



**MICS6 reveals
more male-headed
households, low
marriage rates,
challenges for
children**

Page 3

Govt closes inflated tender prices taps

**New market
price catalogue
means rough ride
for companies
overcharging govt**



By Lwazi Dlamini
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WITH public tenders valued at E10 billion per annum, the Government has moved swiftly to end the gravy train enjoyed by companies that have been supplying goods to the state at inflated prices. The Eswatini Public Procurement Regulatory Agency (ESPPRA) has produced a detailed 713-page document on the market prices reference for common-use items two weeks after the catalogue was launched by the Minister of Finance Neal Rijkenberg at Sibanesami Hotel.

■ SEE FULL STORY ON PAGE 2



Prime Minister calls for unity in tackling crime

Page 2



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By Lwazi Dlamini
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WITH public tenders valued at E10 billion per annum, the Government has moved swiftly to end the gravy train enjoyed by companies that have been supplying goods to the state at inflated prices.

The Eswatini Public Procurement Regulatory Agency (ESPPRA) has produced a detailed 713-page document on the market prices reference for common-use items two weeks after the catalogue was launched by the Minister of Finance Neal Rijkenberg at Sibanesami Hotel.

The new market prices reference for common items came as a result of a survey undertaken by ESPPRA in collaboration with Eswatini Economic Policy Analysis and Research Centre (ESEPARC) and carried out in all four regions of the country namely, Manzini, Shiselweni, Lubombo and Hhohho.

The report states that at least three quotations per item should be solicited from selected outlets in the different regions and in cases where it was impossible to obtain at least three price quotations per item, the prices were excluded from the Market Price Reference.

The Market Price Survey for common-use items within public and government agencies discovered glaring differences in the price of goods and services supplied to the government.

In the survey, it was mentioned that the extent of price variations was due to several factors. From now onwards, every public enterprise and government department will be expected to use the new prices as reflected in the catalogue which effectively means the government is switching off the inflated tender prices taps.

During the launch, ESPPRA Chief Executive Officer, Vusi Matsebula made it clear that any public entity that does not use the catalogue when procuring goods would be in breach of the Public Procurement Act of 2011.

Matsebula told the Eswatini Daily News on Sunday night that there will be a presentation to the suppliers to officially

Govt closes inflated tender prices taps

Companies who were overcharging the government when supplying goods and services are in for a rough ride with a new market price catalogue

inform them of the new Market Prices reference for common items.

“As a regulator, we believe the PS (Principal Secretary) will be the right person to explain everything regarding the new market prices and he did ask that when we do the presentation he must attend. He is the right person to answer all questions regarding this matter,” Matsebula said.

Under the new Market Price Reference, a cabbage under ‘Fruits and Vegetables’, for instance, cannot be charged above E20.23, which is the upper limit value for the Lubombo region while it is E15.72 for the Hhohho region, E13.81 for Manzini and E15.46 for Shiselweni region.

ESPPRA has recommended the implementation of regional procurement restrictions to ensure that procuring entities only procure in their region, which in turn, will increase economic activity in particular in the Shiselweni and Lubombo regions.

Market price survey recommendations:

1. The ESPPRA should create an online registration platform for all suppliers and procuring entities.
2. The ESPPRA should ensure the use of the e-Catalogue by tackling resistance to change via dedicated campaigns that include a wide range of stakeholders such as procuring entities, vendors and policymakers.
3. The ESPPRA should also develop rules and regulations to enforce the use of the e-Catalogue by procuring entities when making procurement decisions and use

4. FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

ITEM DESCRIPTION		Hhohho Region		Manzini Region		Shiselweni Region		Lubombo Region	
		Adjusted Value		Adjusted Value		Adjusted Value		Adjusted Value	
per kg/bundle/head	Available Quantity	Lower Limit	Upper Limit	Lower Limit	Upper Limit	Lower Limit	Upper Limit	Lower Limit	Upper Limit
Cabbage	1 head	11.20	15.72	11.11	13.81	12.17	15.46	13.70	20.23
Pumpkin	1kg	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Green Beans	1 bundle	12.94	15.95	11.76	13.78	10.26	13.81	-	-
Tomatoes	1kg	22.02	27.19	22.25	30.12	17.84	28.75	26.25	33.09
Beetroot excl foliage	1kg	17.30	19.35	18.10	19.60	16.63	21.06	-	-
Cucumber	1 plant	15.09	18.12	15.33	16.87	13.69	18.24	-	-
Cauliflower	1 head	14.45	18.00	14.16	17.77	-	-	-	-
Spinach	1 bundle	8.06	11.38	6.95	8.49	6.82	8.87	-	-
Lettuce	1 head	6.23	8.42	6.36	7.03	5.44	7.11	7.25	8.45
Pawpaw	1 head	15.79	24.00	16.81	21.78	18.38	26.30	-	-
Pineapple	1 head	10.26	14.44	9.72	13.90	11.76	14.41	-	-
Grapes	500g	16.52	19.60	18.51	19.88	-	-	-	-
Peaches	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Avocados	1 kg	36.72	43.57	21.43	31.23	8.41	12.52	-	-
Litchees	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Bananas	1 kg	11.70	12.53	10.74	11.76	10.59	11.60	-	-
Apples	1kg	15.50	23.03	14.57	22.66	14.03	17.38	15.75	19.87
Green pepper	1kg	14.40	17.00	14.09	16.62	14.80	23.94	-	-
Jugo beans	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Peanuts	1kg	30.91	32.97	30.64	31.67	30.90	39.79	-	-
Egg plant	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Parsley	500g	11.55	15.66	14.88	29.10	19.90	28.79	-	-
Carrots	1kg	12.10	13.37	12.09	13.30	8.97	13.53	-	-
ITEM PER 10 KG		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Potatoes	7kg	56.08	75.89	59.16	75.54	63.84	85.31	58.78	71.10
Onions	7kg	59.49	73.18	65.43	77.01	58.01	80.77	70.11	82.40
Gem squash	7kg	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sweet potatoes	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Oranges	-	-	-	-	-	38.20	47.68	29.74	36.59
Cabbage	1 head	10.56	13.86	-	-	-	-	-	-
Tomatoes	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Green pepper	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Peaches	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Apples	1.5kg	23.50	32.70	25.05	26.05	24.80	26.16	-	-
Carrots	3kg	-	-	25.55	47.34	-	-	-	-
Banana	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Beetroots	3kg	37.43	42.17	43.31	53.04	40.86	58.64	40.87	58.64

▲ An excerpt from ESPPRA’s The Market Prices Reference For Common Use Items catalogue.

- their pricing guide to monitor and audit public procurement in the country.
4. The functionalities and user-friendliness of the e-Catalogue should be continuously improved by soliciting user feedback.
 5. The list of commonly used items should be reviewed and updated because some items were discovered to be outdated in terms

- of description (e.g. building material) specification (e.g. ICT) and quantity (e.g. groceries)
6. Vendors or suppliers of common-use items need to be sensitized and made aware of the Market Survey via targeted awareness campaigns on social media, radio, newspapers and television.

PM calls for unity in tackling crime

By Ncaba Ntshakala

PRIME Minister Russell Dlamini, through Deputy Prime Minister Thulisile Dladla, made a strong call for police officers and emaSwati alike to take ownership of their communities and work together to combat crime.

The Premier made the clarion call during the Christian Police Association’s Annual Prayer service held Friday at the Matsapha Police Academy.

Speaking to the theme of the service, “Being Your Brother’s Keeper,” the Prime Minister emphasized the importance of mutual care and fulfilling one’s constitutional duty. He stressed the need for officers to not only look after each other but also to effectively carry out their mandate of curbing crime and minimizing road accidents. “This service is testimony that the police service as an organisation is constitutionally mandated to maintain and defend national safety and security is cognisant of the fact that whosoever watches over the city, devoid of

the Lord’s presence, watches in vain.” Said the Prime Minister. “The theme of this prayer service, Be Your Brother’s Keeper, derives from the book of Genesis 4 verse 9 could not have been more significant than at this present moment in time when the country is experiencing an increase in contact crime like gender-based violence, passion killings and murder, kidnapping, human trafficking, anti-robberies, house breaking and theft, rape and many more.”

The Prime Minister further expressed that corruption is preventing progress in the country. “This I would identify as one of the major stumbling blocks towards economic recovery and social cohesion, as well as the political and the political and economic development of the country.” Shared the Premier. “This is an important moment in the future as the police service has a pivotal role to play in the suppression and uprooting of the scourge. That will not be easy. It is not going to be an easy task as this crime scourge is highly contagious and one can easily be contaminated by the temporary attraction and appeal of such unscrupulous, get-rich-quick tendencies and shady dealings depriving the larger section of society of true



▲ Deputy Prime Minister Thulisile Dladla delivering her remarks on behalf of the Prime Minister during the service.

services and opportunity.” Acting National Commissioner of Police Lydia Dlamini echoed this sentiment, commending the service’s focus on seeking divine intervention for the police force. She assured the public of the police’s continued commitment to collaboration with all stakeholders in their efforts to maintain safety and security.

The annual prayer service, launched in

1995, serves as a vital platform for reflection and renewal for the police force. It comes at a crucial time, as Eswatini grapples with challenges such as murder, armed robbery, gender-based violence, and stock theft. Such was shared by the Acting NatCom who further highlighted the recent incidents of a mother who murdered her three children in Hhohho by forcing them to ingest poisonous substances. She also noted with disregard the ruthless killing of Sifiso Simelane, a Matsapha-based businessman who was slain and found in Malkerns.

The Prime Minister further persuaded the police services to deduce that there is a spiritual warfare as the country grapples with the soaring crime rate. “One may be persuaded to deduce that there is a spiritual warfare as long as we look out for each other. Pray for love and peace, embrace our Christian beliefs and values, and pray for peace,” the Premier asserted “Then we shall overcome all obstacles that an enemy may lay on our path. Our inspiration emanates from Jesus’ teachings to the congregation as scripted in Mark 12 verse 31 that we must love our neighbours as we love ourselves. Therefore, I implore the people here present and members of the police service in particular to be your brother’s keeper.”

Bumper Cotton harvest expected this year

By Bahle Gama
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THE Eswatini Cotton Board is looking forward to an increased harvest this year.

Chief Executive Officer Dr Daniel Khumalo said the rains had given hope that there would be increased yield and production in the cotton industry this year.

He lamented that during the 2022 season, the industry saw a decline in production compared to the 2021 season, due to the late commencement of rainfall.

He said during the 2022 season, rainfall only came in February, denying most farmers a chance to grow cotton, which is a source of livelihood in drought-prone areas.

“However, in 2023, rains began in October until December, and cotton farmers went all out in the fields to plant cotton because this too is the planting season. The current season indicates a better focus going forward,” Khumalo said. The CEO disclosed that the Board employs about 80 seasonal workers during cotton ginning. This creates the required employment for emaSwati living around the farming areas, giving them the most needed employment.

He said since the rainfall distribution has been good since October 2023, most farmers have planted in all cotton-growing areas.

