the workplace among many others," said the CEO.

The seminar will be held on February 29, 2024, at the Royal Villas Hotel and registration is still open.

The CEO stated that BE has started to receive an overwhelming number of bookings as has always been the case.

He further encouraged interested participants to book early due to the limited spaces available, and those who are interested are directed to visit the Business Eswatini social media pages to secure their spot soon to avoid disappointment.

"We have had, on many occasions, been forced to turn back delegates due to space limitations. I hope we do not have to do this ever again", he said.

## Ezulwini's opportunity for streetlight fitting suppliers

THE Ezulwini Municipality has availed an opportunity for competent, registered, and reputable companies to submit proposals for the Supply, Installation and Maintenance of Domestic and Streetlight Fittings for the financial year 2024-25.

The deadline for the applications is January 30, 2024.

According to the Request for Proposals (RFP), late or telegraphic tenders will not be accepted, and the Council does not bind itself to accept any or the lowest tender.

**Documents**

It is stated that tenderers shall, together with the complete tender documents, supply technical data, illustrations and/or leaflets which adequately describe the items offered including quality, and if required by the Council the tenderer shall supply sample items and these samples of the accepted tender will be retained by the Council throughout the contract period.

"Any items supplied not under the approved samples will be



▲ Streetlights image sourced from the internet.

rejected. Tenderers may submit prices in the form of standard manufacturer's price lists. However, such a list must be supplementary to and not replace the Form of Tender," read the RFP.

The RFP stated that a tenderer may modify or withdraw the tender before the deadline for the submission of tenders without forfeiting its tender security unless otherwise stipulated in the invitation document.

"The modification or notice of withdrawal shall be effective if it I received by the procuring entity before the deadline for submission of tenders," read RFP.

The RFP states that the tender contract duration will be from the award date to 31st March 2025.

Ezulwini is situated along the Mbabane - Manzini corridor in the backdrop of Mbabane, and the industrial town of Matsapha. Ezulwini was declared a town in

November 1995 through Legal Notice No. 117 of 1995. The population of Ezulwini was estimated to be 8 841 in 1998 and projected to be 10 936 in 1999. Ezulwini is situated in the Hhohho region of Eswatini, northwest of the kingdom, with the climatic conditions of cool to cold in winter and mild to warm in summer. Temperatures range between 10°C and 25°C in Winter and 15°C and 30°C in summer. These become ideal for the town to be considered the destination after one has toured the kingdom. Ezulwini can be best described as a residential town with limited economic activity. For that reason, most of its residents work in neighbouring towns. The town is also host to a complex number of hotels and restaurants, a characteristic which makes Ezulwini a natural tourist centre of the country. The town also has a reputation for being an entertainment hub of the country. Ezulwini has only one primary school. This situation forces most children to attend school in neighbouring towns.



**FX RATES**

Notes/Cash	Buy	Sell
U.S. Dollar	18.4635	18.9283
G.B. Pound	23.4275	22.1115
EURO	20.0762	20.6898
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 Silindzelwe Nxumalo  
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# Instacash, Liberty Life launch E15 funeral Cover

INSTACASH Eswatini has officially launched its paperless funeral cover which is underwritten by Liberty Life Insurance.

The launch took place at the Instacash Service Centre in Mbabane in the presence of Liberty Management, Instacash Management, and staff on Thursday.

The significance of this event cannot be overstated, as it marks a major step forward in the pursuit of financial inclusion and freedom for individuals in Eswatini.

Instacash Managing Director (MD) Mandla 'Cheeks' Nxumalo, emphasized the importance of the funeral cover in advancing the company's primary goal of financial inclusion.

He stated that convenience is a top priority for Instacash and expressed gratitude to the Liberty team for their hard work in making the funeral cover accessible to their customers.

Nxumalo said the launch of the funeral cover by Instacash is a testament to the innovative spirit and commitment of both companies to providing accessible and affordable financial solutions to their customers.

"It is a step in the right direction towards achieving greater financial inclusion and freedom for individuals in Eswatini and sets a new standard for the financial services industry in the country," he said.

He added that as the funeral cover becomes available to Instacash customers, it is expected to have a positive impact on the lives of many individuals and families, providing them with much-needed financial security during difficult times.

Liberty Life Insurance Managing Director (MD) Mangaliso Shabangu emphasized the significance of the funeral cover in promoting financial freedom, convenience, and affordability.

Shabangu also announced that there are plans to introduce more products under this program, thereby expanding the range of financial services available to Instacash customers.

"One of the key highlights of the funeral cover is its affordability, as it will cost E15 for Instacash customers who are registered on the platform," he said.

He stated that it is important to note that this is a member-only product, and Insta-



▲ Instacash and Liberty management with staff after the launch.

cash customers will be required to opt in to avail of the funeral cover.

"Additionally, the waiting period for the cover is three months, which is significantly shorter than the usual waiting period for similar products in the country. This makes it the cheapest funeral cover available in Eswatini, further enhancing its appeal to potential customers," he explained.

He added that the introduction of the funeral cover by Instacash underwritten by Liberty represents a significant milestone in the financial services sector in Eswatini.

He said it not only expands the range of products available to Instacash customers but also underscores the commitment of both Liberty and Instacash to promoting financial inclusion and freedom.

"The emphasis on convenience and affordability further demonstrates the customer-centric approach adopted by both companies, as they strive to meet the diverse needs of their customer base," he said.



▲ Liberty Life Insurance MD Mangaliso Shabangu and Instacash MD Mandla 'Cheeks' Nxumalo shaking hands after the launch

ESWATINIBANK has presented an opportunity to the public to own a home through their property disposal through sealed bids for one of its properties.

The reserve for the property is E5.6 million. The property is a developed property comprising a 4-bedroomed house with a double garage, guest cottage, and servants' quarters at Thembelihle. Its plot size is 11.927 m2 (1,1927 hectares).

According to the statement issued by the bank, the closing date to submit sealed bids is January 26, 2024, at 10 am. The contact person is 7602 9335, and all inquiries are to be addressed to the Chairperson, Tender Committee Email: [tenders@swazibank.co.sz](mailto:tenders@swazibank.co.sz).

"Sealed bids should be deposited into the tender box situated at Engungwini Building M-Floor," read the notice.

Eswatini Development and Savings Bank (EDSB), known as EswatiniBank, is a development and commercial financial institution, which the Government of Eswatini wholly owns.

## EswatiniBank selling some of its properties

It has 10 branches - Mbabane, Ezulwini, Manzini, Pigg's Peak, Ezulwini, Matsapha, Nhlengano, Matata, Siphofaneni, Siteki and Simunye.

The Bank also has numerous Auto Teller Machines (ATMs) and Automated Deposit Teller (ADT) machines across the Kingdom.

The Bank's development function includes financing projects or businesses in various sectors of the local economy such as industrial, commercial, agriculture, transport, mining, Small, Micro, and Medium Enterprises (SMMEs), health care, tourism, youth entrepreneurship, property development, retail, etc. On the commercial front, EswatiniBank has products and services that include Savings Accounts, Current Accounts, Investment Accounts, Corporate Accounts, Premier Banking, Digital Banking (Mobile App and Internet), Foreign Exchange (USD, EUR, GBP, and ZAR), and loan facilities for housing, vehicle, agriculture, SMME, personal and business. EswatiniB-



▲ EswatiniBank has presented an opportunity to the public to own a home through their property disposal through sealed bids for one of its properties.

ank is a socially responsible corporate citizen, and its Corporate Social Investment (CSI) Programme includes the annual EswatiniBank Cup knockout football tour-

namment and EswatiniBank Schools Music Competition. Other CSI initiatives include youth entrepreneurship, poverty alleviation, wellness, and job creation.



# SA central bank wants clearer disinflation trend before cutting rates

PRETORIA - South Africa's central bank maintained its key lending rate as economists expected on Thursday, saying it did not yet see a clear disinflation trend that would justify cutting rates.

It was the fourth meeting in a row that the bank left its repo rate (ZAREPO=ECI), opens new tab on hold at 8.25 per cent.

All 20 economists polled by Reuters had forecast that the rate would be left unchanged.

Thursday's decision was unanimous, South African Reserve Bank (SARB) Governor Lesetja Kganyago told a news conference, introducing a new member of the Monetary Policy Committee, David Fowkes.

Inflation fell for a second month to 5.1 per cent year on year in December from 5.5 per cent in November, remaining within the central bank's target range of 3 per cent - 6 per cent.

The bank said previously that it wanted to see inflation sustainably around the midpoint of its target range, which is 4.5 per cent, before considering rate cuts.

The central bank said on Thursday that the return to its inflation target had been slow.

"There isn't a discernible trend that shows that inflation is declining towards (the midpoint of) our target," Kganyago told reporters. Growth and inflation forecasts were



▲ South African Reserve Bank (SARB) Governor Lesetja Kganyago.

little changed since the November rate meeting, with the bank flagging on Thursday that electricity, port, and rail constraints continued to pose serious risks to the economy.

Another potential source of uncertainty is this year's national election, which will be the seventh since the dawn of democracy at the end of apartheid. Political analysts say the governing African National Congress

could lose its parliamentary majority for the first time since 1994 and have to enter into a coalition with other parties.

Economists from Alexforbes, Bank of America and HSBC all expect the SARB to begin cutting rates in July and ease policy gradually with between 75 basis points to 125 basis points of cuts this year. David Omojomolo at Capital Economics expects rates to be cut by 50 basis points this year.

## Sasol warns on quarterly coal output

SOUTH Africa's Sasol, opens new tab on Thursday reported lower output at its coal mining division in the October-December quarter citing safety-related incidents, tough geological conditions and delays in sourcing spares for maintenance.

Output in the quarter was cut by 5% or 394,000 metric tons as a result, said Sasol, the world's biggest producer of fuels and chemicals from coal and gas.

This would "negatively impact our mining unit cost per ton for the full year," Sasol said in a trading update.

Sasol maintained its production forecast for the full year to June 2024 for its mining, gas and chemicals segments.

However, it lowered its utilisation rate forecast for its Qatar gas-to-liquid joint venture to 65-75% from previous guidance of 80-90% after a reactor coil leak brought forward a planned shutdown to the second quarter.

Repair work will extend into the third quarter.

Sasol is scheduled to release its half-year results on Feb. 26. (Reuters)



## 'High risk caused by S.Africa's port woes has subsided slightly'

JOHANNESBURG - South Africa's Mr Price, opens new tab, a budget fashion and homeware retailer, said on Thursday the high level of risk caused by the country's port congestion has subsided slightly but it will continue to take necessary action to prevent impact on trade.

South African state-owned logistics company Transnet has said backlogs at ports were due to factors including adverse weather and under-investment in equipment and maintenance.

Mr Price said the Durban port congestion was disruptive to festive season trade and the situation is expected to continue until the core challenges are successfully remedied.

"Currently, the elevated level of risk has subsided slightly due to lower port demand post the festive season," the retailer said.

Meanwhile the instability of the Red Sea shipping route is increasing transit times which has resulted in increased shipping rates. However "the group's rates are contracted until June", it said.

The retailer said group retail sales in the three months to Dec. 31 rose by 9.9% to 13.2 billion rand (\$698.84 million) from a year ago when it reported a 36.5% growth due to the inclusion of acquisitions.

Comparable store sales were up



▲ South Africa's Mr Price, opens new tab, a budget fashion and homeware retailer.

4.1%, from a 3.9% decline in 2022.

"Our trading performance improved monthly, and was strong during the critical month of December, with retail sales up 15.5% and a market share gain of 180 basis points," Group Chief Executive Mark Blair said.

He added that the group's growth was led by the clothing division, which grew sales by 11.7%, and further supported by strong sales

growth from acquisitions, which were fully in the base.

The group also achieved gross margin gains in eight out of the nine divisions as items were sold full-price, resulting in fewer markdowns.

Upmarket rivals TFG, opens new tab and Woolworths, opens new tab also reported a slowdown in Christmas quarter sales, with Woolworths saying shoppers spent less on clothing. (Reuters)

## Nigerian company begins operating \$1.3 billion Chinese-funded power plant

LAGOS - Nigeria's Mainstream Energy, which already runs two of the country's biggest hydroelectric plants, has begun operating a new Chinese-funded facility, nearly a year after winning the concession, the utility said on Thursday.

Mainstream Energy Solution Ltd said its subsidiary Penstock Energy Ltd is running the new 700 megawatts plant in Zungeru, central Nigeria, which has been built with a \$1.3 billion loan from China.

Nigeria's privatisation agency, the Bureau of Public Enterprises (BPE), last February awarded the concession to Mainstream Energy, which will pay the Nigerian government \$70 million

annually over three decades to operate the plant.

"This is where the real work starts in ensuring that the asset is managed in accordance with international standards," Mainstream Energy CEO Audu Lamu, said in a statement on Thursday.

Over the last decade, China has been active in Nigeria, providing finance through its development bank to build infrastructure including rail, airports, and power generation plants.

The Mainstream Energy-run Kainji and Jebba hydroelectric plants have a combined output of 1,338 megawatts which accounts for about 33% of Nigeria's current 4,000 megawatts power generation. Much more is needed as millions of households and businesses suffer frequent blackouts. (Reuters)



▲ High-tension electrical power lines are seen at the Azura-Edo Independent Power Plant (IPP) on the outskirts of Benin City in Edo state, Nigeria

# Gene therapy allows 11-yr-old boy to hear for the first time

AISSAM Dam, an 11-year-old boy, grew up in a world of profound silence. He was born deaf and had never heard anything. While living in a poor community in Morocco, he expressed himself with a sign language he invented and had no schooling.

Last year, after moving to Spain, his family took him to a hearing specialist, who made a surprising suggestion: Aissam might be eligible for a clinical trial using gene therapy.

On Oct. 4, Aissam was treated at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, becoming the first person to get gene therapy in the United States for congenital deafness. The goal was to provide him with hearing, but the researchers had no idea if the treatment would work or, if it did, how much he would hear.

The treatment was a success, introducing a child who had known nothing of sound to a new world.

## Interpreters

"There's no sound I don't like," Aissam said, with the help of interpreters during an interview last week. "They're all good."

While hundreds of millions of people in the world live with hearing loss that is defined as disabling, Aissam is among those whose deafness is congenital. His is an extremely rare form, caused by a mutation in a single gene, otoferlin. Otoferlin deafness affects about 200,000 people worldwide.

The goal of the gene therapy is to replace the mutated otoferlin gene in patients' ears with a functional gene.

Although it will take years for doctors to sign up many more patients — and younger ones — to further test the therapy, researchers said that success for patients like Aissam could lead to gene therapies that target other



▲ Aissam Dam, 11, the first person to receive gene therapy in the U.S. for congenital deafness, at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia.

er forms of congenital deafness.

It is a "groundbreaking" study, said Dr. Dylan K. Chan, a pediatric otolaryngologist at the University of California, San Francisco, and director of its Children's Communication Center; he was not involved in the trial. The one in which Aissam participated is supported by Eli Lilly and a small biotechnology firm it owns, Akouos. Investigators hope to eventually expand the study to six centers across the United States.

Aissam's trial is one of five that are either

underway (the others are in China and Europe) or about to start.

Investigators from all five of the studies will be presenting their data on Feb. 3 at a meeting of the Association for Research in Otolaryngology.

The studies, researchers said, mark a new frontier for gene therapy which, until now, had steered clear of hearing loss.

"There has never been a biological or medical or surgical way to correct the underlying biological changes that cause the inner ear to not function," Dr. Chan said.

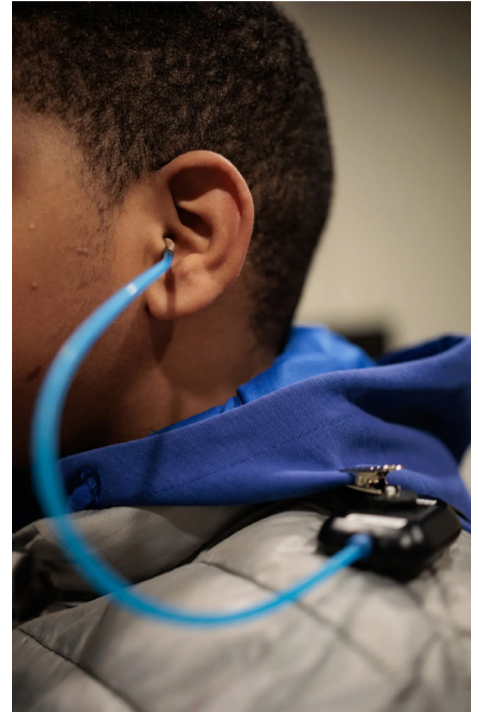
Although otoferlin mutations are not the most common cause of congenital deafness, there is a reason so many researchers started with it. That form of congenital deafness, said Dr. John A. Germiller, an otolaryngologist who is leading the CHOP study, is "low hanging fruit." The mutated otoferlin gene destroys a protein in the inner ear's hair cells necessary to transmit sound to the brain. With many of the other mutations that cause deafness, hair cells die during infancy or even at the fetal stage. But with otoferlin deafness, hair cells can survive for years, allowing time for the defective gene to be replaced with gene therapy.

## Unique

There's an advantage in using gene therapy to allow children to hear. Most of the mutations that affect hearing — there are approximately 150 — do not affect any other part of the body. Some genes are actually unique to the ear.

The inner ear is a small closed compartment, so gene therapy delivered there would not affect cells in other parts of the body, said Manny Simons, chief executive and co-founder of Akouos and senior vice president of gene therapy at Lilly.

But getting the genes to the cochlea, a spiral-shaped cavity close to the center of the skull, is challenging. The cochlea is filled with fluid, is lined with 3,500 hair cells and is encased in a dense dome of bone with a tiny, round membrane.



▲ Special earphones being used for Aissam's hearing test. His form of deafness is rare, caused by a mutation in a single gene, otoferlin.

Sound sets off a wave of fluid in the cochlea and stimulates the hair cells to transmit signals to the brain. Each hair responds to a different frequency, enabling a person to hear the richness of sound.

The gene therapy consists of a harmless virus carrying new otoferlin genes in two drops of liquid that are delicately injected down the length of the cochlea, delivering the genes to each hair cell.

Yet despite the promise of otoferlin gene therapy, finding the right patients for the trial was difficult.

One issue is the very idea of treating deafness.

## Cured

"There is an internal Deaf community that doesn't see itself as needing to be cured," said Dr. Robert C. Nutt, a developmental and behavioral pediatrician in Wilmington, N.C., who is deaf.

Some Deaf parents, he added, celebrate when their newborn baby's hearing test indicates that the baby is deaf too and so can be part of their community.

Making the issue of gene therapy even more complicated is the standard intervention for otoferlin hearing loss: a cochlear implant. The device, which uses electrodes to stimulate auditory nerves in the inner ear, allows patients to hear sounds, especially those needed to understand speech. But the implant does not provide the full richness of sound — and is said to assist in hearing but without restoring it completely.

(Reuters)



▲ Aissam's trial at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia is among five that are either underway (the others are in China and Europe) or about to start.

# Autofin Ford Eswatini Now Open



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NAIROBI - Ethiopia's deal to lease a port in Somalia's breakaway region of Somaliland has infuriated the government in Mogadishu and prompted concern it will further destabilise the Horn of Africa region.

Under a memorandum of understanding signed on Jan. 1, landlocked Ethiopia would lease 20 km (12 miles) around Somaliland's port of Berbera for 50 years, in exchange for stakes in Ethiopian state-run companies and possible recognition as an independent nation.

Somalia has responded by calling the deal an act of aggression and says it will block it. Ethiopia says it is merely striking a commercial arrangement to address a need for access to the sea.

#### Why does Ethiopia want a port?

Ethiopia, Africa's second most-populous country with 120 million people, depends for more than 90% of its trade on ports in neighbouring Djibouti, costing it more than \$1.5 billion a year in fees.

In a speech in October, as Abiy publicly made the case for Ethiopia to gain sea access, he cited an 19th-century Ethiopian general, who had called the Red Sea the country's "natural boundary."

Ethiopia lost sea access in the early 1990s when its then-province Eritrea seceded following a three-decade war. Abiy's drive to reclaim it is seen as enjoying wide political support.

The prime minister also wants a sea base for Ethiopia's navy, which has been rebuilt in recent years but is currently limited to conducting training exercises on an inland lake.

#### Why is Somalia so angry?

The Mogadishu government considers Somaliland an integral part of Somalia even though it enjoys effective autonomy.

# How Ethiopia's quarrel with Somalia could destabilise Horn of Africa

While Somaliland declared its independence in 1991, it has not been recognised by any country. If Ethiopia does so, it could set a precedent that other countries would follow.

Somalia's President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud signed a law that claimed to nullify the deal, and his government rejected an African Union proposal for dialogue with Ethiopia, saying it would not negotiate over its sovereignty.

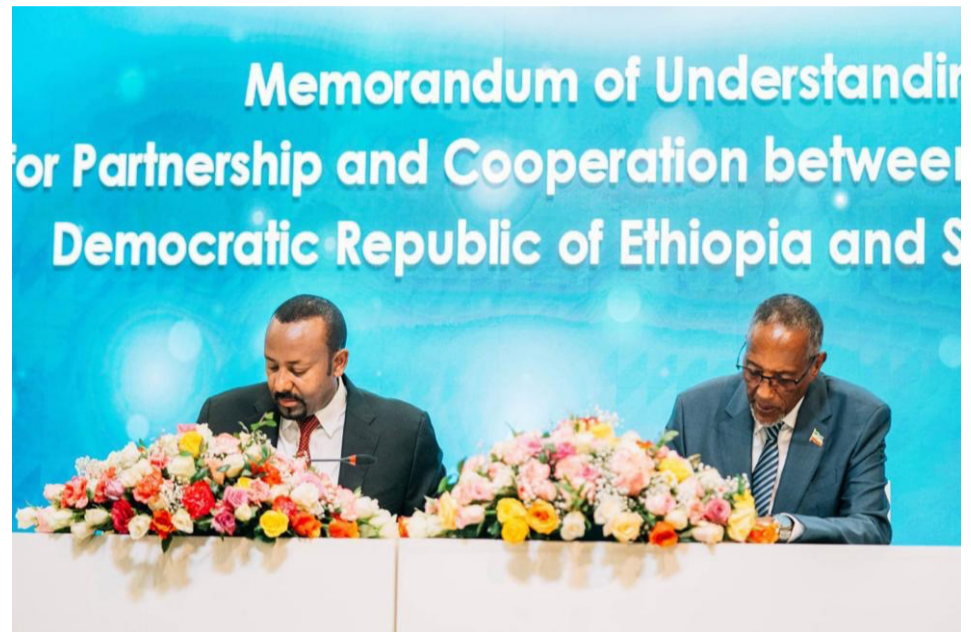
#### What are regional countries saying?

Given chronic instability in Somalia, Ethiopia and Sudan as well as the Horn of Africa's strategic location across the Red Sea from the Gulf, some analysts fear the dispute could draw in outside actors if it escalates.