He further highlighted the increase in cotton prices from E6,300 to E6,500 per tonne, making it E6.50 per kg, a price that was warmly welcomed by farmers. This he said was an indication that production would be high at the ginnery.

Khumalo said the Board also observed that



▲ Bales of cotton.

farmers were pleased with the new cotton seeds which were seen producing clean cotton balls. “This has restored confidence in the cotton industry as more are making a comeback, and we are looking forward to the yield this year,” Khumalo said.

Production

He further stated that they were looking forward to the construction of a dam through the Umkhondvo and Ngwavuma rivers which will be used to irrigate cotton plants. Khumalo said the Board was confident and urged cotton farmers to go all out in planting and production.

He further highlighted that climate change continued to threaten agriculture worldwide and Eswatini has not been spared from its

impact, referencing the drought experienced by the industry in the 2022/23 season.

This he said saw the industry engaging irrigating growers to meet the ginnery throughput, further highlighting that in 2021, a total of 63 hacters was grown under irrigation and an increase of 93 hacters was observed in 2022. “With the future of crop production leaning towards irrigation, the industry was on the verge of recruiting more growers. Irrigated cotton saw a significant contribution to the ginnery throughout the 2022 season,” he said.

The yield from irrigated cotton was 288 tonnes in 2022. Khumalo further mentioned that small-scale cotton farmers continued to thrive under rain-fed conditions in the past



▲ Eswatini Cotton Board CEO Dr Daniel Khumalo.

season. The area under production was 450ha, producing 206 tonnes of cotton.

Small-scale cotton farmer Khanyisile Bhembe said her love and passion was revived by the new seeds as well as the price increment.

“With the previous seeds called scencana, there were a lot of worms that would damage the plant resulting in spoilt yield. Now with the new seed we don’t get such and we were told this is good produce, we don’t need to spray pesticides a lot,” Bhembe said.

She further said she also noted that even the cotton balls were not falling off the plans which meant they would indeed produce and sell more yield. She also highlighted that she heard from those who sold cotton last year that the money was appealing, thus encouraging her to return to the field. Another, Gcamile Tsabedze said the process of selling bales of cotton and receiving immediate payments began last year.

This she said was very encouraging to them as farmers. “Two hours doesn’t pass by after you deliver your bales and payment is received soon after. I think this will allow the industry to grow and encourage cotton farmers to work hard,” Gamedze said.

MICS6 reveals more challenges for children in Eswatini

By Ncaba Ntshakala

THE Ministry of Economic Planning and Development, in collaboration with UNICEF, recently unveiled the much-anticipated findings of the sixth Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS6).

This comprehensive survey sheds light on crucial aspects of life in Eswatini, focusing on education, health, social protection, and other areas impacting children, women, and men.

One striking finding is the prevalence of male-headed households, with 56 per cent falling under this category. Additionally, a quarter of household heads hold only primary education, highlighting potential limitations in educational attainment across generations.

The survey also paints a picture of a society with relatively low marriage rates among individuals aged 15-49. With 57 per cent of women and 70 per cent of men in this age group remaining unmarried, it raises questions about family structures and their potential implications for social dynamics.

Concerning children, the MICS6 reveals concerning trends. Only one in four children live with both parents, while a majority (38 per cent) reside solely with their mothers. Furthermore, a significant portion of children (22 per cent under 5 and 21 per cent aged 5-17) come from underprivileged households, raising concerns about poverty’s impact on their well-being. Education levels among mothers of young children also present a challenge. 30 per cent of mothers with children aged 5-17



▲ Ministry of Economic Planning and Development Director of Central Statistics Thembinkosi Tshabalala.

and 24 per cent of mothers with children under 5 possess only primary education. This could potentially influence educational opportunities for the next generation.

The Eswatini Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) was carried out in 2021-2022 by the Central Statistical Office as part of the global MICS programme. Technical support was provided by the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF). UNICEF and the Government of Eswatini and other partners provided financial support. The objective of this snapshot is to disseminate selected findings from the Eswatini MICS 2021-2022 related to Drinking Water, Sanitation & Hygiene (WASH).

Originally, the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) is a household survey programme developed by UNICEF in the mid

90’s to assist countries in filling data gaps for monitoring the situation of children and women. It is capable of producing statistically sound, internationally comparable estimates of these indicators.

Launch

Speaking at the launch, UNICEF Representative Amina Mohammed urged stakeholders to utilize the data to support vulnerable populations including children and women. She further thanked all users of the data for their input during the MICS inception, particularly their inputs on the questionnaire development phase to ensure the survey collects valid data. The Representative assured stakeholders that they can confidently use the evidence generated as the Central Statistics Office with support from UNICEF has the expertise to

generate credible data to inform development plans.

According to the Ministry, MICS6 survey aims to provide policymakers and program implementers with updated data on vital national indicators. This information is crucial for monitoring and evaluating existing programs, assessing progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and informing future policy decisions.

Also, the survey’s findings have revealed that almost 8 in 10 households use drinking water from an improved source which is accessible within 30 minutes. The use of basic drinking water is more in urban areas (95 per cent) than in rural areas (72 per cent). It also revealed that about 1 in 2 households obtain water within premises and collection of water is primarily the responsibility of women (57 per cent). Overall, 58 per cent of the household population use basic sanitation that is not shared with other households, and the use of this basic service is more in rural areas (61 per cent) than in urban areas (49 per cent). The availability of handwashing facilities on premises with soap and water is more in urban than in rural areas (62 per cent vs 52 per cent). Open defecation is at 4.6 per cent nationally, people in rural areas are 6 times more likely to use open defecation than those in rural areas. Lubombo region (10 per cent) has the highest proportion of population using open defecation. The quality of the water source is poor. The quality of the source in rural areas is worse than those in urban areas (73 per cent vs 36 per cent). Those with low economic status and living in the Hhohho region are highly likely to use poor quality water sources.

By Bahle Gama
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MINISTER of Health Mduzuzi Matsebula has urged practitioners in the sector to ensure they create a healthy environment and appropriate service delivery to patients.

Matsebula was speaking during the seventh Health Sector Annual Prayer held for health practitioners at Ezulwini on Saturday. This is part of the Ministry’s wellness programme.

The Minister said the Ministry and the country have done well in a lot of things despite the challenges encountered.

He said nationally, regionally, and internationally, Eswatini is greatly respected and highly spoken about when it comes to the health sector, therefore important to recognize and applaud such, and not be overwhelmed by the negative news/ feedback.

“Yes, we are supposed to be moving and working at full speed, and fix that which needs mending, but we also need to give ourselves a hand over the good we do as a Ministry and country,” he said.

Matsebula urged the practitioners to leave the prayer service with a heart and mind to demonstrate that they are praying Christians, something that must be visible in the way they treat patients and execute their duties.

He said there had been complaints received about the sector and hoped the prayer session would be a reminder for all health workers to create a customer centric environment in their respective workplaces.

Prayer

The Minister further stated that the annual prayer also allowed for health workers to connect spiritually through God, thus strengthening their relationship as colleagues and with patients.

“Gathering in prayer is very important and helpful for health practitioners because it is a challenging job whereby, in the long run when we are frail and losing our physical strength, we then tap into the spiritual for revival,” he added.

Worth noting is that the country’s health sector is in the process of recovering, following complaints from emaSwati during the people’s parliament, specifically on the drug shortage that had engulfed the Ministry birthed by alleged corruption within the sector.

As a result, a National Drug Crisis Committee chaired by Minister of Commerce Industry and Trade Manqoba Khumalo was formed with the intent to investigate and address all the issues within the sector to ensure that no lives are lost due to drug shortages and those at fault face the law.

Minister’s message at Health Sector Annual Prayer

‘Create a customer centric environment for patients’



▲Minister Mduzuzi Matsebula making his remarks.



▲A Wolrd Vision official presenting clothes to the community.



▲A section view of the health practitioners who attended the annual prayer.



▲The attendees holding hands for prayer.



▲Two young children holding their clothing gifts from World Vision Eswatini.



▲A police officer helping children cross the road whilst maintaining traffic.

Stories By Nokunceda Magagula
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TWO unidentified pedestrians were knocked by a Volkswagen sedan which was driven by a 27-year-old near Madlangemphisi.

The accident was reported by Police Chief Information and Communications Officer Senior Superintendent Phindile Vilakati through a press release.

The press release states that on January 27, 2024, at about 00:05 am near the Madlangemphisi area, a Volkswagen sedan driven by a 27-year-old man from Gucuka knocked down two pedestrians a 22-year-old man of Maguga and a 29-year-old of Gucuka.

The 22-year-old sustained serious injuries all over the body and was taken to Dvokolwako Health Centre where he was

certified dead upon arrival while the other pedestrian was admitted as he got injuries on both legs. The suspect who was driving the motor vehicle has been arrested by police from Mliba and is set to make his court appearance on Monday.

It was also reported that on January 27, 2024, at 10:30 am at Ndlunganye intersection along MR3, Manzini lane a white Nissan NP300 driven by a 49-year-old man lost control, veering off the roadway and knocked down a 17-year-old pedestrian

who was on the pavement. She sustained serious injuries and died while undergoing treatment at RFM Hospital.

In Big Bend, the police reported that on January 27 2024 at 12:00 pm three men ages 37, 37, and 35 of Bulandzeni, Mpolonjeni, and kaLanga were arrested and charged for being found in possession of eighteen (18) 9 mm live rounds of ammunition while without a licence or permit at Lunkuntu area. The three men will make their court appearance on Monday,



▲ PICO Superintendent Phindile Vilakati.

88 cases of 'DD' reported over the weekend

OVER the past weekend, the police have reported that countrywide there were 88 people arrested for driving while under the influence of alcohol.

This was confirmed by Police Chief Information and Communications Officer Senior Superintendent Phindile Vilakati through a press release. Stating that the police were able to apprehend 88 suspects who were found driving motor vehicles while under the influence of alcohol. All the suspects are set to appear in different Magistrate's courts around the country.

The increase of suspects arrested for this offense is alarming and it is worth mentioning that former National Commissioner of Police Isaac Magagula once stated that the correct structures must consider giving out custodial sentences to people found to have committed this offense.

Magagula made this known during a press

briefing in 2017, he said the issue of drunk-driving was showing no sign of abating besides all the warnings that have been issued and continue to flag about its hazards in the road safety landscape.

Magagula noted that the police service had time and again pointed out that drunk driving was one of the major causes of both fatal and serious accidents and it was worrisome that motorists were persisting with such an untoward and dangerous practice.

To show the seriousness of the scourge, the national commissioner pointed out that from a total of 401 accidents that occurred in the country in 2017, more than 50 per cent were attributed to drink-driving while the other half may be traced to speeding and reckless driving which could also be linked to drink-driving as well. It is worth mentioning that since the ban on breathalyzers was lifted the has been an increasing number of people who appear in court charged with drink and driving. The lift-

ing of the ban came after Acting Magistrate Innocent Motsa, pleaded with the police to bring back the use of breathalyzers so that they can be able to give hand out maximum sentences to suspects.