Middle Eastern powers, including Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Turkey and Qatar, have been vying for influence in the region by making economic investments, opening military bases and selling weapons.

So far, no country has publicly backed the port deal. The Arab League, of which Somalia is a member, reaffirmed its support for Somalia's sovereignty over Somaliland, as did the African Union, European Union and United States.

President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi of Egypt, which has a frosty relationship with Ethiopia



▲ Somaliland President Muse Bihi Abdi and Ethiopia's Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed attend the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding agreement, that allows Ethiopia to use a Somaliland port, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

related to a dispute about a dam Ethiopia has built on a tributary of the Nile River, said on Sunday he would not allow anyone to threaten Somalia.

Eritrea has not commented on the deal but its President Isaias Afwerki invited So-

malia's Mohamud to Asmara shortly after it was announced.

The UAE, which is a strong ally of Ethiopia and Somaliland and manages the Berbera port through state-run DP World, has not commented on the deal beyond the Arab League statement. (Reuters)

## Egypt set to unveil overhaul of downtown Cairo

CAIRO - Egypt's sovereign wealth fund is finalising a masterplan to revamp Cairo's historic centre now that government ministries have largely moved to a new capital to the east, and hopes to break ground on the project within months, its chief executive said. The area, modelled on Paris in the 1860s, is filled with elegant but crumbling buildings constructed over the subsequent seven decades. Many were nationalised in the 1950s and 1960s and left in disrepair.

The Sovereign Fund has already taken control of three prime properties in central Cairo, and received ownership of 11 former ministry buildings in a decree published this week in the official gazette.

It is also overseeing the real estate portfolio of Misr Insurance Holding, which includes nearly a hundred buildings, most built before World War Two.

The blueprint includes the government quarter on the southern edge of downtown and involves traffic plans, area surveys and plans to repurpose various buildings, the fund's CEO, Ayman Soliman, told Reuters. The fund will bring in private companies to own and finance much of the properties.

The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and two international advisers are helping to draw it up.



▲ A general view of memorial and performance grounds at the New Administrative Capital (NAC) in the east of Cairo, Egypt.

"It's coming over the course of the coming weeks," Soliman said.

#### From old capital to new

Much of the government has transferred in recent months to ministries and offices in a lavish new capital being built 45 km (28 miles) east of Cairo.

The fund expects to take over many former government buildings to either sell, manage on behalf of the government or turn over to private developers in exchange for a minority ownership stake in the projects.

"Some of the buildings are already evacuated, but there is a mobilisation plan for relocating into concentrated locations for whoever is staying and not moving to the new capital," Soliman said.

The plan will discourage some activities, such as warehousing and storage, while encouraging others, such as tourism.

It provides for preservation of architectural styles through a permitting system, weekend pedestrian zones and the creation of parking garages in place of uglier buildings.

Work on the ground would begin "probably within the first half of this year," Soliman said.

"We're getting done with the paperwork and from then on you'll be seeing boots on the ground."

#### Vacated properties

The three vacated properties the fund has received are Tahrir Square's colossal Mogamma building - formerly a notoriously dysfunctional one-stop bureaucratic shop - the interior ministry compound and a now-vacant Nile-side lot once occupied by the headquarters of former ruling National Democratic Party (NDP).

(Reuters)

## Ghana Coup: 6 sentenced to death, including soldiers

SIX Ghanaians, among them three military personnel, have been sentenced to death by hanging for their role in a coup conspiracy that unfolded three years ago.

There was a heavy security deployment outside the High Court in Accra during the sentencing on Wednesday. This historic case marks Ghana's first treason trial since 1966, the year of the overthrow of post-independence leader Kwame Nkrumah.

The individuals, apprehended in 2021 while experimenting with weapons in the capital city, Accra, with an alleged intent to overthrow the government, have been sentenced following a highly publicized trial that captivated the entire nation.

Among the accused is a skilled gunsmith, and despite the gravity of the charges, the group maintained their plea of not guilty throughout the proceedings.

Defence lawyers said they would appeal against the ruling in the Supreme Court.

Three other people, including a senior police officer and two military officers, were acquitted.

The court found the six guilty of high treason and conspiracy to commit high treason.

The men were arrested with locally manufactured guns, improvised explosive devices and AK-47 rifles, according to court documents. State prosecutors said the group had planned to organise protests, ostensibly to topple President Nana Akufo-Addo's government ahead of the 2020 general elections.

The court said it found the evidence against the men, including intercepted communications and testimonies, compelling.

Attorney General Godfred Yeboah Dame, who led the prosecution, praised the court verdict as "significant".

"The constitution of Ghana as the fundamental law of the country, which has sustained the stability of the nation, frowns seriously upon any attempt to overthrow a government," Mr Dame said.

(Africanews)

# Trump opens up lead over Biden

WASHINGTON - Donald Trump leads Democratic President Joe Biden by six percentage points in a Reuters/Ipsos poll that showed Americans are unhappy about an election rematch that came into sharper focus this week.

The nationwide poll of 1,250 U.S. adults showed Trump leading Biden 40% to 34% with the rest unsure or planning to vote for someone else or no one. The poll had a margin of error of three percentage points.

That represented a gain for Trump after a Reuters/Ipsos poll conducted earlier this month showed him and Biden tied, though a nationwide survey does not capture the subtleties of the electoral college contest that will be decided this fall in just a handful of competitive states.

As Trump handily beat his sole remaining primary challenger, Nikki Haley in New Hampshire on Tuesday, some 67% of respondents polled Monday through Wednesday said they were "tired of seeing the same candidates in presidential elections and want someone new." Still, just 18% said they would not vote if Biden and Trump were their choice.

"I hate to think that we're constantly navigating the lesser of two evils," said Kimberly Sofge, a 56-year-old project manager in Washington, D.C., this week. "I honestly feel that we can do better."

The two candidates themselves seem ready for a rematch following Trump's back-to-back wins in Iowa and New Hampshire, with the White House regarding Trump as a beatable challenger, and Trump fuming because Haley did not immediately drop out of the Republican race.

Trump's six-point lead held even when respondents were given the option of voting for third-party candidates, including



▲ Donald Trump (l) leads Democratic President Joe Biden (r) by six percentage points in a Reuters/Ipsos poll that showed Americans are unhappy about an election rematch that came into sharper focus this week.

anti-vaccine activist Robert F. Kennedy Jr., with Trump drawing 36% support, Biden 30% and Kennedy 8%.

Slightly more than half of respondents said they were dissatisfied with the U.S. two-party system, with just one in four satisfied by it.

Whitney Tallarico, 33, a consultant interviewed in Washington, is among those considering an alternative.

"The independents don't really have a voice. Polarizing characters usually take the front seat, and it's a little sad for our country," Tallarico said this week. Asked whether she would vote for Biden or Trump, she said, "I'll probably go for a third party."

Overall, the poll gave numerous signs that voters are not happy with their choices.

Seventy percent of respondents - including about half of Democrats - agreed with



a statement that Biden should not seek re-election. Fifty-six percent of people responding to the poll said Trump should not run, including about a third of Republicans.

Biden has been weighed down by the widespread view that at 81, already the oldest person ever to be U.S. president, he is too old for the job.

Three-quarters of poll respondents agreed with a statement that Biden was too old to work in government, while half said the same about Trump, who at 77 would also be among the oldest U.S. leaders ever if returned to the White House. Just over half of Democrats saw Biden as too old while a third of Republicans viewed Trump that way.

Haley, 52, is trying to marshal dissatisfaction to turn around her well-financed but flagging campaign. (Reuters)

## UK must comply with human rights court

LONDON - The president of Europe's human rights court said on Thursday Britain had a legal obligation to comply with its injunctions after Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said he would ignore such orders over his plan to send some asylum seekers to Rwanda. Under the scheme, asylum seekers who reach England's southern coast in small boats would be sent to the East African nation.

However, in June 2022, the ECtHR issued a last-minute injunction - known as interim measures under Rule 39 - to prevent the first deportations. Last November, the UK Supreme Court also ruled that the policy was unlawful because of failings in the Rwandan system.

To overcome this, a bill is going through the British parliament to declare Rwanda safe and give ministers power to decide whether to comply with injunctions from the ECtHR.

"There is a clear legal obligation under the convention for states to comply with Rule 39 measures," ECtHR president Siofra O'Leary told reporters in Strasbourg.

### Comply

Where states had failed to comply with injunctions, issued "in exceptional circumstances where there is a real and imminent risk of irreparable harm", the court had ruled they had violated the European Convention on Human Rights, O'Leary said.

A spokesperson for Britain's Home Office, the ministry responsible for immigration policy, was not immediately able to comment.

Despite the legal setbacks, Sunak remains determined to put the Rwanda policy into operation amid pressure from right-wing lawmakers in his Conservative Party and, with an election expected this year, voter concern about thousands of asylum seekers arriving without permission across the Channel.

Almost 30,000 made the journey last year and Britain spends more than 3 billion pounds (\$3.82 billion) a year processing asylum applications, with the cost of housing those awaiting a decision running about 8 million pounds a day.

Last week, lawmakers in parliament's lower House of Commons backed Sunak's "Safety of Rwanda Bill" which the government admits might not be compatible with the European Convention.

"I've been crystal clear, repeatedly, that I won't let a foreign court stop us from getting flights off, and getting this deterrent up and running," he said then.

O'Leary's comments are likely to anger Sunak's right-wing critics, some of whom want Britain to pull out of the convention altogether. They have already said he said his bill was not tough enough in ensuring judges could not block deportations. However, the remarks might provide succor to critics of the bill. On Monday, parliament's upper house backed a largely symbolic motion to delay ratification of a new treaty with Rwanda and could seek to amend the bill when it comes before peers to consider it next week.

(Reuters)

## Russia accuses Ukraine of killing 65 of its PoWs by shooting down plane

MOSCOW - Russia accused Ukraine on Wednesday of deliberately shooting down a Russian military transport plane carrying 65 captured Ukrainian soldiers to a prisoner exchange in what it called a barbaric act of terrorism that had killed a total of 74 people.

Ukraine did not directly confirm it had shot down the Ilyushin Il-76 military transport plane, which was downed near the Russian city of Belgorod near the Ukrainian border, and challenged key parts of Moscow's narrative. Nor did it confirm that Ukrainian prisoners were on board.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy, in his evening address said greater clarity was needed about what happened, particularly when it came to who was on board.

"It is clear that the Russians are playing with the lives of Ukrainian prisoners, the feelings of their loved ones and the emotions of our society," he said.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has yet to comment on the incident.

Video footage posted on Telegram by Baza, a channel linked to Russian security services, and verified by Reuters, showed a large aircraft falling to the ground near the village of Yablono in Belgorod region and exploding in a fireball.

The Russian defence ministry said six Russian crew members and three Russian soldiers had been on board too and that the prisoner exchange with Ukraine had been due to take place on Wednesday afternoon at a border checkpoint.



▲ Traffic police officers block off a road near the crash site of the Russian Ilyushin Il-76 military transport plane outside the village of Yablono in the Belgorod Region, Russia.

It said Ukraine knew a transport plane carrying the captured Ukrainian soldiers was expected at the Belgorod airfield. Russian radar operators had detected the launch of two Ukrainian missiles at the time of the crash, it said.

"By committing this terrorist act, the Ukrainian leadership has showed its true face. It disregarded the lives of its own citizens," the ministry said in a statement.

Ukraine's GUR military intelligence agency confirmed a swap was meant to take place, but said it had not been told of how Russia would bring the prisoners to the handover point and said Ukraine had not been asked to ensure airspace security around Belgorod

unlike previous swaps. "On this basis, we may be talking about planned and deliberate actions by Russia to destabilise the situation in Ukraine and weaken international support for our state," GUR said in a statement on Telegram.

Without confirming it had shot down the plane, the Ukrainian military said it would continue to destroy Russian military transport aircraft it believed were carrying missiles with which to strike Ukraine.

It said it had noticed more Russian military transport aircraft landing in Belgorod, something it linked to Russian missile strikes on Kharkiv and other Ukrainian cities.

(Reuters)



26-28 JAN

# LeWeekend, iyaStunna!

By Siphesihle Dlamini  
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GET ready to groove and have a blast as the doors to the world of events swing wide open!

It's time to dust off those dancing shoes, gather your friends, and get ready for an unforgettable weekend filled with music, laughter, and good times. And who is better to guide you through the maze of entertainment options than your trusted companion, Eswatini Daily News?

► **5/4 ERA VIBES**  
When: Saturday  
Where: Siteki Hotel  
Fee: Free

Siteki Hotel is set to be transformed into a haven for music enthusiasts as it hosts the highly anticipated "4/5 Era Vibes" event which will feature a good set of DJs. This carefully curated gathering promises an unforgettable experience, showcasing the talents of some of the most promising DJs in the industry. The event will start from 7 pm, the event will kick off with a line-up that is sure to captivate the crowd. Moon-Elo, Hallux, Maye Le Muso, Master Vee, Sundeeep, and Gift DeeJay will take the stage, each bringing their unique style and sound to the forefront. Admission to the event is free, but after 7 pm, a nominal fee of E20 will be charged. This ensures that everyone can enjoy the incredible performances and support the local music scene.

► **AFRICA IS A FEELING**  
When: Friday  
Where: Sibane Sami Hotel  
Fee: E350

This comedy extravaganza promises to be a rib-cracking experience. Comedy lovers are set to be captivated by Kevin Fraser's untamed spirit as he takes the stage, ready to unleash a theatrical safari of comedic brilliance. With his nostalgic impersonations, heartwarming tales, and groundbreaking rhythms of energy and laughter, Fraser guarantees a night that will leave audiences clutching their sides in laughter. The Africa Is a Feeling tour is set to embark on a month-long journey from January 12 to February 12, 2024, visiting countries across the continent. From the stunning shores of Mauritius to the vibrant streets of Mozambique, and from the wild wonders of Zambia and Zimbabwe to the breathtaking landscapes of Namibia and Botswana, Fraser's tour promises to bring joy and laughter to comedy enthusiasts across Africa.

► **SWAZI PLAZA NIGHTS**  
When: Friday  
Where: Swazi Plaza Food Court

This enchanting evening promises to be a celebration of joy, laughter, and unforgettable

experiences for all attendees. The best part? It's free for everyone. At the heart of this mesmerizing event is the talented singer, songwriter, rapper, and poet, Sarnilo. Swazi Plaza Nights has become a beloved tradition, renowned for its vibrant atmosphere and engaging activities. Designed to bring families together, this event takes place at the family-friendly Food Court, offering a delightful evening under the stars for parents, while their children immerse themselves in exciting games within the various restaurants. What sets Swazi Plaza Nights apart is its ability to strike the perfect balance between lively entertainment and an early night. The relaxed ambience allows attendees to savour delicious dinners and drinks while indulging in premium entertainment. Swazi Plaza aims to bring accessible entertainment to its customers, enabling them to experience the talents of local artists in a central location, free of charge.

► **THE FIRST ASSEMBLY**  
When: Saturday  
Where: Mega Lounge  
Fee: E150

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 line-up 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 line-up, the atmosphere is sure to be pulsating with energy and excitement. '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.

► **BACK 2 SCHOOL LADIES NIGHT**  
When: Saturday  
Where: Subway Restaurant and Bar  
Fee: Free

Subway Restaurant and Bar, the newest hotspot in town, is set to host the Back 2 School Ladies Night which features Trend Twins, among many other artists. This night will be a celebration of music, dance, and pure entertainment. Leading the charge will be the sensational Trend Twins. Joining them will be the incredible Lady Zee who is expected to deliver a fire set. To keep the energy high and the crowd moving, the event will be hosted by the dynamic duo of Slitchie Da Dancer and Lisah. As a bonus, Subway Restaurant and Bar is offering free entry to all

attendees. The recommended dress code for the night is all black, adding an air of sophistication and style to the event. And to make the night even more special, the venue will be providing free wine for the ladies from 7 pm until 9 pm. It's important to note that food and beverages will be available for purchase inside the venue, and patrons are kindly requested not to bring their own.

► **COMEDY & MUSIC BIRTHDAY SUNDAY**

When: Sunday  
Where: Polar Park Guest Lodge  
Fee: Free

It will be laughter galore as local comedians, Dr Shakes and Ndosh are set to dish the funniest jokes at Comedy & Music Birthday Sunday. The event promises to be a night of mirth, music, and celebration, bringing together the finest talents in comedy and music to create an atmosphere of joy and camaraderie. With an impressive line-up of comedians and musicians, this event is set to leave a lasting impression on all who attend. The event will feature Dr Shakes and Ndosh and the talented Sbu as the headliner. Adding to the excitement, the audience will be treated to live music by the sensational Soul Friends. This star-studded line-up will be further complemented by a roster of hilarious comedians, including Mcola, Cappuccino, Bongiswa, and Darren. In addition to the laughter-filled performances, attendees will also be treated to an array of musical talents. The event will feature performances by Tempt, Zulu D, Russel, and Ntombz, ensuring that there is something for everyone's musical taste.

► **DEEP HOUSE CONVERSATIONS**  
When: Sunday  
Where: Sundeck Manzini  
Fee: E60

Dance will be the language of the day and groove will be the order of the day as South African DJ, C-Blak delivers an electrifying performance at the Deep House Conversations (DHC). The event, set to be held at Sundeck in Manzini, promises to be a playground for the crème de la crème of Eswatini DJs, with C-Blak headlining the show. attendees will be treated to the deck-prowess of renowned DJs such as Crooks, Mthizo, Orthodox, Fantasy, Rekorder, The Other Guys, and Maphi. The event has gained a reputation for showcasing the finest talent in the industry. Deep House Conversations, lovingly referred to as DHC, is a concept dedicated to celebrating and elevating House music. Spearheaded by the visionary SwaziBoy Entertainment, this event has become a monthly ritual for music lovers seeking the soulful melodies and infectious rhythms of House music.



# Ntsetse's music video premieres on MTV Base

Stories by Siphesihle Dlamini  
siphesihled@rubiconmedia.group

ESWATINI musician Ntsetse's music video for his hit song 'Jabula Nami' made its grand debut on MTV Base.

The video premiered on Thursday, enticing audiences at 11 am, 4 pm, and 6 pm on the popular music channel. Ntsetse, known for his infectious Afro-Pop tunes, expressed overwhelming joy during an interview following the premiere. He admitted feeling so elated that he nearly fainted when he saw his video being played. This milestone signifies to him that his work is being appreciated and loved by people from all walks of life.

The music video for 'Jabula Nami' is a celebration of happiness, urging listeners to find joy in the face of life's challenges. Ntsetse's lyrics resonate with the belief that everyone deserves to be happy and dance, regardless of the hardships they may encounter.

Looking ahead, the talented artist shared his ambitious plans for the year. Ntsetse revealed that he will be releasing an Extended Play (EP), showcasing his versatility as an artist. With a knack for effortlessly blending various genres, Ntsetse aims to push the boundaries of Eswatini music and leave an indelible mark on the industry.

Hailing from Mpolonjeni, Siteki, and currently residing in Bhunya, Ntsetse has proven himself to be a force to be reckoned with in the music scene. His ability to adapt to different musical styles while maintaining his Afro-Pop roots has garnered him a loyal fan base.



▲ Ntsetse Musician.

## Lwah Ndlunkulu to mesmerise fans at Subway Restaurant & Bar

BRACE yourselves, music enthusiasts!

The sensational South African musician, Lwah Ndlunkulu, is all set to captivate fun-loving souls at the Easter Night event, hosted by the renowned Subway Restaurant & Bar.

Scheduled for March 30, 2024, this electrifying event promises to be an unforgettable experience. Early bird tickets will be available for purchase starting February 1, 2024, at a steal for E100. For those who miss out on the early bird offer, presale tickets will be priced at E150, while tickets sold at the gate will cost E200.

Lwandile Mtshali, better known by her stage name Lwah Ndlunkulu, hails from the vibrant town of Hluhluwe in KwaZulu-Natal. This rising star's journey in the music industry began when she inked a record deal with the prestigious Nkabi Records. Her debut single, 'Ithuba,' took the airwaves by storm, quickly earning her the coveted Platinum certification from the Recording Industry of South Africa (RiSA).

Before her meteoric rise to fame, Lwah honed her skills as a radio presenter at Hillbrow Radio Station and spent time immersing herself in the pulsating club scene of Maboneng.

It was during one of her electrifying performances at a local club that she

caught the attention of music producer Celza. Recognising her immense talent, Celza wasted no time in extending an invitation for Lwah to visit Nkabi Records.

Impressed by her undeniable talent, Nkabi Records wasted no time in signing Lwah, propelling her into the limelight. Her debut collaboration with Big Zulu on the hit single 'Umuzi eSandton,' featured on the chart-topping album 'Ichwane Lenyoka,' further solidified her presence in the industry, reaching the number one spot in South Africa.

### Recognition

However, it was Lwah's breakout moment that truly skyrocketed her career. The release of her debut single, 'Ithuba,' featuring the talented Siya Ntuli, in August 2022, sent shockwaves through the music industry. The song became an instant sensation, garnering global recognition and securing yet another Platinum certification from RiSA.

Now, with her unique style and powerhouse vocals, Lwah Ndlunkulu has firmly established herself as a force to be reckoned with in the music industry. Her latest album, which dropped just last Friday, has already been met with overwhelming praise from fans and critics alike.

► Lwah Ndlunkulu.

## Passion Master for Sondelani Wine & Malt event

PARTYGOERS will be fascinated as South African, SiSwati-singing sensation, Passion Master, takes the stage at Sondelani Wine & Malt for a night of unforgettable music.

February 3, 2024, will be the big day for the event, which promises to be a fiery affair, with more supporting acts to be revealed soon.

Vusi Mazibuko, widely known by his stage name 'Passion Master,' hails from the town of Bhuga in South Africa. His musical journey began in 2004 while he was still a student at Tshwane University of Technology.

It was during this time that he joined forces with four friends to form the group Black Nature. Passion Master's talent shone through when he offered to write a captivating chorus for their song, 'Impilo yaseKasi'.

Since then, Passion Master has been an unstoppable force in the music industry. His passion for writing and singing led him to join the renowned group Minds Adjourned, where he discovered his unique sound.

Describing his music as tribal soul, a fusion of Umbhacanga, Isicathamiya, and Afro-pop, Passion Master's versatility shines through in every note. While he initially explored house music, it was in 2018 that he ventured into the realm of Afro-pop, captivating audiences with his soulful melodies and infectious rhythms.

Passion Master's talent has not gone unnoticed. In 2019, he claimed the prestigious title of Best SiSwati Album at the South African Traditional Music Awards (SATMA), solidifying his position as a rising star in the industry. With his undeniable talent and magnetic stage presence, it comes as no surprise that music lovers eagerly anticipate his performance at Sondelani Wine & Malt.



◀ Passion Master.

# Alec Baldwin wants 'speedy' trial for involuntary manslaughter charge

ALEC Baldwin wants a "speedy" trial for the involuntary manslaughter charge he's facing over Halyna Hutchins' death.