Motsa stated that Section 122 (2) of the Road Traffic Act stipulates that a suspect should be granted a fine not exceeding E5,000 or sentenced to 2 years imprisonment.

"The government funds are going to waste as the courts cannot give suspects the maximum fine of E5,000 because the crown lacks evidence which is the measurements from the breathalyzer," Motsa said.

He said they are pleading with the police to bring back this device since it will make the court process easier. Motsa added that it is not professional that the only particulars of drink and driving will be that the alcohol had a strong smell of alcohol coming from his mouth, which is what is used by the police to place one under arrest.





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



Complainant threatened to drink Masta 900 – Rape suspect

By Bahle Gama
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A rape suspect has told the court that after being caught having consensual sexual intercourse by a relative, the victim/complainant allegedly threatened to drink Masta 900.

The accused person, 23-year-old Mduduzi Masuku was on Sunday, January 7 found having sexual intercourse with his neighbour's teenage daughter.

In his bail application, Masuku said he and the victim were in a love relationship, thus occasionally engaging in sexual intercourse with the 17-year-old whom he said her age was unknown to him because the couple never discussed their ages.

Bath

On the day in question, Masuku said he returned from the fields in the afternoon, took a bath then rested. Later he called the complainant, but her phone was off, and he assumed she was in church as was a norm in her family.

He said due to exhaustion he decided to sleep and was awoken by a call-back message from the complainant at around 2 p.m. He called her back, and she invited him to come to her parent's place.

"I told her I was tired, and she insisted, begging me to come over. Jokingly I asked how many condoms I should bring, and she said 10. I told her I was tired and would only bring two," he stated.

Within a few minutes, Masuku was prepared and proceeded to his neighbours'. Upon arrival, they went into her house and had sexual intercourse.

According to the suspect, it was



▲ The Masta 900 insecticide.

consensual as per the phone discussion about condoms.

However, the duo forgot to lock the door and whilst engaged in the sexual activity, the complainant's male cousin entered looking for her and caught them in the act. The cousin was reportedly upset and left them, and they abandoned the act immediately.

"The complainant was traumatized by the fact that we have been caught having sexual intercourse. She then suggested to commit suicide by ingesting Master 900 (a very poisonous pesticide). I tried to reason with her not to do that as it would complicate things for me as well. Luckily, she never did that. I then left and went home," he said.

Later that evening, the com-

plainant's father called him and according to Masuku, this was a norm as he would assist as a neighbour.

He responded to the call and the father asked Masuku to explain what had happened and he confessed to engaging in sexual intercourse with his daughter. The accused also told his neighbour that the complainant was his girlfriend.

Upon hearing that the neighbour became angry and said his daughter had claimed to have been forced by Masuku to have sexual intercourse which he denied.

The father called the cousin to narrate what he had witnessed who gave a side of their story.

"I respectfully submit that in my presence, the father of the complainant never gave the complainant a chance to say anything," he submitted.

According to Masuku, in anger, the father of the complainant went to fetch his gun and ordered the cousin to tie his hands from behind and assaulted him all over the body with a fan belt, kicks, and fists.

Masuku further alleges to have been throttled by the complainant's father throttled him.

The beating supposedly went on for more than an hour until he was exhausted, after which the neighbour called Masuku's family, and his aunt and cousin responded, then were joined later by his mother and sister.

"He continued threatening me even in the presence of my family members saying he would hunt me down to kill me. He went on to tell me that he was a criminal, he could even lay his hands on me at home," Masuku said.

His cousin took him home where he dressed his wounds before taking him to hospital for medical treatment.

The suspect then went to the police station to open an assault case against his neighbour, where he requested a police form to be taken to the hospital the following day.

On his way home he received a phone call being instructed to return to the police, however, he was almost home, and he told them it would be impossible to turn back and undertook to come the following day, January 9.

In the morning, two police officers arrived at his parental homestead as he too was preparing to go to the police station.

The officers introduced themselves and stated that had come to arrest Masuku for allegedly raping the complainant.

Masuku told the court that during the relationship with the complainant, they never discussed the issue of her age.

Complainant

"During good times in our relationship with the complainant, she would say she was old enough to make decisions. There is no way I could have known her exact age. I verily believe that the complainant's father was angered by the fact that we were found having sexual intercourse in broad daylight in his homestead and that was the reason a charge of rape was levelled against me. He was also infuriated by the fact that I am a person well known to his family since we are neighbours," Masuku submitted.

The suspect told the court that he and the complainant had been in a love relationship since October 2023, they just decided to keep it under wraps.

Judge Zonke Magagula granted Masuku bail at E15,000. He was ordered to pay E3,000 cash and the balance as surety.

Mbabane government doctor arrested for assaulting his wife

By Nokunceda Magagula
nokuncedam@rubiconmedia.group

THE Royal Eswatini Police Service has arrested a 50-year-old doctor working at the Mbabane government hospital who resides at Sandla in connection with the assault of his wife.

The accused identified as Percival Dlamini appeared at the Mbabane Magistrate Court before Magistrate Innocent Motsa, where he was formally charged with contravening Section 77(1) of the Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence Act of 2018.

Charge sheet

"On January 18, 2024, at the Sandla government houses the said accused did unlawfully and intentionally assault Thembi* who is a wife to the accused by pushing her and further dragging her" part of the charge sheet reads.

During court proceedings the accused pleaded not guilty, the crown then paraded the complainant as a witness to prove the

commission of the crime.

Thembi told the court that she and the accused fought over car keys. She explained that on the fateful day while she was in the flat at Sandla she was with one of their three children.

She mentioned that she stopped living with the accused in 2017, so she would

come and visit with the children on rare occasions. Thembi says at around 5 pm the accused came home and began shouting at her telling her to hand over her car keys, she refused to hand over the keys because they belonged to both of them as they both contributed to purchasing the car.

In anger the accused then began using

force to take the keys, she said he pushed her causing her to fall on the floor, and further dragged her in front of her child. She also revealed that they have been having a lot of problems in their marriage which had previously caused her to suffer from depression. "I was once admitted at Medisun because of depression that was brought by my marriage" she asserted. In cross-examination, the accused did not want to pause any questions to the witness.

The crown applied that may the court set another date for the continuation of the trial as it intends to bring more witnesses.

The court ruled that the accused shall be remanded into custody until 28 February 2024 for the continuation of the trial.



▲ The Mbabane Government Hospital.

BUSINESS NEWS

BUSINESS BRIEFS

Ntsika Yetfu wins Ngwenya office expansion tender

THE Ngwenya Town Board has awarded Ntsika Yetfu Investments a tender worth E1.6 million for the proposed alterations and additions to the Ngwenya Town Board Office Building on Plot 60 and 62 situated in Ngwenya Village. According to the intention to award issued by ESPPRA on their website, Ntsika Yetfu Investments was awarded in terms of section 45 of the Public Procurement Act No. 7 of 2011 (the Act), following a competitive bidding process, and scored 92 per cent beating 15 other tenderers.

AMRS bags Namboard consultancy E200k tender

THE AM Recruitment Services (AMRS) has bagged a tender worth E215 050 from the National Agricultural Marketing Board (NAMBOARD) for their request for proposals for consultancy services for the provision of job valuation and salary review. According to the intention to award issued by ESPPRA on their website, AMRS was awarded in terms of section 45 of the Public Procurement Act No. 7 of 2011 (the Act), following a competitive bidding process, and scored 91.37 per cent beating 15 other tenderers.

Chinese firms to invest \$7 bln in Congo mining

KINSHASA — Chinese construction companies will invest up to \$7 billion in infrastructure projects as part of an agreement over their Sicominex copper and cobalt joint venture in the Democratic Republic of Congo, they said on Saturday. Both parties agreed to maintain the current structure of the shareholding, while the Chinese partners, Sinohydro Corp and China Railway Group Limited, will pay 1.2% of royalties annually to Congo, according to a statement.

ESCCOM to introduce centralized system for local courier service providers

Stories by Silindzelwe Nxumalo
silindzelwen@rubiconmedia.group

IT's good news for local courier service providers as the Eswatini Communications Commission (ESCCOM) will soon have a centralized system for the service providers to use.

This was revealed by ESCCOM Director Technical Services Thulani Fakudze, who said as a regulator they have noticed that most courier service providers did not have an appropriate system they could use in terms of doing declarations.

"These declarations include how they collect their orders. If there are systems in place, they can be able to work smoothly," he said.

Fakudze stated that the system they are working on will assist the service providers to have a centralized system that can be used by every one of them.

"We know that bigger courier service providers have their systems, but the smaller ones do not have it. So, we are in the process of acquiring this system for all of them to have," he said.

He explained that the system will be used for tracking and all the functionalities of proving the service including pre-declarations at the border posts.

"We hope that this project will be starting soon as specifications have been developed which shows progress and that this system will help us see much progress in how they work," he said.

According to their website, The Eswatini Communications Commission (ESCCOM) is the regulatory body responsible for regulating



▲ESCCOM Director Technical Services Thulani Fakudze speaking during the recent ICD event hosted by ERS.

the communications sector in Eswatini, constituting telecommunication services and networks, broadcasting services, postal services, and the use and allocation of radio spectrum.

It derives its mandate from the Swaziland Communications Commission Act No. 10 of 2013.

The Commission became operational on July 31, 2013, effectively taking over all the regulatory powers of the sector from the Eswatini Posts and Telecommunications Corporation (EPTC) and Eswatini Television Authority (Eswatini TV).

The website stated that the Commission is mainly responsible for licensing all systems and services in the communications industry, including telecommunications, postal, courier, and broadcasting, and managing the country's frequency spectrum and numbering resources.

The website also states that the commission

is responsible for facilitating the development of e-commerce, type approving and accepting communications equipment meant for use in the country, protecting consumer rights within the communications environment, and managing competition within the sector to ensure a level playing ground for all players.

"The commission is also responsible for regulating retail and wholesale tariffs for communications services, managing the universal access fund to facilitate access to communications services by all in Eswatini, and monitoring the activities of licensees to enforce compliance with the license terms and conditions as well as the law," read the website.

The Commission is overseen by a Board of Directors consisting of non-executive members and all decisions of the Board are executed by the Chief Executive Officer and are supported by an executive team.

Get a JA entrepreneurship qualification online for free

JA Eswatini has joined JA Africa in offering a free online entrepreneurship course for all high school students across the country.

JA Eswatini Communications and Marketing Specialist Siphesihle Mkhonta said this online application allows students to do the entrepreneurship course and get a certificate at their comfort.

She said a school does not need to be part of JA Eswatini for students to access this online training. Mkhonta stated that the JA DEEP is an online-based interactive entrepreneurship curriculum, created specifically for young African learners, and it is an online version of the successful in-person Company Program and a part of the Futurepreneurship Initiative that JA Eswatini is offering to all students in high school.

She alluded to the fact that the establishment of this digital learning platform allows JA to reach youth across the country and continent, whether in-school or out of school, in rural or urban areas, unemployed or in employment, etc.