The 65-year-old actor was again indicted by a grand jury in relation to the fatal shooting of the cinematographer on the set of 'Rust' in October 2021, and in his first response since the new charge was brought, his legal team have stressed they want things to move quickly in order to "minimise public vilification and suspicion".

According to court documents obtained by 'Entertainment Tonight', the 'Boss Baby' star's legal team emphasised their "demand for speedy trial, discovery and exculpatory information, notice of defence intent to call witnesses," as outlined by the Sixth Amendment, and also explained they wanted to do so in order to "avoid the hazards of proving his innocence that often arise after a lengthy delay in prosecution."

Baldwin must enter a plea on February 1 at 11am, either by phone or video conference.

The former '30 Rock' star had previously had involuntary manslaughter charges against him dropped but last October, special prosecutors announced that they planned to present the case to a Santa Fe grand jury.

They argued that probable cause existed to criminally charge the Hollywood star, explaining that "additional facts" suggested that



▲ Alec Baldwin wants a 'speedy' trial for the involuntary manslaughter charge he's facing over Halyna Hutchins' death.

Baldwin "has criminal culpability in the death of Halyna Hutchins".

The 'Cooler' actor has always denied that he pulled the trigger on the prop gun that killed the cinematographer and offered a potential explanation for what happened on the set during an interview on 'The Chris Cuomo Project' podcast in 2022.

Asked how a gun could be fired without someone pulling the trigger, he replied: "This did not come from me, this came from the DA's Office themselves.

"You're familiar with what fanning a gun is? Have you heard of that phrase, fanning the gun?"

"So, if you pull the hammer back, and you don't lock the hammer; if you pull the hammer back pretty far - in old Western movies you'd see someone fan the hammer of the gun - the hammer didn't lock; you pulled it back to an extent where it would fire the bullet without you pulling the trigger, without you locking the hammer."

In January 2023, Hannah Gutierrez-Reed - the film's armourer - was charged with two counts of involuntary manslaughter and tampering with evidence.

She has pleaded not guilty and her trial is set to begin in February. (BANG Showbiz)

# Fans outraged by Barbie snub at Oscars

THE announcement of Oscar nominations always generates a bit of buzz, with fans weighing in on which movies and which actors deserved recognition and didn't get it. But few snubs have provoked as much online outrage as those delivered to summer blockbuster 'Barbie', a deft satire on the difficulties women face in being recognised for their talents, whose female director and female lead did not make the shortlist.

Especially as the male actor playing Ken did.

"Nominating Ken but not Barbie is literally the plot of the movie," novelist Brad Meltzer wrote on social media.

Greta Gerwig's fizzing audience-pleaser, which took over \$1-billion at the box office with its effortless melding of social commentary and bubblegum pop culture, had been seen as a lock for many of the biggest categories when the Oscars nom-

inations were announced on Tuesday.

Both Gerwig as director and star Margot Robbie had already garnered a suite of nominations in earlier awards and were expected to feature in the line-up for Hollywood's top prizes.

But while the film notched an impressive eight nods, including the coveted Best Picture, Gerwig and Robbie were left off the lists for director and leading actress.

Ryan Gosling, who earned a supporting actor nomination for his efforts as Ken, was among the first to speak out.

"No recognition would be possible for anyone on the film without their talent, grit and genius," he said. "To say that I'm disappointed that they are not nominated in their respective categories would be an understatement."

Fellow Ken actor Simu Liu lauded the way the two women had fought to make 'Barbie' the movie it was.

(BANG Showbiz)



▲ Greta Gerwig and Margot Robbie accepts the award for Cinematic and Box Office Achievement for 'Barbie' at the 81st Golden Globe Awards.

# Inside Musa Keys' star-studded Grammy Awards send-off party

MUSA Keys at just 23 years old, has been nominated for a prestigious Grammy Award.

The talented artist has not only made history as the youngest male South African nominee, but has also become the trailblazer for the groundbreaking amapiano genre.

Keys was nominated in the esteemed Best African Music Performance category for his contribution to Davido's chart-topping hit 'Unavailable'.

To celebrate this monumental occasion, Keys was honoured at an exclusive Grammy nomination celebration that paid tribute to the incredible achievements of the young artist and showcased the outstanding South African and African talent making international waves.

The festivities took place at the exquisite Zioux, an award-winning champagne and cocktail lounge located at The Marc in Sandton.

"A Grammy is something I've been manifesting for a long time," Keys remarked and now he is an inch closer to realising his dream.

"I've always been a student of my own craft, I'm constantly learning and trying to navigate better.

"Over the years, I've spent so much time learning and reconstructing myself to make sure I'm not just another amapiano artist."



▲ TV and radio presenter Anele Mdoda and Grammy award nominated artist Musa Keys

The hard work has paid off; Keys is not only a chart-topping artist in the country but also internationally. His debut album 'Tayo', featuring the global hit 'Selema,' went Platinum.



▲ Just 6 is nominated in the Best Arrangement, instrumental or Acapella category at the 2024

He's on the radar for international stars such as Lewis Hamilton, Rihanna and now the Grammy committee.

The event was hosted by award-winning presenter Anele Mdoda and celebrities such as Mpho Popps, Moonchild Sanelly, Tresor, Priddy Ugly, Bontle Modiselle and Ayanda Mvp.

Grammy winner Zakes Bantwini was also in attendance, adding an extra touch of prestige to the affair.

"The representation of South African artists and the growing presence of African talent at the Grammys is a testament to the

vibrancy and richness of our music.

"It is incredible to see how African music has played an integral role in shaping the global music landscape," remarked Bantwini.

Keys is not the only South African nominated, afropiano sensation Tyla and group Just 6 were nominated in the Best Arrangement, instrumental or Acapella category.

This is their second time being nominated. Bantwini, won a Grammy in 2023 for his collaboration with Wouter Kellerman and Nomcebo Zikode for Best Global Music Performance. (IOL)

JOHANNESBURG — It seems hard to believe that Africa's biggest killer is a tiny insect, but almost every minute, an African child dies with malaria.

The continent bears the brunt of the mosquito-borne disease, with 95 per cent of the fatal cases recorded every year, and children under the age of 5 make up about 80 per cent of those deaths.

The malaria parasite spreads to people bitten by infected mosquitos, and causes initial symptoms including high fever, headache and chills.

But finally, after four decades in the making, there's hope for the widespread prevention of malaria infections across Africa as a new vaccine is rolled out across the continent.

History was made Monday in Cameroon as the first routine vaccination programme against the mosquito-borne illness got underway. Cameroon hoped to vaccinate roughly 250,000 children over the next two years.

"The arrival of the vaccines marks a historic step in our efforts to control malaria, which remains a major public health threat in the country," said Dr. Malachie Manaouda, Cameroon's Minister of Public Health.

"We have been waiting for a day like this," Mohammed Abdulaziz, the head of disease control and prevention at the Africa CDC, told journalists at a news conference to mark the launch. "We are not just witnessing history, but actively participating in a transformative chapter in Africa public health history. It brings more than just hope — a reduction in the mortality and morbidity associated with malaria."

The RTS,S/ASo1 vaccine, also known as Mosquirix, was developed by British pharmaceuticals giant GlaxoSmithKline in conjunction with the Path Malaria Vaccine Initiative. It was recommended for use in such widespread fashion by the World Health Organization in 2021, and is being rolled out in 19 countries in addition to Cameroon after having undergone successful trials in Ghana and Kenya.

### Plan

The plan is for some 30 million doses of the vaccine to be administered in the coming months across all participating nations. According to the WHO, malaria cases were up by almost 5 million in 2022 compared to the previous year. The increase in infections has been attributed largely to rising resistance to insecticides in the mosquitoes that carry the parasite, along with disruptions in health care and supply chains caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The WHO recommends a four-dose plan for children around five months of age, with a fifth dose in high-risk areas. The trials showed that vaccinating kids before the rainy season, while also administering anti-malarial drugs, cut deaths by nearly two-thirds.

Two million children in Ghana, Kenya and Malawi have already been vaccinated in a pilot programme, and the WHO said studies of those children showed a 30 per cent reduction in severe malaria symptoms.

A second vaccine, R21, developed by Oxford University and produced by the Serum Institute of India, completed

# Malaria mass vaccination programme brings hope



▲ A health worker administers a malaria vaccine to a baby at a hospital in Soa, Cameroon, Jan. 22, 2024, as the country launches the first malaria vaccination programme to be offered nationwide and as a matter of routine, in a step the World Health Organization described as "historic."

a final regulatory step in December and is expected to be distributed in seven countries beginning in May or June. That vaccine's approval reassured health officials on the continent amid concerns that the eagerness of nations to participate in the programme could lead to shortages.

Both vaccines, in trials, prevented half of malaria cases in the year after vaccination. Neither vaccine stops transmission of the disease.

The rollout will face challenges in many of the countries about to get the vaccine, as they struggle with transport and other infrastructure hurdles, leading those in charge of the programme to suggest that local health workers schedule malaria vaccine shots in conjunction with other vaccinations, such as measles.

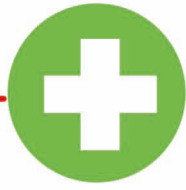
Health officials have warned the Ministries of Health in the initial 20 countries that the success of the vaccines will also depend on local health officials' level of preparation, including the continued provision and use of bed nets and spraying of insecticides.

Ten other countries have expressed an interest in the vaccine already, and officials involved expect that number to increase.

CBS Health







WHEN you enter the gym, which way should you head first?

Toward the treadmills and spin studio to get your sweat on with a cardio session? Or toward the free weights and strength-training machines to do some resistance training?

The American College of Sports Medicine suggests doing both types of exercise to take advantage of their unique benefits for improving health and daily functioning and reducing chronic disease risk. But what is the optimal sequence to get the best results?

The answer to this question is — it depends. I'm an exercise physiologist. Recently in my lab we have been studying the effects of combinations of aerobic and resistance training on improving health-related fitness, particularly aerobic capacity and muscular strength.

Research suggests that when you're designing your exercise programme, there are a few factors to take into account, including your age, fitness level and exercise history and goals. You'll also want to consider the volume of your exercise routine — that is, its duration and intensity — and how you'll schedule your training during the day.

#### Benefits of exercise

First, just about any exercise at all is going to be better for you than doing nothing.

Aerobic exercise is rhythmic activity that gets your heart pumping. Examples are walking, running, swimming, cycling and using a cardio machine such as an elliptical trainer.

Aerobic exercise can improve cardiorespiratory function — over time, your heart and lungs get better at delivering oxygen to your muscles to make energy for continued muscle contractions. Aerobic exercise can also reduce several chronic disease risk factors, increase how much energy your body uses and how much fat it burns, and improve physical and cognitive function.

Resistance training involves strengthening your muscles by lifting, pushing or pulling against resistance. This type of exercise can be done using free-weight barbells, dumbbells, kettlebells, weight machines or even elastic bands.

Resistance exercise improves muscular strength, endurance and the power and the size of muscles — what exercise physiologists call muscle hypertrophy. Studies show resistance training has health-related benefits, as well, particularly for people who have or are at risk of developing Type 2 diabetes. It can improve blood pressure, blood levels of glucose and the ability of muscles to use glucose for energy, and it helps maintain lean body mass and bone health.

#### Training for health benefits

With a limited amount of time to devote to working out, many people include both cardio and weights in the same exercise session. This concurrent training comes with plenty of benefits for your health, including lowering your cardiovascular and metabolic risks.

In fact, doing both forms of exercise together is better, especially for people with chronic disease risk factors, than exercising

# Should you start with cardio or lift weights first?



for the same amount of time but sticking with just aerobic or resistance exercise.