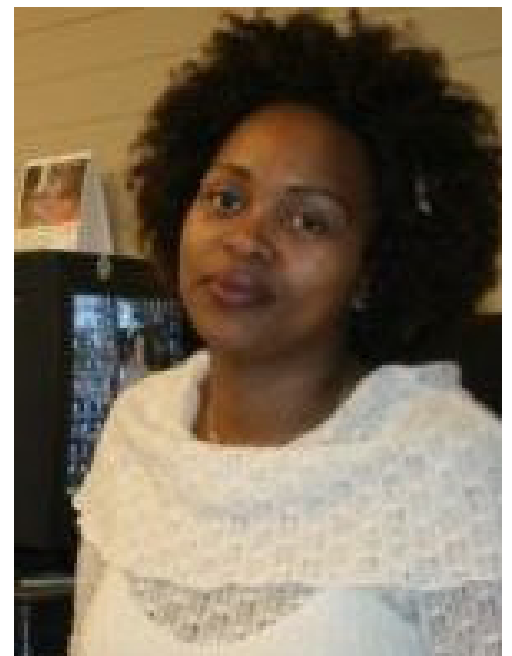
"This initiative is supported by a JA Partner, Future Foundation which is providing both financial and technical support for the implementation of the JA DEEP Program," she said.

Mkhonta explained that the online training initiative aims to reach 10,000 students over the next three months, and this initiative will enable all Eswatini youth to become economically self-reliant preparing them for entrepreneurship.

"The program allows learners the opportunity to experience the risks and rewards of entrepreneurship by walking them through all steps of how to start and operate a business that fills a need or solves a problem in their communities," she said.

She stated that all learners put theory into practice from idea generation, product development, capitalization of the venture, marketing and sales strategies, and financial reporting while being supported with digital mentorship from a JA corporate mentor.

Continued on Page 8 ►



▲JA Eswatini Marketing and Communications Specialist Siphesihle Mkhonta.

EswatiniBank		
FX RATES		
Notes/Cash	Buy	Sell
U.S. Dollar	18.4182	18.8839
G.B. Pound	23.3770	24.0610
EURO	19.9758	20.5833
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	

Ntsika Yetfu wins Ngwenya office expansion E1.6m tender

Stories by Silindzelwe Nxumalo
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According to the intention to award issued by ESPPRA on their website, Ntsika Yetfu Investments was awarded in terms of section 45 of the Public Procurement

Act No. 7 of 2011 (the Act), following a competitive bidding process, and scored 92 per cent beating 15 other tenderers.

“In terms of sections 45(4), 46, and 47 of the Act, all tenderers who submitted bids are hereby notified that a period of ten (10) working days is hereby allowed for the submission of any application for review from the above-stated date of first publication of this notice,” read the intension.

According to the Request for Proposal (RFP), the Ngwenya Town Board had invited sealed bids from suitably qualified building contractors (Category B4) for the Alterations and Additions to The Ngwenya Town Board.

The RFP stated that the successful tenderer would be appointed in terms of

the JBCC Principal Building Agreement, and additions and alterations to such an agreement are detailed in the schedule of the agreement.

The RFP also stated that the successful tenderer will also ensure all pre-tender information is set out in the Schedule, and variables requiring selection by the tenderer are to be clearly marked for later inclusion in the Schedule.

“Any conditions or qualifications that are appended by the tenderer, which are at variance with the conditions in this or the tender inquiry document, may invalidate the submitted tender. The Client is not obliged to accept the lowest or any tender submitted,” read part of the RFP.



AMRS bags NAMboard consultancy E200k tender

THE AM Recruitment Services (AMRS) has bagged a tender worth E215 050 from the National Agricultural Marketing Board (NAMBOARD) for their request for proposals for consultancy services for the provision of job valuation and salary review.

According to the intention to award issued by ESPPRA on their website, AMRS was awarded in terms of section 45 of the Public Procurement Act No. 7 of 2011 (the Act), following a competitive bidding process, and scored 91.37 per cent beating 15 other tenderers.

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According to the Request for Proposals (RFPs), the National Agricultural Marketing Board invited proposals from local (Eswatini), eligible companies for the above-mentioned tender.

The RFP stated that the purpose of the RFP was to obtain a suitably qualified Consultant to provide consultancy services for the National Agricultural Marketing



▲ NAMBoard CEO Bhekizwe Maziya.

Board (NAMBoard).

Tendering was conducted through the Limited Tendering procedures specified in the Eswatini Public Procurement Act 7 of 2011 and procedures laid down by the Eswatini Public Procurement Regulatory Agency (ESPPRA).

The RFP further stated that since the last Salary Review conducted in 2017, the organization has grown significantly extending its operations, manpower, and income base.

“NAMBoard uses a salary range structure which ensures that pay levels for individuals or groups of jobs are competitive externally

in its category and equitable internally,” read part of the RFP.

The RFP stated that this approach rewards performance and the development of skills while controlling overall base salary costs by providing a cap on the range paid for the job.

“In this context, NAMBoard would like to engage the services of a reputable and technically qualified consultant with extensive expertise in labour market analyses, management, and organizational development to undertake the remuneration survey process,” read part of the RFP.

The RFP explained that NAMBoard

therefore, hereby solicits proposals from interested companies to conduct remuneration surveys and support NAMBoard in establishing a revised and reasonable salary scale for its employees based on the latest prevailing market rates.

NAMBoard is the Kingdom of Eswatini's National Agricultural Marketing Board which is enabled by Act No. 13 of 1985 and charged with regulating and facilitating markets for farmers and assisting them with the production, processing, storage, transportation, distribution, and sale of scheduled products.

NAMBoard is also tasked with registering wholesale distributors, importers, and exporters of scheduled products as well as advising the Government on the availability and demand of scheduled products.

To achieve optimum import regulation, significant import substitution, and maximum export sales NAMBoard's mission is to maximize its organizational performance effectiveness and, in collaboration with farmers and other stakeholders in the agricultural community, build an efficient commercialized Swazi production and distribution agri-business value chain in accordance with sustainable farming best practices that meet international GAP and SPS standards.

Continued on Page 8 ►

She added that in addition to the entrepreneurship modules, the digital platform includes training content on basic digital skills, including how to build an online identity and how to harness the power of the internet and social media in growing a business.

“The platform also offers the option to transition to deeper learning in digital literacy by providing access to more advanced courses developed by partners,” she said.

She further stated that incentives are built into the program to encourage students to progress through the modules up to completion, and this course has different modules which upon completion issue a certificate that can be utilized in sourcing funding and building a reputable profile for one's business.

Mkhonta stated that by teaching them about entrepreneurship JA is giving students

Get a JA entrepreneurship qualification online for free

in the program the keys to unlock their own future success story.

“Support from partners helps make a positive impact by harnessing Africa's youth bulge which has the immense potential of translating into a dividend not just for the individual's life trajectory, but more so through their creation of enterprises that will both stimulate economic growth and provide job opportunities for some of the approximately 7 million African youth who each year graduate into years of unemployment,” she explained.

She said the entrepreneurship education platform is built upon an existing open source, customizable Learning Management System, and to access the site for training, JA Eswatini is urging all students to log into the site and register then make time to take all modules offered.

She stated that JA mentors are made

available to answer all questions and challenges one can experience whilst learning online, and the platform is experiential in that it provides homework and workspace components allowing students a chance to have hands-on practice with the concepts they are learning.

“Students also have to establish a business and track the business progress and performance on the platform. The platform is also interactive as it includes various interactive resources including game features, videos, audio, puzzles, popups, and chat functions to make the learning process fun and engaging,” she said.

She also said that testimonials, tips, and tutorials, sourced from alumni and volunteers, will also be embedded in the application allowing the content presented in modules to be completed within a one-hour block.

“After each module, students complete a short quiz to test their understanding of the content with a self-assessment, pre- and post-self-assessment of competencies acquired, capturing students' sense of initiative and entrepreneurship with a particular focus on creativity, teamwork, perseverance, resourcefulness, self-confidence, taking initiative and responsibility,” explained Mkhonta.

She also added that students have the option to complete an international qualification, the Entrepreneurship Skills Pass, which certifies that a candidate is highly enterprising and uniquely qualified to start a business or to be successfully employed.

“Get your child registered and see them get an international qualification whilst in school. This is the link to use: - JA DEEP - Training Platform,” she encouraged.



▲DRC President Felix Tshisekedi.

Chinese companies to invest up to \$7 billion in Congo mining infrastructure

KINSHASA — Chinese construction companies will invest up to \$7 billion in infrastructure projects as part of an agreement over their Sicominex copper and cobalt joint venture in the Democratic Republic of Congo, they said on Saturday.

Both parties agreed to maintain the current structure of the shareholding, while the Chinese partners, SinoHydro Corp (SINO.HK) and China Railway Group Limited, will pay 1.2 per cent of royalties annually to Congo, according to a statement.

President Felix Tshisekedi's government had been revisiting the deal struck by his predecessor Joseph Kabila under which the Chinese partners agreed to build roads and hospitals in exchange for a 68 per cent stake in the joint venture with Congo's state mining company Gecamines.

Under the deal, the Chinese investors committed to spending \$3 billion on infrastructure projects, but the state auditor - Inspection Generale des Finances (IGF) - last year demanded that commitment be increased to \$20 billion.

Tshisekedi instructed his government to hold talks with the investors ahead of a visit to China in May 2023. He had aimed to boost Congo's stake in the joint venture to 70 per cent from 32 per cent.

"It is a win-win deal," IGF head Jules Alingete said in a press conference, adding that negotiations had not been easy.

Ernest Mpararo, head of the Congolese Anti-Corruption League, said the announcement was a step forward but flagged that Sicominex remained exempt from paying taxes.

He also pointed to money owed under the last agreement. A 2023 IGF report found that only \$822 million of the \$3 billion promised for infrastructure investments had been spent.

Congo is the world's biggest producer of cobalt, a key component in batteries for electric cars and mobile phones. It is also the world's third-largest copper producer. Its mining sector is largely dominated by Chinese companies.

Tshisekedi, who won a second mandate in December, had signposted the agreement in his Jan. 20 inauguration speech. (Reuters)

India's Tata and France's Airbus to manufacture helicopters together



▲The logo of Airbus is pictured at the aircraft builder's headquarters in Colomiers near Toulouse, France.

NEW DELHI — India's Tata group and France's Airbus have signed an agreement to manufacture civilian helicopters together, India's Foreign Secretary Vinay Kwatra said on Friday.

The agreement was signed during French President Emmanuel Macron's ongoing state visit to India, he said.

Tata and Airbus are already cooperating to make C-295 transport aircraft in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's home state of Gujarat.

Tata did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

As part of his 40-hour visit to India, Macron held talks with Modi on Thursday and also attended a state-banquet hosted by India President Droupadi Murmu in his honour on Friday.

This was the fifth meeting between Modi and Macron since May.

Further cooperation in the defence sector was also discussed during the state visit, officials said, including the possibility that French engine maker Safran (SAF.PA) would assist in manufacturing fighter jet engines in India.

After Russia, France is the largest arms

supplier to India, which has relied on its fighter jets for four decades.

"Safran is fully willing to do it with a 100 per cent transfer of technology in design, development, certification, production and so on," India Ambassador to France Jawed Ashraf said, adding that discussions will continue on the matter.

Coinciding with Macron's visit, jet engine maker CFM International on Friday also announced an agreement with India's Akasa Air to purchase more than 300 of its LEAP-1B engines to power 150 Boeing 737 MAX airplanes.

Akasa Air had earlier ordered 76 aircraft powered by the engine, of which 22 are in use.

France, both before and during Macron's visit, also raised the issue of New Delhi-based French journalist Vanessa Dagnac being served a notice by the Indian government regarding possible cancellation of her visa, Kwatra said.

The government termed her work "malicious" and said it may "provoke disorder and disturb peace", according to local media reports. Dagnac denied all the allegations in a statement released on Wednesday. (Reuters)

China securities regulator suspends restricted share lending from Monday

SHANGHAI — China's securities regulator said on Sunday that it will fully suspend the lending of restricted shares effective from Monday, in policymakers' latest attempt to stabilise the country's stock markets following recent sharp falls.

A string of supportive policies by Beijing including a deep cut to bank reserves helped lift Chinese stocks off 5-year lows early last week but they retreated again on Friday, reflecting deep investor pessimism over the outlook for markets and the shaky economy.

Analysts and investors say Beijing needs to roll out more support measures to revive consumer and business confidence and get activity back on a more solid footing.

Restricted shares are often offered to company employees or investors with certain limits on their sale, but they can be lent to others for trading purposes, such as

short-selling, which can add pressure on markets during a prolonged slump.

Sunday's move will "highlight fairness and reasonableness, reduce the efficiency of securities lending, and restrict the advantages of institutions in the use of information and tools, giving all types of investors more time to digest market information and creating a fairer market order," the China Securities Regulatory Commission (CSRC) said in a statement published on its official WeChat account.

The CSRC added that the move would "resolutely" crack down on illegal activities that use securities lending to reduce holdings and cash out.

The regulator also said it will limit the efficiency of some securities lending in the securities refinancing market from March 18.

Last October, the CSRC restricted securities lending businesses and tightened scrutiny of improper regulatory arbitrage by

imposing higher margin requirements.

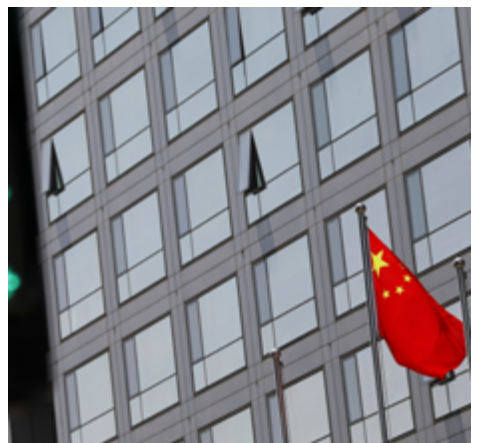
China's stock market tumbled in 2023 and has extended its slide in the new year. Though the blue-chip CSI300 Index has recovered some ground, it still down about 3 per cent year-to-date.

Small Chinese investors are scrambling even harder than foreigners to exit the crumbling stock markets, sending premiums on global index funds skyrocketing as they search for exposure to anything but the sputtering domestic economy.

China's economy grew 5.2 per cent for 2023, slightly above the government's target, but the comparison was flattered by a weak, lockdown-hit 2022 and the recovery has been highly uneven.

December data showed lacklustre consumption and the fastest fall in home prices for nine years, with the property market in a deep crisis.

Both Shanghai and Shenzhen stock



▲A Chinese national flag flutters outside the China Securities Regulatory Commission (CSRC) building on the Financial Street in Beijing, China.

exchanges said they will suspend securities lending by strategic investors during lockup periods, effective from January 29. (Reuters)



CENTRAL BANK
OF ESWATINI
Umntsholi Wemaswati

Monetary Policy Statement

26 January 2024

Interest Rate
7.50%

The CBE maintained the interest rate at **7.50 per cent**.

Inflation
4.3%

Headline inflation decreased to **4.3 per cent** in December 2023 from **4.7 per cent** in the previous month.

What does this mean?

Banks are expected to maintain the prime lending rate on loans extended to individuals and businesses at **11.0 per cent** until the next monetary policy meeting.

What to expect?

The CBE expects the cost of goods and services to increase moderately in 2024. The CBE marginally revised down its inflation forecasts for 2024 to **4.9 per cent** (from 5.2 per cent forecasted in November 2023).

Economic Activity

Economic activity, as measured by the Quarterly Gross Domestic Product grew by a slower 7.7 per cent year-on-year (seasonally adjusted) in the third quarter of 2023, down from a revised growth of 8.2 per cent in the second quarter of 2023.

On the 26th January 2024, the Central Bank of Eswatini (Bank), together with the Monetary Policy Consultative Committee (MPCC) held a meeting to consider the appropriate monetary policy stance. Taking into consideration relevant global, regional, and domestic economic factors; as well as the price and financial stability mandate, the Bank decided to maintain the discount rate unchanged at 7.5 per cent.

On the global front, the ongoing effects of tighter monetary policy, the restrictive credit conditions and the intensifying geopolitical tensions are weighing down on growth prospects. Economic growth in advanced economies is subdued whilst growth in Emerging Markets and Developing Economies (EMDEs) with strong fundamentals is improving. The US economy grew by an annualized 3.3 per cent in the fourth quarter of 2023 from 4.9 per cent in the previous quarter whilst the UK and the Eurozone contracted by 0.1 per cent each in the third quarter of 2023. China grew by 5.2 per cent in the fourth quarter of 2023, compared to the 4.9 per cent recorded in the previous quarter. Inflation in advanced economies and EMDEs remain persistent and above target, and monetary conditions remained at restrictive levels.

Regionally, the South African economy shrank by 0.2 per cent in the third quarter of 2023, after a revision downward to 0.5 per cent in the second quarter. The South African Reserve Bank (SARB) marginally revised down its growth forecast for 2023 to 0.6 per cent (from 0.8 per cent forecasted in November 2023) whilst the forecasts for 2024 and 2025 remain unchanged at 1.2 per cent and 1.3 per cent, respectively. The South African inflation decreased to 5.1 per cent in December 2023 from 5.5 per cent the previous month, recording an average of 6.0 per cent in 2023. The SARB left its inflation forecast for 2024 unchanged at 5.0 per cent whilst the forecast for 2025 was marginally revised up to 4.6 per cent (from 4.5 per cent). The SARB maintained the repo rate unchanged at 8.25 per cent in its 25 January 2023 meeting.

On the domestic front, economic activity as measured by the quarterly GDP, grew by a slower 7.7 per cent year-on-year (seasonally adjusted) in the third quarter of 2023, down from a revised growth of 8.2 per cent in the second quarter. The primary and secondary sectors recorded slower increases (on a year-on-year basis) in the quarter under review, whilst the tertiary sector remained resilient on double digit growth. On a quarter-on-quarter basis, economic activity grew by 3.0 per cent (seasonally adjusted) in the quarter under review, from a revised growth of 1.3 per cent in the previous quarter.

The country's annual headline inflation declined further to 4.3 per cent in December 2023 from 4.7 per cent in November 2023. The slowdown is attributed to a decrease in prices for; 'food & non-alcoholic beverages' which grew by a slower 7.1 per cent in December 2023 from 8.4 per cent the previous month; 'furnishing & household equipment' which grew by 3.9 per cent in December 2023 compared to 4.1 per cent in the previous month, and 'transport' which fell by 0.5 per cent in December 2023 following a zero growth in November 2023. These decreases were counteracted by increases in the price indices for; 'clothing & footwear' which rose by 6.5 per cent in December 2023 from 6.0 per cent the previous month and 'miscellaneous goods & services' which grew by 0.2 of a percentage point to 9.6 per cent in December 2023. The country's headline inflation averaged 5.0 per cent in 2023. The Bank revised down its inflation forecasts to 4.9 per cent (from 5.2 per cent forecasted in November 2023) for 2024 and the forecast for 2025 is at 5.1 per cent. Risks to the inflation outlook include elevated crude oil prices, a weaker exchange rate and higher food prices, amongst others.

Credit extended to the private sector declined by 0.9 per cent month-on-month to E18.8 billion at the end of November 2023. Accounting for the slowdown in credit to the private sector were decreases in the credit extended to "other sectors of the domestic economy" and "households and NPISH". These sectors decreased by 16.6 per cent month-on-month to settle at E1.0 billion and 0.1 per cent month-on-month to E8.3 billion at the end of November 2023 respectively. Credit extended to businesses on the other hand grew by 0.5 per cent to E9.4 billion at the end of November 2023. The banking sector's total non-performing loans (NPLs) fell by 4.1 per cent in November 2023 compared to the previous month to settle at E1.1 billion. Consequently, the NPL ratio declined by 0.3 of a percentage point month-on-month to 6.9 per cent at the end of November 2023.

As at 19 January 2024, gross official reserves stood at E11.1 billion an equivalent to import cover of 3.5 months. Total public debt increased by 1.0 per cent to E34.7 billion in December 2023 from E34.3 billion the previous month. At this level, public debt is equivalent to 40.9 per cent of GDP.

The Bank will continue to monitor international and domestic developments that influence the movements of inflation and will act appropriately in line with its mission to foster price and financial stability that is conducive to the economic development in Eswatini.

Dr. Phil Mnisi
GOVERNOR

Ethiopia's deputy PM Demeke to be replaced by spy chief Temesgen

ADDIS ABABA - Ethiopia's deputy prime minister Demeke Mekonnen, who has occupied the post for over 11 years under three successive prime ministers, will be replaced by spy chief Temesgen Tiruneh, a senior government official told Reuters on Friday.

Temesgen was elected to succeed Demeke as a vice president of the ruling Prosperity Party, state-run media reported. A vice president of the party typically serves as deputy prime minister.

Demeke has been a face of continuity during a turbulent period in Ethiopian politics. He was appointed to the post after the death of longtime prime minister Meles Zenawi in 2012 and survived a reorganisation of the ruling party that occurred after Abiy Ahmed took power in 2018.

Temesgen is the head of the national intelligence service and has coordinated the government's response to a conflict that broke out last year in the Amhara region with local militias.

Abiy appointed Demeke as foreign minister days after civil war broke out in November 2020 in the northern Tigray region, a conflict



▲ Ethiopia's deputy prime minister Demeke Mekonnen, who has occupied the post for over 11 years under three successive prime ministers, will be replaced by spy chief Temesgen Tiruneh

that lasted two years and cost tens of thousands of lives.

While the government and rebel forces in Tigray signed a peace deal in November 2022, Ethiopia has remained dogged by insecurity.