Studies of concurrent training suggest a generalized training effect — similar improvements in aerobic capacity and muscular strength, regardless of the order of aerobic and resistance exercises in a session. These benefits hold for a wide variety of people, including those who are initially inactive, recreationally active, young people and older women and men. Resistance exercise done before aerobic exercise results in a small increase in lower-body muscular strength without compromising all the other improvements in health-related physical fitness. So if your exercise goals are along the lines of staying generally healthy and enjoying the mental benefits of moving your body, resistance training first might provide a little boost. Research suggests that overall, though, you don't need to worry too much about which order to focus on — cardio versus weights.

#### Training with performance goals in mind

On the other hand, you may want be more

thoughtful about the order of your workout if you're a performance-oriented athlete who is training to get better at a particular sport or prepare for a competition.

Research suggests that for these exercisers, concurrent training may slightly inhibit improvement in aerobic capacity. More likely, it can hinder gains in muscular strength and power development, and to a lesser degree muscle growth. This phenomenon is called the "interference effect." It shows up most in well-trained athletes undertaking high volumes of both aerobic and resistance exercise.

Researchers are still investigating what happens on a cellular level to cause the interference effect. Aerobic and resistance training unleash competing influences at the molecular level that affect genetic signaling and protein synthesis. At the start of an exercise programme, the body's adaptations are more generalized. But with more training, the muscle changes become more and more specific to the kind of work being done, and the likelihood of the interference effect kicking in increases.

Of course, many sports require combinations of aerobic and muscular

capabilities. Some elite-level athletes need to improve both. So the question remains: What is the optimal order of the two modes of exercise to get the best performance effects?

Given research findings about concurrent training for high-level athletes, it makes sense to do resistance exercise first or to train first in the type of exercise that is most important to your performance goals. Additionally, if possible, elite athletes should give their bodies a break of at least three hours between resistance and aerobic training sessions.

#### Don't sweat the order

In my lab, we're studying what we call "microcycles" of aerobic and resistance exercise. Instead of needing to decide which to do first, you weave the two modalities together in much shorter bursts. For instance, one set of a resistance exercise is immediately followed by three minutes of walking or running; you repeat this cycle for as many times as necessary to include all of the resistance exercises in your routine.

Our preliminary findings suggest this method of concurrent training results in similar gains in aerobic fitness, muscular strength and lean muscle mass — while also feeling less challenging — when compared with the typical concurrent routine where all of the resistance exercise is followed by all of the aerobic exercise.

For most people, my current advice remains to choose the order of exercise based on your personal preferences and what will keep you coming back to the gym. High-level athletes can avoid any significant interference effect by doing their resistance routine before the aerobic routine or by separating their aerobic and resistance workouts within a particular day.

#### CBS Health

● Studies show resistance training has health-related benefits, as well, particularly for people who have or are at risk of developing Type 2 diabetes. It can improve blood pressure, blood levels of glucose and the ability of muscles to use glucose for energy, and it helps maintain lean body mass and bone health.

# PICTURES OF THE DAY



▲ Students pour water on each other as they take a holy bath during a ceremony organised to resemble the annual month-long Hindu religious festival of Magh Mela, held during the Hindu month of Magh, in Ahmedabad, India.



▲ A journalist, dressed as the “Joker”, lies on the ground in front of police members during a one-day national strike, outside the National Congress, in Buenos Aires, Argentina.



▲ A Typhoon aircraft from the Royal Air Force flies during the annual Red Flag military exercise between the United States, Britain and Australia, in Nevada.



▲ Claudia Schiffer carries a cat as she attends the premiere of “Argylle” at Leicester Square in London, Britain.



▲ Pope Francis holds a weekly general audience, in Paul VI hall at the Vatican.



▲ A woman reacts after police officials evicted a group of people from a building which they had illegally occupied, in Cape Town, South Africa.



▲ Experts in PPE walk to a building damaged by an explosion after a truck carrying liquefied natural gas crashed, in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia.



▲ Sled dogs are tethered in the forest prior to team’s training run before this weekend’s annual sled dog rally in Aviemore, Scotland, Britain.



▲ Models present creations by designers Viktor Horsting and Rolf Snoeren as part of their Haute Couture Spring-Summer 2024 collection collection show for fashion house Viktor & Rolf in Paris, France.

# Coco Gauff crashes out of Australian Open

COCO Gauff's journey at the Australian Open 2024 ended in a semi-final showdown against Aryna Sabalenka, with a scoreline of 7-6 (7-2), 6-4.

Gauff, the American tennis sensation, couldn't sustain her winning streak against the formidable Sabalenka, the defending champion, who was out for revenge after their last encounter at the US Open.

The match was a nail-biter, characterised by intense rallies and moments of sheer tennis brilliance. Despite Gauff's valiant efforts, Sabalenka's first serve percentage stood tall at 76%, coupled with her impressive tally of 33 winners against 28 unforced errors. Gauff, on the other hand, managed to win only 39% of her second-serve points, which proved crucial in the match's outcome.

Gauff's journey to the semi-finals was nothing short of remarkable, given her unbeaten run in 2024.

She outlasted Marta Kostyuk in a marathon quarter-final match that lasted over three hours.

Earlier in the tournament, Gauff had extended her Grand Slam streak by defeating Anna Karolina Schmiedlova.

The US Open champion showcased her problem-solving skills on the court, reminiscent of the great Serena Williams.



▲ Coco Gauff's journey at the Australian Open 2024 ended in a semi-final showdown against Aryna Sabalenka, with a scoreline of 7-6 (7-2), 6-4.

Gauff admitted to being nervous during the first set but found her rhythm towards the end, setting up a strong performance throughout the tournament.

Gauff's achievements in tennis have been nothing short of extraordinary. Since teaming up with coach Brad Gilbert, she has collected significant titles, including victories

in Washington, DC, and Cincinnati, and her groundbreaking triumph at the US Open.

Her meteoric rise to the top echelons of women's tennis is marked by her relentless improvement, particularly in her serve, under the guidance of former world No. 1 Andy Roddick.

(Reuters)

## Klopp wants nothing to do with Liverpool 'quadruple' talk

LIVERPOOL manager Jurgen Klopp insisted Thursday it is far too early in the season to talk about another quadruple bid by his side after they reached the League Cup final.

The Premier League club had a shot at winning four trophies in the one season two years ago after defeating Chelsea

– their opponents in next month's final –

at Wembley.

But they had to settle for a domestic Cup double, after also defeating Chelsea in the FA Cup final, with the Reds narrowly beaten to the Premier League title by Manchester City on the last day of the season and losing to Real Madrid in the Champions League final.

Liverpool are competing on four fronts again this season, with Klopp's men five points clear at the top of the Premier League and into the last 16 of the Europa League as they prepare for Sunday's FA Cup fourth-round tie at home to second-tier Norwich.

"I didn't think about it to be honest because we are far off having 'four finals'," Klopp said Thursday, less than 24 hours after Liverpool's 3-2 aggregate League Cup semifinal win over Fulham.

"We have qualified for one. It makes no sense to plan the next one before you have played the first one."

The German added: "It's very unlikely we reach all three finals, it's just the nature of it."

Klopp, meanwhile, tried to defuse a potential club versus country row involving Liverpool and Egypt's Mohamed Salah heading back to England from the Africa Cup of Nations.

The forward has returned to England for treatment on a hamstring tear to give him what Liverpool hope will be the best chance to be available for the Africa Cup of Nations final, should Egypt be involved in the February 11 showpiece in Abidjan.

But there were reports that Klopp providing an update on Salah's fitness has caused problems for Egypt officials who wanted to make a similar announcement themselves.

Klopp stressed he had not "intentionally" spoken out of turn, with both Liverpool and Egypt keen to uphold Salah's best interests.

"Most people in Egypt understand the situation because we have exactly the same target as Egypt – make Mo fit as quick as possible," he added.

"That's all we want and that's how it always is. If a player is injured we try everything to help him to get fit as quick as possible.

"All parties agreed that it makes sense he is doing rehab here. We have a season to play so we want him fit but if he is fit earlier then as long as Egypt is still in the tournament he will go back, that is clear. Then it's a win-win." (AFP)

## Spanish judge wants Rubiales to stand trial in kiss case

MADRID - A Spanish High Court judge proposed on Thursday that former football federation chief Luis Rubiales stand trial over the kiss he planted on player Jenni Hermoso's lips after Spain's victory in the Women's World Cup.

The court said in a statement that the judge, Francisco de Jorge, also sought a trial for former women's team coach Jorge Vilda, as well as Albert Luque, the men's team's sport director, and Ruben Rivera, the federation's marketing chief, for pressuring Hermoso to say the kiss was consensual.

The court quoted the judge as saying that, contrary to Rubiales' statements, the investigation showed the kiss "was not consensual and was a unilateral and surprising initiative".

Prosecutors and lawyers can still present their arguments, after which the court will decide whether and when

to call the trial. Up until now, the case has been handled by an investigative judge.

The 33-year-old forward - Spain's all-time top scorer - lodged a criminal complaint of sexual assault and coercion in September over the kiss on the winners' podium on Aug. 20, saying she felt "vulnerable and a victim of an aggression".

The case shocked the sporting world and society in Spain and abroad, prompting protests and further accusations by women that prominent or powerful men had forced intimacy on them.

In Spain, the social media hashtag #SeAcabo ("It's over") became a rallying cry.

Beside the kiss itself, the judge found evidence Rubiales and the co-defendants may have committed a related offence in their coordinated action to make Hermoso "record a video in which she would say the kiss was consensual."

(Reuters)



▲ Luis Rubiales is to stand trial over the kiss he planted on player Jenni Hermoso's lips after Spain's victory in the Women's World Cup.

## Haaland to miss Spurs game

MANCHESTER City striker Erling Haaland will miss their FA Cup fourth round game with Tottenham Hotspur, but is close to a return to action, manager Pep Guardiola said on Thursday.

Haaland has missed City's last nine games in all competitions with a foot injury, and Guardiola is prepared to wait until the Norwegian forward is fully recovered.

"He is on the verge to come back," Guardiola told reporters.

"Tomorrow still he's not ready but he's close. Training camp was good, trained some sessions and the last two days here he trained but he's not perfect and we wait a little bit more."

The manager also reported that defender Manuel Akanji will miss Friday's trip to Spurs but both defender John Stones and goalkeeper Eder-

son are available for selection.

Guardiola confirmed the news that midfielder Calvin Phillips is in London for a medical at West Ham United prior to a probable loan move.

"It still isn't done, but he travelled yesterday to make a medical test, but probably it is going to be a loan for six months, and hopefully he can play the minutes he deserves and I couldn't give to him," the manager said.

"If I give him 10-15 games in a row he will play good but I did not give him that. I have players in the squad and decide we are looking for different things.

"I can only say how grateful I am for his behaviour off the pitch and hopefully he can get the minutes and next season we will see what happens." City, who have denied wrongdoing, are facing 115 charges from the Premier League over breaching financial rules.

(Reuters)

▲ Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp.

# Pitso Mosimane signs on the dotted line for new club

IT'S official, Pitso Mosimane has landed a new job after signing with Saudi Arabia Pro League side Abha Football Club on a short-term four-month contract on Thursday afternoon.

"I can confirm to you that coach Pitso has officially signed with Saudi Arabia club Abha FC on Thursday," MT Sports MD Moira Tlhagale exclusively revealed the news to Sunday World.

"Coach Pitso will be returning to the gulf and has signed a four-month contract with the team until the end of the season.

"His mandate is clear and that is to ensure that Abha survives relegation and plays in the Pro League again next season."

Abha is currently languishing in the relegation zone on number 17 in the Saudi Pro League – five points away from safety.