Besides the unrest in Amhara, a decades-long conflict in the Oromiya region, the country's largest, has intensified in recent years, killing hundreds and displacing tens of thousands. (Reuters)

Kenyan court refuses to stay ruling invalidating housing levy

NAIROBI - Kenya's Court of Appeal on Friday refused to extend a stay that had allowed the government to continue collecting a 1.5% levy to fund affordable housing despite a lower court having found the measure unconstitutional.

The levy was part of a finance law adopted in June that also doubled the value-added tax on fuel and increased the top income tax rate.

The law, intended to shore up government finances amid a high debt burden and fast-depreciating currency, sparked violent protests the following month by opponents who said it would further squeeze house-

holds at a time of rising living costs.

A trial court ruled in November that the levy was unconstitutional because the government had not provided a rational explanation for why it applied only to workers with employment in the formal sector.

The trial court stayed its ruling until the government could appeal, allowing the levy to continue to be collected.

The appeals court said the stay should not be extended since "the presumption of constitutional validity ... was extinguished the moment the trial Court issued the declaration."

"Public interest tilts in favour (of) awaiting the determination of the issues raised in the intended appeals," the court said.

The housing levy is one of a raft of taxes President William Ruto's government, which faces a June deadline to repay a \$2 billion Eurobond, has introduced to increase revenues and fund social programmes.

Earlier this month, the Court of Appeal lifted a stay on a separate 2.75% tax intended to fund a national health insurance programme.

Following the trial court's ruling on the housing levy in November, parliament began taking views from the public for a law to guide how to provide affordable housing in accordance with the constitution. (Reuters)



▲ Kenya's Court of Appeal on Friday refused to extend a stay that had allowed the government to continue collecting a 1.5% levy to fund affordable housing despite a lower court having found the measure unconstitutional.

Uganda says judge's dissent from World Court ruling on Israel does not reflect its position

KAMPALA - Uganda has distanced itself from an opinion written by a Ugandan judge on the International Court of Justice (ICJ) dissenting from the panel's ruling in South Africa's genocide case against Israel, and said the remarks do not reflect Uganda's position.

Julia Sebutinde was the only judge on the 17-member ICJ panel to vote against all six measures adopted by the court in a ruling ordering Israel to take action to prevent acts of genocide as it fights Hamas militants in the Gaza Strip.

"The position taken by Judge Sebutinde is her own individual and independent opinion, and does not in any way reflect the position of the government of the republic of Uganda," the government said in a statement issued late on Saturday.

It added that the east African country supported the position of the Non-Aligned Movement on the conflict that was adopted at its summit in the Ugandan capital this month.

That NAM position contained in a document issued at the end of the summit condemned Israel's military campaign and killing of civilians and also called for an immediate ceasefire and unimpeded humanitarian access.

The movement was formed officially in 1961 by countries opposed to joining either of the two major Cold War-era military and political blocs. Many of the countries were newly independent from their colonial rulers.

Sebutinde was one of only two judges who issued dissenting judgements while 15 voted for the emergency measures which covered most of what South Africa had asked for in the case. (Reuters)



▲ Uganda has distanced itself from an opinion written by a Ugandan judge on the International Court of Justice (ICJ) dissenting from the panel's ruling in South Africa's genocide case against Israel, and said the remarks do not reflect Uganda's position.

Zimbabwe opposition leader quits 'hijacked' party

ZIMBABWE'S main opposition leader Nelson Chamisa quit his Citizens Coalition for Change (CCC) party on Thursday, two years to the day after its formation, saying it had been hijacked by the ruling ZANU-PF in a power grab.

"Fellow citizens, this is to officially and under my hand inform you that, with immediate effect I no longer have anything to do with CCC," Chamisa wrote in a lengthy statement posted on his X account.

The CCC party, which enjoys huge urban support, won 103 of the 280 seats in Zimbabwe's main house of Parliament and swept most of the urban councils in last year's general election.

However, several CCC lawmakers and councillors have been ejected from their seats by an official claiming to be the party's secretary general, but who Chamisa and the CCC say is an imposter.

Efforts to reverse the recalls in the courts have failed. The CCC accuses ZANU-PF, in power since independence in 1980, of using the courts to destroy the opposition. ZANU-PF has dismissed the accusations, but has benefited from the recalls after winning most of the resultant by-elections.

"The CCC has to all intents and purposes been criminally handed over to ZANU-PF," Chamisa said in his statement.

The ZANU-PF spokesperson could not immediately be reached for comment.

It was not immediately clear if lawmakers and councillors loyal to Chamisa would quit their posts in solidarity, a move which would trigger a wave of by-elections. (Reuters)

Ukraine says it uncovered mass fraud in weapons procurement

UKRAINE'S SBU security service said on Saturday it had uncovered a corruption scheme in the purchase of arms by the country's military totalling the equivalent of about \$40 million. The announcement of mass procurement fraud, confirmed by Ukraine's Defence Ministry, will have a huge resonance in a country beleaguered by Russia's nearly two-year-old invasion.

The fight to root out endemic corruption remains a major issue as Ukraine presses its bid to secure membership in the European Union.

The SBU said an investigation had "exposed officials of the Ministry of Defence and managers of arms supplier Lviv Arsenal, who stole nearly 1.5 billion hryvnias in the purchase of shells."

"According to the investigation, former and current high-ranking officials of the Ministry of Defence and heads of affiliated companies are involved in the embezzlement."

The embezzlement, it said, involved the purchase of 100,000 mortar shells for the military.

The SBU said a contract for the shells was clinched with Lviv Arsenal in August 2022 - six months into the war - and payment was made in advance, with some funds transferred abroad.

But no arms were ever provided, the statement said, with some funds then moved to other foreign accounts.

The statement said five individu-



▲ A Ukrainian serviceman of 80th Separate Galician Air Assault Brigade prepares shells to fire a L119 howitzer towards Russian troops, amid Russia's attack on Ukraine, at a position near Bakhmut in Donetsk region, Ukraine

als had been served "notices of suspicion" - the first stage in Ukrainian legal proceedings - both in the ministry and the arms supplier. One suspect, it said, was detained while trying to cross the Ukrainian border.

Corruption within the military has been a particularly sensitive issue in Ukraine as it tries to maintain wartime public morale and present its case to join the 27-nation EU.

Defence Minister Oleksii Reznikov

was dismissed last September over various corruption cases despite enjoying a solid reputation in representing Ukraine in its discussions with Western allies.

Although he was not alleged to have engaged personally in corruption, several cases hit the military under his stewardship, one for supplying troops with food, another over procuring suitable clothing for servicemen. (Reuters)

US reviewing Venezuelan sanctions policy in wake of court decision

THE U.S. is reviewing its sanctions policy against Venezuela after a court in that country upheld a ban preventing presidential candidate Maria Corina Machado from holding office, the U.S. State Department said on Saturday.

The ruling by Venezuela's Supreme Justice Tribunal on Friday means Machado, a 56-year-old industrial engineer, cannot register her candidacy for presidential elections scheduled for the second half of 2024.

"The United States is currently reviewing our Venezuela sanctions policy, based on this development and the recent political targeting of democratic opposition candidates and civil society," State Department spokesman Matthew Miller said in a statement.

The U.S. eased economically debilitating oil sanctions on the crude-exporting country in October after President Nicolas Maduro's government signed a deal with the opposition under which Caracas made commitments to hold a free



▲ Opposition coalition presidential hopeful Maria Corina Machado speaks to supporters at a campaign event in Caracas, Venezuela

and fair 2024 presidential election.

Miller said the court ruling was a "deeply concerning decision" that ran contrary to the commitments made by Maduro to allow all parties to select candidates.

Maduro on Thursday said the deal with his opponents was in danger of collapse, citing what he has described as "conspiracies" against him.

Gerardo Blyde, head of the opposition negotiating team, denied members had been linked to acts of violence and demanded the court ruling be reversed.

"We are not asking for sanctions, that is not our job. We are looking for the process to move forward," he told a news conference in Caracas on Saturday.

(Reuters)

More countries pause funds for UN Palestinian agency

LONDON - Six European countries paused funding for the U.N. refugee agency for Palestinians (UNRWA) on Saturday, following allegations that some of its staff were involved in the Oct. 7 Hamas attacks on Israel.

Britain, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Switzerland and Finland on Saturday joined the United States, Australia and Canada in pausing funding to the aid agency, a critical source of support for people in Gaza, after the allegations by Israel.

"Palestinians in Gaza did not need this additional collective punishment," Philippe Lazzarini, UNRWA commissioner-general, said on X. "This stains all of us."

The agency said on Friday it had opened an investigation into several employees and severed ties with those people.

Encouraging more donor suspensions, Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz said UNRWA should be replaced once fighting in the enclave dies down and accused it of ties to Islamist militants in Gaza.

"In Gaza's rebuilding, @UNRWA must be replaced with agencies dedicated to genuine peace and development," he added on X.

Deputy U.N. spokesperson Farhan Haq, asked about Katz's remarks, said: "We are not responding to rhetoric. UNRWA overall had had a strong record, which we have repeatedly underscored."

Lazzarini said the decision by the nine countries threatened its humanitarian work across the region, especially in Gaza.

"It is shocking to see a suspension of funds to the Agency in reaction to allegations against a small group of staff, especially given the immediate action that UNRWA took by terminating their contracts and asking for a transparent independent investigation," he said in a statement.

The Palestinian foreign ministry criticised what it described as an Israeli campaign against UNRWA, and Hamas condemned the termination of employee contracts "based on information derived from the Zionist enemy".

AGENCY PLAYS BIG ROLE IN GAZA AID

UNRWA was set up to help refugees of the 1948 war at Israel's founding and provides education, health and aid services to Palestinians in Gaza, the West Bank, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon. It helps about two thirds of Gaza's 2.3 million population and has played a pivotal aid role during the war that Israel launched to eliminate Hamas after the Oct. 7 attacks.

Announcing the investigation, Lazzarini said on Friday that he had decided to terminate the contracts of some staff members to protect the agency's ability to deliver humanitarian assistance.

Lazzarini did not disclose the number of employees allegedly involved in the attacks, nor the nature of their alleged involvement. He said, however, that "any UNRWA employee who was involved in acts of terror" would be held accountable, including through criminal prosecution.

During weeks of Israeli bombardment of the Palestinian enclave, UNRWA has repeatedly said its capacity to render humanitarian assistance to people in Gaza is on the verge of collapse.

Hussein al-Sheikh, head of the Palestinians' umbrella political body the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), said cutting support to the agency brought major political and relief risks.

"We call on countries that announced the cessation of their support for UNRWA to immediately reverse their decision," he said on X. (Reuters)



▲ Palestinians carry bags of flour they grabbed from an aid truck near an Israeli checkpoint, as Gaza residents face crisis levels of hunger, amid the ongoing conflict between Israel and Hamas, in Gaza City

Young Stunna stuns the crowd at Mega Lounge

Stories by Siphesihle Dlamini
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EXCEPTIONAL, excellent, and exhilarating! Well, all those adjectives explain the First Assembly, at which South African famous musician, Young Stunna delivered a fire performance.

In a night filled with electrifying energy, South African music sensation, Young Stunna, left the audience in awe with his mind-blowing performance at the Mega Lounge.

The First Assembly event, which showcased a lineup of incredible artists, reached its pinnacle when Young Stunna took the stage and set it ablaze with his captivating presence.

From the moment he stepped on stage, Young Stunna commanded the attention of the crowd with his prayerful rendition of “Yizwa imithandazo yabantwana bakho,” leaving many in tears. The atmosphere was charged with anticipation as he kicked off his set with the hit song “Sete”, igniting a frenzy among the audience. The energy in the venue reached its peak when he performed “Adiwele”, with the crowd enthusiastically singing along at the top of their voices.

However, it was Young Stunna’s performance of “Imithandazo” that truly stole the show. As he poured his heart and soul into the song, fun lovers couldn’t help but join in, singing along as if their lives depended on it.

The emotional connection between the artist and his fans was palpable, creating an unforgettable experience for everyone present.

The First Assembly event, which started in the afternoon, featured a line-up of talented acts that paved the way for Young Stunna’s show-stopping performance. Artists such as Linda Dlamini, Zulu D, Shu Drum DJ, The Prefect, Supa CDQ, Tilungu, Matamza, The Bishops, and the Mega Lounge All Stars graced the stage, adding their unique flair to the event. More than just a night of entertainment, the



▲ Young Stunna making his entrance on stage for his highly anticipated performance at Mega Lounge for the First Assembly show.

First Assembly is a three-year-old initiative that aims to make a positive impact on the community. Attendees were encouraged to bring donations, including old school uniforms, clothes, shoes, sanitary towels, and food parcels for the less privileged. By participating in this noble cause, the audience had the opportunity to contribute to creating a brighter future for those in need.

● The emotional connection between the artist and his fans was palpable, creating an unforgettable experience for everyone present.



▲ The man of the moment serenading revellers.



▲ A section of the audience capturing Young Stunna’s performance on their phones.



▲ Linda Dlamini during his performance.

Linda Dlamini sends the crowd to a spiritual high

LOCAL gospel artist Linda Dlamini left the audience mesmerized with his captivating performance at the First Assembly event held at the Mega Lounge.

With a powerful gospel set, Dlamini brought the crowd to their feet, praising God and embracing the spiritual atmosphere. The air was charged with anticipation as Dlamini began his performance with the soul-stirring song “Ujesu Wam Uyaphila”. The audience joined in unison, their voices raised in praise to God, creating an atmosphere of worship and gratitude.

As the performance continued, Dlamini’s heartfelt rendition of “Uthando lwakhe” resonated deeply with the audience. The lyrics touched their souls, and they couldn’t help but sing along, feeling the power of the music and the message it conveyed.

Dlamini’s performance also served as a reminder of the potential for success and blessings in the year ahead. With the song “Lona Ngumnyaka Wethu”, he encouraged the crowd to affirm that this was their year to achieve greatness and overcome obstacles. The audience embraced the message, feeling inspired and motivated to pursue their dreams.

The spiritual journey continued as Dlamini rendered the songs “Kuyang’lungela” and “Thula Moya Wam”. The room filled with a sense of peace and tranquility as his soothing voice echoed through the venue. The audience was captivated by the depth of emotion conveyed in each note, finding solace and comfort in the music.

● Dlamini’s heartfelt rendition of “Uthando lwakhe” resonated deeply with the audience. The lyrics touched their souls, and they couldn’t help but sing along, feeling the power of the music and the message it conveyed.

Dr Shakes devours Ndosh in an epic eating showdown

By Siphesihle Dlamini
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IN an exhilarating display of gastronomic prowess, Dr Shakes emerged victorious over comedian Ndosh WebeNguni in a thrilling eating competition held at Cypress Basket on Saturday.

The event drew a crowd of eager spectators, all curious to witness the ultimate clash of appetites. With lightning speed and insatiable hunger, Dr Shakes devoured a whole chicken in an astonishing time of fewer than 30 minutes, leaving Ndosh with no choice but to surrender. The crowd erupted in applause and cheers as Dr Shakes celebrated his well-deserved victory.

After his triumph, Dr Shakes graciously shared his secret to success, revealing that his preparation for the competition involved rigorous eating sessions. He expressed joy in representing the city of Mbabane and commended Cypress Basket for their delectable chicken.

With a confident smile, he issued a challenge to anyone brave enough to take on his newfound champion status.

Ndosh, although disappointed by his defeat, acknowledged Dr Shakes' exceptional performance. He admitted that his opponent was on top of his game and had put in the necessary preparation. Ndosh, ever the optimist, apologized to his loyal followers

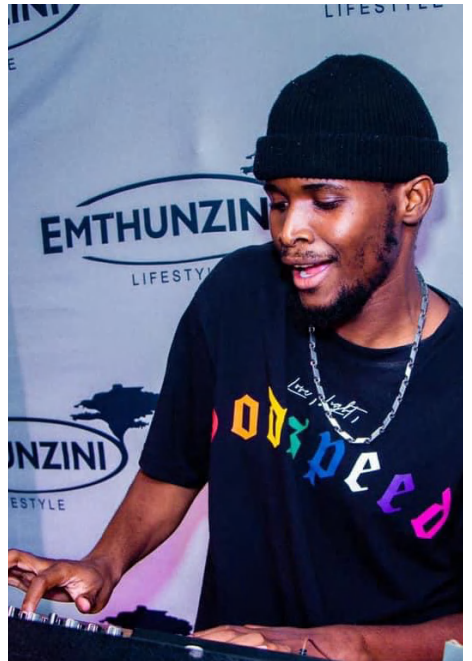


▲ Ndosh WebeNguni and Dr Shakes faced off in an eating competition. Dr Shakes came out victorious.

and requested Cypress Basket to bless him with more full chickens, vowing to return stronger and claim victory in the next eating competition. He gracefully accepted that Dr Shakes was simply better on the day.

The thrilling showdown between these two comedic talents not only showcased

their eating abilities but also highlighted the camaraderie and sportsmanship that exists within the competitive world of food challenges. The competition left spectators in awe and anticipation for future showdowns, eagerly awaiting the next challenger who will dare to take on the reigning champion, Dr Shakes.



▲ DJ Obsession.

DJ Obsession to headline Monday Therapy

IT'S all a therapeutic experience like no other for fun lovers as DJ Obsession is slated to take center stage at the Monday Therapy event, to be held at the Ekhayeni Chillaz.

This electrifying event promises to be a night of pure musical bliss. Joining DJ Obsession on this unforgettable night will be a star-studded lineup of talented artists, including Sbu Drum DJ, Knoxman, Lil Dee, Twenty 11, Fantasy, Troy & Cece, Paris, Maphi, Bunny, Shibz, 1D, and Orthodox. With such an impressive roster of performers, Monday Therapy is set to deliver an unforgettable experience for all attendees.

The event is slated for January 29, 2024, and amazingly so, it is a "Back 2 School" edition. This exciting event is not only a chance to dance the night away but also an opportunity to relive the carefree days of youth. Entry to this incredible event is free for all attendees.

Bonus

As a bonus, Ekhayeni Chillaz will be offering a generous 40 per cent discount on all beverages throughout the night. So, attendees can sip on their favorite drinks while immersing themselves in the pulsating rhythms and infectious melodies that DJ Obsession and his fellow artists will be bringing to the stage.

In an exclusive interview with DJ Obsession, he expressed excitement at being invited to headline Monday Therapy once again. He fondly recalled his last performance at the event in 2019, and he is thrilled to be back to captivate the crowd with his unique sound.

"I can't wait to share some of the exclusive unreleased music I've been collecting recently," he shared. "This performance will be massive, and I promise to deliver a show that will leave the audience in awe. Obsession never disappoints."

DJ Obsession also encouraged his loyal followers to come out in full force, dressed in school uniforms, to add an extra layer of fun and nostalgia to the event. The Back 2 School Party promises to be an evening filled with laughter, dancing, and a sense of camaraderie as attendees reminisce about their school days while enjoying the pulsating beats of DJ Obsession and his fellow artists.

Ntokozo Mbambo added to the Makoti Festival

SENSATIONAL South African Gospel artist, Ntokozo Mbambo, is the latest addition of acts to grace the stage at the highly anticipated Makoti Festival.

This exciting addition to the lineup has sent waves of excitement throughout the country, as fans eagerly await the opportunity to witness her incredible talent firsthand.

The Makoti Festival, known for its celebration of Eswatini culture and its homage to modern women, is scheduled to take place on April 27, 2024, at Malkerns Country Club. With Mthandeni SK already confirmed as the headliner, the festival promises to be a memorable event that showcases the best of music and pays tribute to the strength and beauty of women.

Tickets for the Makoti Festival are now available for purchase, with early bird prices starting at E250. Music enthusiasts can secure their spot at this extraordinary event through Howler, Computickets, and Galitos outlets.

While the music performances are undoubtedly the highlight of the festival, the Makoti Festival goes above and beyond to offer a diverse range of experiences. Attendees will have the opportunity to explore vibrant fashion and food stalls, providing a platform for local entrepreneurs to showcase their creativity and culinary skills. From traditional attire to contemporary fashion trends, the



▲ Gospel artist Ntokozo Mbambo.

festival embraces the rich diversity of women from all walks of life.

Ntokozo Mbambo, with her unique voice and exceptional talent, has become a blessing to the Christian community not only in South Africa but also across the continent. Her gospel hits, including the soul-stirring "Fill Us Again," the uplifting "For My Good," the powerful "Jehovah

You Reign," and the timeless "Jehovah Is Your Name," have shown the world how much of a talent she is.

In addition to her solo work, Ntokozo Mbambo has collaborated with renowned international gospel artists such as CeCe Winans, Yolanda Adams, Donnie McClurkin, Kirk Franklin, and Mercy Chinwo.

50 Cent is making good on his “I Get Money” lyrics after announcing that his imprint on television is steadily expanding. On Saturday (Jan. 27), he revealed to his Instagram followers that a more detailed announcement about his latest product endeavor is forthcoming.

“I sold another show yesterday. You will find out the details when the formal press release goes out, but I’m really enjoying television production,” he wrote on the post that featured photos of him in a green blazer, smoking a celebratory cigar on a balcony.

The entertainer currently has several shows on Starz, including “Power Book II: Ghost,” “Power Book III: Raising Kanan,” “Power Book IV: Force,” “BMF,” as well as the first season of the “Hip Hop Homicides: The Truth Behind the Tragedies” docuseries, which aired on We TV.

In April 2023, he added to his real estate portfolio with the purchase of a 985,000-square-foot facility to house the G-Unit Films and Television studio. Months later, in December, it was revealed

that he secured a 30-year deal to run his production company from the existing Millennium Studio in Shreveport, Louisiana.