The deal puts to bed the ongoing speculations surrounding Mosimane's future, as the most decorated and successful South African coach was linked many clubs, including the likes of Egyptian outfit Zamalek, Nigeria national team and Soweto giants Kaizer Chiefs.

Two weeks ago, the South African-born coach was reported to have agreed terms with the Saudi Arabian side.

Abha is said to have offered the former Mamelodi Sundowns and Al Ahly mentor an 18-months deal, however, Mosimane's management opted for a short-term deal.

This will mark a sensational return in Saudi Arabia for Mosimane following his successful first stint with Al Ahli Jeddah, where he woke the 'sleeping giants' by promoting



▲ Pitso Mosimane has landed a new job after signing with Saudi Arabia Pro League side Abha Football Club.

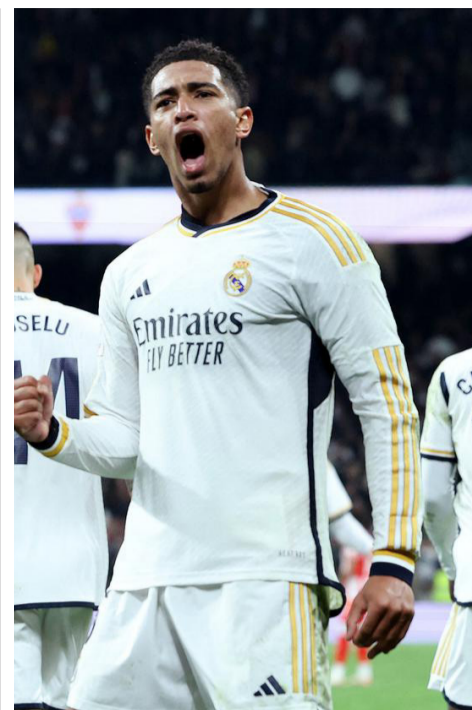
them to the Pro League and lifted the Saudi First Division Yelo League title last season.

As a cherry on top, Jingles, as Mosimane is fondly known, topped it off by walking away with two Coach of the Month accolades.

His success story began with Sundowns, where steered them into winning their first ever Caf Champions League title, before

joining Egyptian giants Al Ahly and winning two Caf Champions League titles in two seasons.

Mosimane jetted off to the gulf with his generals Maahier Davids, Kabelo Rangoaga, Musi Matlaba, Kyle Solomon, and goalkeeper coach Hamad Alyami earlier this week. (Sunday World)



▲ Real Madrid's Jude Bellingham.

## Real overtake Man City as highest revenue-generating club

REAL Madrid have overtaken Manchester City and topped the Deloitte Football Money League as the world's highest revenue-generating club in the 2022-23 season, with commercial revenue taking over as the largest income stream for teams.

The Spanish club, leaders for the first time since the 2017-18 season, generated total revenue of 831 million euros (\$907.78 million), followed by City (826 million euros) and Paris St Germain (802 million euros).

Barcelona moved from seventh last year up to fourth, generating 800 million euros while Manchester United slipped one place to fifth as they made 746 million euros.

Real recorded an increase in revenue of 118 million euros over the previous year, their 16% growth attributed to strong retail performance, higher stadium attendance and recovery of sponsorship income.

Despite City losing the top spot, which they had held for the last two years, the club reported its highest ever revenue for a season, thanks to their treble-winning campaign which bolstered their broadcast and commercial revenues.

Commercial revenue was the largest income stream at clubs for the first time since 2015-16, excluding the COVID-19 impacted 2019-20 season, as broadcast revenue increased by a modest 5%.

"A high demand for live sport is pointing towards further growth for commercial and matchday revenues, in particular," said Tim Bridge, lead partner in Deloitte's Sports Business Group.

"As clubs appear to no longer be able to rely on exponential broadcast revenue growth, creating a more commercially focused business model will support them to achieve greater control over their financial stability."

Liverpool, the biggest movers in last year's edition, rising from seventh to third, reported the greatest fall in year-on-year rankings this year as they returned to seventh, one of three clubs to report a decline in revenue.

Atletico Madrid and West Ham United are the other two clubs with a drop in revenue, and Premier League sides now make up eight of the top 20, down from 11 last year, with Leicester City, Leeds United and Everton replaced by Eintracht Frankfurt, Napoli and Olympique Marseille. (Reuters)



▲ The 23-year-old Mbatha joins the Buccaneers from SuperSport United.



▲ Thabiso Lebitso will also join the Buccaneers on a 6 month loan deal from Chippa.



▲ Bienvenu Eva Nga leaves Orlando Pirates after an unsuccessful stint.

## Bucs confirm two new signings, part ways with Eva Nga

SOWETO giants Orlando Pirates have officially confirmed the signing of Thalte Mbatha and Thabiso Lebitso on Thursday.

Mbatha joins the Buccaneers on an initial six-month loan deal with an option for purchase at the end of the season from SuperSport United, while Lebitso put a pen to paper on a two-and-a-half-year deal from Chippa United.

"Joining Orlando Pirates is a significant milestone in my career. I am eager to make a meaningful contribution to

the team's success," Lebitso told the club's website.

Mbatha also expressed his excitement to be joining Pirates, saying that he is eager to start his new chapter at the club.

"I'm thrilled to be here and can't wait to start playing. I see this as a golden opportunity and intend to make the most of it," Mbatha said.

Meanwhile, Pirates confirmed that they have reached a mutual agreement for the departure of Cameroonian striker Bienvenu Eva Nga.

Nga leaves the Sea Robbers after an unsuccessful

one-and-a-half seasons stint with the club.

"We extend our heartfelt thanks to him for his contributions and wish him the best in his future endeavours," Pirates said in a statement.

The departure of Nga also made way for Tshegofatso Mabasa, who returns to Pirates following the expiry of loan spell at Moroka Swallows.

The Premier Soccer League (PSL) January transfer window is set to close on Friday midnight. (Sunday World)

## Leclerc staying at Ferrari for 'several more seasons'

CHARLES Leclerc will stay at Ferrari for years to come after the Italian Formula One team announced a contract extension on Thursday.

The 26-year-old Monaco-born driver's previous deal was due to expire at the end of the year.

"I'm very pleased to know that I will be wearing the Scuderia Ferrari race suit for several more seasons to come," he said in a statement that did not state the length of the extension.

The deal is likely to take Leclerc into the sport's new engine era that starts in 2026, however, and assures continuity for the sport's oldest and most successful team whose other driver, Spaniard Carlos Sainz, remains unsigned for 2025.

It also means the top teams have drivers signed up for the next few years with Red Bull's triple world champion Max Verstappen contracted to the end of 2028 while Lewis Hamilton and George Russell are at Mercedes through 2025.

Fourth-placed McLaren have Lando Norris and Oscar Piastri signed up until the end of 2025 and 2026 respectively. "Charles' bond to the Scuderia goes beyond that of just a driver and a team, as he has been part of the Ferrari family for eight years now," said Ferrari's French boss Fred Vasseur. (Reuters)



# AFRICA CUP OF NATIONS

## Côte d'Ivoire 2023



THE group stage of the TotalEnergies CAF Africa Cup of Nations Côte d'Ivoire 2023, concluded on Wednesday night, setting up some highly anticipated knock-out stage clashes.

The group stage produced everything expected of the grit the TotalEnergies CAF AFCON is made of; stellar shocks, goals, records, history and passionate fans turning up at match venues.

In the marquee match of the round, defending champions Senegal will take on tournament hosts Côte d'Ivoire.

The Elephants suffered a shock 4-0 thrashing by Equatorial Guinea in their final group game but still advanced.

They now face the daunting task of overcoming an in-form Senegalese side yet to drop points.

Two more African heavyweights will collide when Nigeria meets Cameroon. Both teams had uneven group stages but remain continental powerhouses.

Elsewhere, Morocco topped their group without conceding and will look to continue their fine form against South Africa.

After surprisingly winning Group A undefeated, underdogs Equatorial Guinea will try to cause another upset against Guinea. First-time knockouts Namibia face a stern challenge from two-time quarterfinalists Angola.

# AFCON enters knockout rounds with mouthwatering fixtures

2023 AFCON ROUND OF 16 FIXTURES			
ANGOLA	VS	NAMIBIA	
NIGERIA	VS	CAMEROON	
EQ. GUINEA	VS	GUINEA	
EGYPT	VS	DR CONGO	
CAPE VERDE	VS	MAURITANIA	
SENEGAL	VS	COTE D'IVOIRE	
MALI	VS	BURKINA FASO	
MOROCCO	VS	SOUTH AFRICA	

Despite an underwhelming group stage, Egypt's pedigree as the most successful TotalEnergies CAF AFCON nation makes them dangerous opponents for DR Congo.

Other intriguing clashes see Mali take on Burkina Faso while Cape Verde battle Mauritania.

(cafonline)



▶ Hosts Ivory Coast scraped through to the knockout stage after finishing as the last of the best third place finishers.

## Holders Senegal remain team to beat after spectacular group stage

NAMIBIA winger Deon Hotto has hailed his side after they made history to qualify for the knockout rounds of the Africa Cup of Nations for the first time following a battling 0-0 draw with Mali on Wednesday.

Namibia finished third in their Group E, enough to advance to the last-16 where they will take on COSAFA rivals Angola, a draw that will keep them dreaming of even more.

"It wasn't easy. We fought until the last minute, until the final whistle. This qualification means a lot for Namibia," Orlando Pirates star Hotto said. "When we arrived at the match, we already knew we had a point and we were qualified."

"But we tried to have a low (defensive) block and take advantage of a few transitions.

The Mali team is very strong, especially on these sides, so we clearly played low. We contained them but we also had chances."

Hotto says the side built confidence as the game went on, and they will take that into their clash with Angola.

"It was our day. As the match went on, you could see that nothing could happen to us," he said.

Angola and Namibia will know each other incredibly well from recent COSAFA Cup tournaments, though they have not met since 2011, and while Angola will be favourites, Namibia coach Collin Benjamin will have a plan out them.

Their blow-out 4-0 loss to Bafana Bafana aside, Namibia have looked solid before and during this Cup of Nations. (Supersport)



▲ Senegal finished the group stage with a 100 per cent record.

## Senegal remain team to beat

THE Africa Cup of Nations moves onto the knockout phase after a remarkable group stage packed with goals, drama, shock results and a huge scare for hosts Ivory Coast, but holders Senegal remain the team to beat.

The tournament is on course to be far more prolific than either of the two previous editions to feature 24 teams, after 89 goals were scored in the group stage.

That average of 2.5 per game marks a huge increase after 68 were scored in the first round in Cameroon two years ago, and in the first expanded Afcon in Egypt in 2019.

Senegal got to the final of both of those tournaments, and won the title for the first time in 2022.

They have so far lived up to their billing in Ivory Coast, with Aliou Cisse's side alone in finishing the group stage with a 100 per cent record.

Led by Sadio Mane, they swept aside Gambia, Cameroon and Guinea and can be confident going into a last-16 tie with the Ivorians in Yamoussoukro.

Meanwhile Morocco, the continent's top-ranked team, eased through with seven points and the sense is there must be more to come from a side led by Paris Saint-Germain full-back Achraf Hakimi, as they face South Africa next.

Three-time champions Nigeria have

looked remarkably sound defensively, with coach Jose Peseiro openly admitting keeping clean sheets is his No 1 priority.

That is despite the Super Eagles' impressive array of attacking options around superstar Victor Osimhen, the African player of the year. "My responsibility is to choose the best way to win this competition," Peseiro said when asked about his decision to put the focus on the defence.

"I chose another strategy, and the players believe in it – don't concede goals because we will score at least one."

He astutely pointed out that Senegal only scored one goal in their first three games at the last Afcon before going on to lift the trophy.

Nigeria's meeting with Cameroon is a mouthwatering repeat of the 2000 final, when Rigobert Song's Indomitable Lions won on penalties in Lagos – he is now the Cameroon coach.

Egypt have been the opposite of Nigeria – a team that conceded only six goals across the last three tournaments combined have let in six in three group games here.

"Obviously this is something that worries me," said their coach Rui Vitoria, although the fitness of talisman Mohamed Salah is their biggest concern before facing the Democratic Republic of Congo.

(Supersport)



▲ Deon Hotto made it to the knockout stages for the first time.

By Ntokozo Magongo  
ntokozom@rubiconmedia.group

# Last chance for athletes to qualify for the Africa Games

ATHLETES have been given a lifeline to qualify for the 13th African Games to be held in Ghana in March.

This is the second edition of the qualifiers with the first edition held last Saturday but it attracted less than 10 athletes.

Athletics Eswatini (AE) Communications Officer Victor 'Mavikane' Dlamini said they are expecting a huge turnout as this was the last qualifier.

Due to the division within the association, some athletes are shunning away from the qualifiers as clubs are unwilling to send their athletes.

Dlamini pleaded with clubs and athletes to attend the event to stand a chance of making it to Ghana.

## Cities

The Africa Games will be held in three cities Accra, Kumasi, and Cape Coast from March 8 to 23.

Dlamini said they will also be expecting the country's elite athletes including sprinters Sibusiso 'Swazi Bolt' Matsenjwa and Bongwiwe Mahlalela.

"What happened in the first edition was not good for the sport. We are aware that they are squabbles within the association but the sport has to be a winner at the end. Clubs must send their athletes to stand a chance of representing the country. The problems within the association must not hinder the athletes from representing the country," he said.



▲ Athletics Association Communications Officer Victor 'Mavikane' Dlamini.



▲ Sibusiso 'Swazi Bolt' Matsenjwa (Right) and other athletes during an international meet.

## THE PROGRAMME:

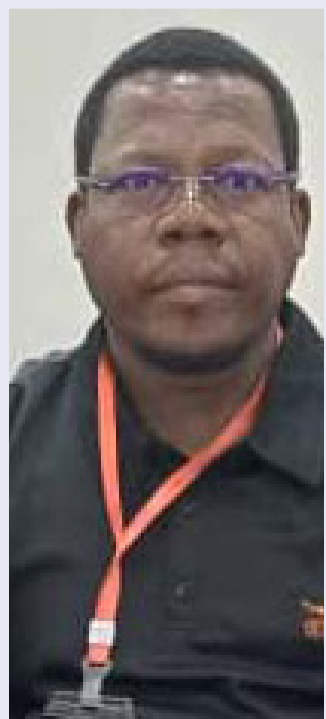
8 am Meeting	
9 am 5 000m	- High jump and shot put
9:00 am	- 400m
10:00 am	- 1 00m, long jump, triple jump
10:45 am	- 100m
11:15 am	- 200m
11:45 am	- 1500m
12:45 pm	- 4 x 100m Relay
12:45 pm	- 4 x 400m Mixed Relay

## Zakhele Zulu off to Ghana for Chief de Mission seminar

Stories By Sibusiso Masilela  
sibusisom@rubiconmedia.group

ESWATINI Olympic and Commonwealth Games Association (EOCGA) Board Member Zakhele Zulu has left the country for Ghana to attend the African Games Chief de Mission seminar.

The meeting will take place between Friday and Saturday



▲ EOCGA treasurer, Zakhele Zulu is currently in Accra, Ghana for the Chief de Mission seminar for the upcoming Africa Games.

in preparation for the continental games slated for March in Accra.

Zulu will be Eswatini's Chief de Mission during the continental games.

EOCGA Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Maxwell Jele confirmed the news when giving updates on the upcoming continental games.

"It's true that our CDM Zakhele Zulu is out of the country to attend the seminar which is part of our preparations for the Games. We will announce other logistics of the assignments as we are currently engaging with our stakeholders over the selection criteria of the continental assignment," he said.

EOCGA recently announced seven disciplines for the continental games such as Boxing, Volleyball, Athletics, Taekwondo, Swimming, Karate and Chess.

The local sports movement recently tabled an E1.2 million budget for the continental championships.

Some of the athletes expected to attend the continent's showpiece include Sibusiso 'Swazibolt' Matsenjwa (Athletics), Bongwiwe Mahlalela (Athletics), Saneliso Masuku (taekwondo), Carlotta Munave (Taekwondo), Hayley Hoy and Simanga Dlamini both swimming, to mention the few.



▲ Brave Lions line up before a match in the ongoing RES Siyakha League.

## Brave Lions extend lead in RES Siyakha League

**LEADERS** Brave Lions extended their lead in the RES Siyakha Northwest 1800 League after beating second-placed Motivators 2-0 in the Lubombo development league.

The Vuvulane-based outfit also maintained their 100 per cent start after recording six straight wins during the recent league matches.

Lions are now sitting at 24 points while their closest challengers, Motivators are at 13 points.

Other results of the weekend saw the Equator beat the inconsistent Mhlume Professionals 5-1 to jump to

the third spot.

The latter moved to position seven with five points while Young Stars recorded their first win after beating Tambankulu FC which moved them out of the relegation zone.

The result moved Tambankulu FC to position eight with four points together with basement side Young Killers.

Happy

One of the tournament coordinators and Eswatini Football Association (EFA) executive member Sicelo Nene said they were happy with the proceedings of the development

### WEEKEND RESULTS:

M. Professionals 1-5 Equator  
Brave Lions 2-0 Motivators  
Tambankulu FO 2-3 Young Stars  
Young Killers vs Mhlume Community (abandoned)

tournament.

"We are pleased with the progress of the tournament, and we urge teams to continue working hard in their respective matches. We are grateful for the continued investment that has been made by the sponsor Royal Eswatini Sugar (RES) over the years," he said.

# 'Downs star, Siphamandla set to join Green Mamba

... Defending league champions, Green Mamba set to make their biggest signing of the season as they snatched talented midfielder Siphamandla Maseko from Denver Sundowns before the end of second registration window period.

By Sibusiso Masilela  
sibusisom@rubiconmedia.group

DENVER Sundowns utility player Siphamandla Maseko is heavily linked with a move to MTN Premier League Champions Green Mamba.

A source close to the matter revealed that the former national Under 20 player has been identified as a possible replacement for the club's former captain Mxolisi Mkhonto who has joined Botswana Premier League outfit Jwaneng Galaxy. "The player is set to move Green Mamba as he has impressed their technical bench throughout the first round and they want to replace Mxolisi. The deal is likely to be concluded before the end of the transfer window," the source said. Sundowns Chief Executive Officer Elvis said they were yet to receive a formal offer from the player's suitors.

"We haven't received any offer from any team over the player and we are willing to release him to a team that will give us a good offer," he said.

Meanwhile, his Green Mamba counterpart Mandla Sibiya said he was yet to get an update from the technical bench. "We haven't received any recommendation from the coaching staff concerning the possible signings for the team," he said. Maseko has been of the seasoned performers for



◀ Siphamandla Maseko.

the Milton Dlamini led charges. He could become the third Premier League signings for Green Mamba this season after Peter

Dlamini and Mbongeni Magagula from Mbabane Highlanders and Moneni Pirates respectively.

## Mandla Palma cleared to Ezulwini Utd for free

By Sibusiso Masilela  
sibusisom@rubiconmedia.group

MBABANE Highlanders have officially cleared their former veteran defender Mandla Palma to Ezulwini United – for free.

This comes after the player resigned from the crowd-pullers after being hauled before the disciplinary committee for misconduct.

The former Mbabane Swallows player was recently summoned to a disciplinary hearing together with goalkeeper Mxolisi Dlamini and midfielder Enzo Motsa.

Dlamini has also left the club while Motsa is still on ice.

Highlanders Public Relations Officer Kenneth Dlamini confirmed the news.

"The player (Palma) has officially joined Ezulwini United and we wish him the best of luck in his future endeavours. We have no hard feelings against the player as the hearing was meant to resolve other pending cases with the team and everything is now water under the bridge after we accepted his resignation," he said.

Meanwhile, Ezulwini United Chief Executive Officer Lungile Nxumalo said they have not finalised the transfer of the player yet.

Palma had formed a strong defensive partnership with South African defender Thami Zulu at the Dumisani 'Du' Makhanya-led outfit this season.

Palma missed the past two matches for the crowd-pullers before his resignation in the MTN Premier League and SMVAF Ingwenyama Cup.

He is one of the few players who have played for the big three teams including Mbabane Swallows and Manzini Wanderers together with the likes of Mfanufikile 'Fash' Ndzimandze and Stanford Ncube, among others.

## Not a good start for trio in Mediclinic Invitational

By Sibusiso Masilela  
sibusisom@rubiconmedia.group

THE country's three golf pros in Mandla Dlamini Jnr, James Pennington and Brandon-Jude Rennie got off to a rough start in the Mediclinic Invitational on Thursday at the Maccauvlei Golf Course, South Africa.

The locals who are part of the 143 golfers playing in the tournament started on a bad note. Mandla Dlamini Jnr was positioned 108 having played two over par while the duo of James Pennington and Brandon-Jude Rennie were at 119 spot with three over par. The trio will be back in the greens on Friday morning on day of the four days tournament. Mandla Dlamini Jnr will be the first among the locals to tee-off at 8:40 am alongside Steven Le Roux and Shalan Govender.

Brandon-Jude Rennie will be next at 8:30am together with Siyanda Mwandla and Nicholas Frade while James Pennington will tee-off with Wade Jacobs at 11:30 am. Leading in the E2 million tournament is South Africa's Willie

### THE DRAW:

8:40am	Steven Le Roux Mandla Dlamini Jnr +2 Shalan Govender
8:30am	Siyanda Mwandla Nicholaus Frade Brandon-Jude Rennie +3
11:30am	James Pennington +3 Wade Jacobs

### ABOUT THE TOURNAMENT:

**Dates:** January 25th - 28th, 2024  
**Tournament:** Mediclinic Invitational  
**Venue:** Maccauvlei Golf Club  
**Defending Champion:** Stefan Wears-Taylor  
**Rounds:** 4 (Four)  
**Prize fund:** E2 million

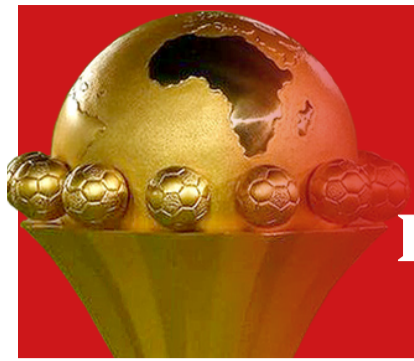
Olivier and Oliver Bekker with seven under par. The tournament is the first golf event in 2024 under the Sunshine Tour banner. It is sponsored to the tune of E2 million and the winner is expected to walk away with over E300 000. The trio of the local golfers will be battling to beat the cut-off on Friday if they are to stand a chance of playing until the last day, Sunday.



◀ Golfer Mandla Dlamini Jnr.

▶ Mandla Palma.





**AFCON  
enters  
knockout stage**

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**Palma  
cleared to  
Ezulwini UTD**

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# Sport



# Siphamandla linked to Green Mamba

... Defending league champions, Green Mamba set to make their biggest signing of the season as they snatched talented midfielder Siphamandla Maseko from Denver Sundowns before the end of second registration window period. *Page 23*