“We already know that 50 Cent is a mighty mogul in the entertainment business, but the residual effects for local businesses here is what’s going to be felt. We have rebranded Shreveport in the entertainment industry, and now we are considering ourselves back again as an entertainment mecca,” Councilwoman Tabitha Taylor told KSLA-TV about the venture.

Last year, the Get Rich or Die Tryin’ rapper leveled up his résumé when he inked a multi-year deal with FOX Entertainment to develop scripted dramas, live-action comedies and animated series. Further proving his impeccable aim, 50 reminded fans that he does not miss when he partnered with Paramount+ and Lionsgate Television to develop a series titled “Vice City.”

(Bang Showbiz)



▲Hip hop mogul 50 Cent.

Nadia Jaftha opens up about Xavier Haupt break-up

CONTENT creator Nadia Jaftha has had a busy start to 2024 Not only is she single again, she just bought herself a brand new whip.

The businesswoman and former bae Xavier Haupt released a joint statement via their Instagram accounts that they had decided to end their relationship.

Although fans were disappointed to see the end of ‘Xadia’, they were curious to know what happened between the love birds.

While appearing on Good Hope FM’s Great Drive! show with Carissa Cupido, Jaftha answered the burning question as well as revealing some fun facts about herself that fans didn’t know.

When Cupido touched on a fan question, Jaftha said, “I think the beautiful thing is that we both are still on very good terms.

“It’s still very fresh,” she admitted while laughing. “I’d be lying if I said I was completely fine, because, obviously, that’s a lie.

“I’m keeping myself busy. Sometimes it feels like I’m on autopilot, but I do what I can to just heal and not be toxic about it,” she added.

When asked how they came to the decision to split up, Jaftha said it was mutual and added, “Ain’t nobody fighting nobody.”

Jaftha has always advocated for self-care and emphasised that this year she’s planning to be more patient with herself and to ask for help when she needs it.

And for those who plan on shooting their shot with the creative, she made it absolutely clear that she’s not looking for love right now. “I’m dating my career,” she declared.

The content queen might share some things online, but not everything. For example, she has three tattoos that fans don’t know about. “I have three tattoos,” she said. Jaftha has one behind her ear, an Africa tattoo, and an elephant on her back.

(IOL)



▲Content creator Nadia Jaftha.

‘Big Brother Mzansi’ disqualifies Bravo B following derogatory comments

WE’RE only into the first week of season four of ‘Big Brother Mzansi’ and already MultiChoice has taken the executive decision to disqualify one of the housemates.

This comes after a conversation between Lindokuhle Nsele (Bravo B) and Tshepo Tau (Makhekhe) went viral on social media.

The clipped showed the two talking opening about “smashing” their fellow contestants Liema or Zee because they were drunk.

“I was planning that the girl who can let me smash is Mpumi, my homegirl, just to satisfy my ...” Bravo B could be heard saying.

In response to the uproar, ‘Big Brother Mzansi’ issued a statement via its various social media channels and said it was investigating the matter.

“We do not condone any acts that threaten the safety of the housemates on the show and we take Gender Based Violence seriously,” added Mzansi Magic and DStv in a joint press release.

In the interim Bravo B has been disqualified, while Makhekhe will face a reprimand from Big Brother “with a social

lesson on behaviour etiquettes.”

“Mzansi Magic will ensure that Makhekhe is coached to call out anyone who speaks or behaves in a derogatory manner,” the statement concluded.

Fans praised Biggie for taking drastic action, while others wanted Makhekhe to receive the same punishment as Bravo B.

“Thank you for sending a strong message to the public against rapey behaviour. More education is needed for the elderly who continue to protect and enable GBV & rape perpetrators in their families. The victims are continuously relieving the trauma and being blamed,” commented an X user.

Another said: “Such a great opportunity wasted. They both should’ve been disqualified, hands down. They were in to do it. Cringy AF.”

When the housemates were introduced to the nation earlier this week, Makhekhe was the first contestant who walked into the house and by his own admission was a self-confessed “ladies’ man.”

Bravo B followed right behind and said he was looking forward to the R2-million prize since he feared being poor forever.

(IOL)



▲CBig Brother Mzansi’ season four housemate Bravo B with host Lawrence Maleka.



GETTING enough protein daily is essential for your overall health.

Healthy protein sources include eggs, nuts, lean meats, fish, dairy, and certain grains.

Proteins are a large category of molecules that support cell structure, immune function, movement, chemical reactions, hormone synthesis, and more. They're all made up of tiny building blocks called amino acids. Nine of these are essential—meaning your body needs them but can't make them on its own, so you need to get them in your diet.

Not only is protein essential for your health but consuming it can keep you feeling full and satisfied, which supports a healthy body weight.

The recommended dietary allowance (RDA) for protein is set at 0.36 grams (g) of protein per pound of your body weight (0.8 g per kilogram). Remember that this reflects the minimum protein required to meet your body's needs .

Here are 16 delicious foods that are high in protein.

1. Eggs

Whole eggs are a good source of protein that's easy to absorb, and they're also an excellent source of vitamins, minerals, healthy fats, and antioxidants.

Remember that egg whites are almost pure protein, but whole eggs that include the yolk provide many more nutrients, including vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, and healthy fats.

2. Almonds

Almonds are a nutritious tree nut rich in essential nutrients like fiber, vitamin E, manganese, and magnesium. They're also high in plant-based protein.

Eating almonds may benefit your health in several ways, including lowering heart disease risk factors like high LDL (bad) cholesterol and high blood pressure.

3. Chicken breast

Chicken breast is an excellent choice if you're trying to increase your protein intake. In addition to protein, chicken provides a variety of B vitamins, plus minerals like zinc and selenium.

4. Cottage cheese

Cottage cheese is a type of cheese that is low in fat and calories yet high in protein. It's rich in calcium, phosphorus, selenium, vitamin B12, riboflavin (vitamin B2), and various other nutrients.

5. Greek yogurt

Greek yogurt, also called strained yogurt, is a very thick type of yogurt high in protein.

It has a creamy texture and is a good source of many nutrients like calcium, vitamin B12, vitamin A, selenium, and zinc.

6. Milk

Dairy milk contains a little of nearly every nutrient that your body needs. It's a good source of high quality protein, and it's high in vitamins and minerals, like calcium, phosphorus, and riboflavin (vitamin B2).



Many people with lactose intolerance can't tolerate milk and other dairy products, and they avoid many dairy-containing foods.

7. Lentils

Lentils are among the richest sources of plant-based protein, making them an excellent choice if you follow a vegetarian or vegan diet. Plus, they're loaded with other nutrients, too, including fiber, folate, magnesium, potassium, iron, copper, and manganese.

Studies show that people who regularly consume lentils and other legumes have a lower risk of developing health conditions like heart disease and fatty liver disease.

8. Lean beef

Lean beef is a rich source of protein. It's also high in bioavailable iron, zinc, selenium, and vitamins B12 and B6. Red meat can be a part of a healthy diet, but it's best to moderate your intake. Consuming high amounts of red meat has been linked to a higher risk of developing certain health conditions, including colorectal cancer.

Try cutting back on red meat and eating plant-based protein, fish, and poultry more frequently.

9. Fish

Fish is an excellent source of protein and provides several important vitamins and minerals, like iodine, selenium, and vitamin B12. People who include a lot of fish in their diet tend to have a lower risk of health conditions like heart disease and type 2 diabetes. Plus, fatty fish like salmon and herring are high in omega-3 fats, which have powerful benefits for your overall health, including supporting heart health.

10. Quinoa

Quinoa is rich in fiber, folate, copper, iron, and zinc, and it's higher in protein than many grains.

Quinoa is often referred to as a complete protein because it contains all nine essential amino acids that your body can't make on its own. However, it actually contains insufficient amounts of certain amino acids, like leucine.

11. Protein powders

When you're pressed for time and unable to prepare a meal, protein powder can come in handy. You can easily add protein powders like

whey and pea protein to shakes, smoothies, energy balls, yogurt, and more to increase the protein and fullness factor.

12. Ezekiel bread

Ezekiel bread is different from most other breads. It's made of organic and sprouted whole grains and legumes, including millet, barley, spelt, wheat, soybeans, and lentils. Compared with other breads, like white bread, Ezekiel bread is high in protein, fiber, and various important nutrients.

13. Pumpkin seeds

Pumpkin seeds are a great source of minerals like iron, phosphorus, magnesium, and zinc. Plus, they're loaded with plant-based protein and fiber. Try adding pumpkin seeds to salads, baked goods, oatmeal, or yogurt, or mix them with unsweetened dried fruit and almonds for a convenient snack.

14. Turkey breast

Turkey breast consists mostly of protein, with very little fat and few calories. It also contains several vitamins and minerals, including selenium, zinc, and vitamins B12 and B6.

15. Shellfish

Shellfish, including shrimp, oysters, clams, and scallops are excellent sources of protein. Plus, shellfish contain healthy fats and a number of vitamins and minerals, including selenium, zinc, vitamin B12, and iron.

16. Peanuts and peanut butter

Peanuts and peanut butter are packed with nutrients like protein, folate, magnesium, and vitamin E.

Eating peanuts and peanut butter may help make you feel full due to their high protein content. In fact, studies show that adding peanut butter to a high carb meal may help reduce blood sugar spikes after the meal.

The bottom line

Getting enough protein daily is essential for health. People's protein needs vary. However, experts recommend most active people consume 0.54–0.9 g of protein per pound of their body weight (1.2–2 g per kg) per day. Fortunately, there are many high protein foods to choose from, including animal and plant-based sources.

Healthline



TREATING chronic migraine can be done acutely and preventively.

There are multiple medications and integrative treatments that may be able to provide relief.

Chronic migraine is defined as migraine that occurs 15 or more days a month for 3 consecutive months. At least 8 of these days, headaches will resemble a migraine attack.

The migraine will last for 4 hours and up to 72 hours, and the pain will be moderate to severe. In addition, nausea or sensitivity to light and sound may occur.

Acute treatment is intended to provide immediate relief from migraine symptoms, while preventive treatment is meant to prevent a migraine from occurring. Along with acute and/or preventive treatment of chronic migraine, there are complementary treatments and therapies to manage coexisting conditions.

Acute treatments for chronic migraine

An acute treatment refers to a medication taken at the first sign of migraine. These treatments don't prevent migraine but may offer pain relief during an episode. Most of these drugs must be taken at the first sign of migraine for best results.

The most commonly prescribed drugs for acute treatment are:

- ▶ analgesics like nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs)
- ▶ dopamine antagonists
- ▶ ergotamines
- ▶ ubrogepant and rimegepant
- ▶ triptans, available as pills, injections, or nasal spray
- ▶ dihydroergotamine, available in a nasal spray, by injection, or IV

Oral drugs targeting the CGRP pathway linked to migraine disease have emerged in recent years. Gepants and ditans used to treat chronic migraine include:

- ▶ ubrogepant (acute treatment)
- ▶ rimegepant (also used as a preventive treatment)
- ▶ reyvow
- ▶ zavegepant

Reyvow works differently than the other medications of this class. It targets serotonin receptors on the brain's nerve endings to halt migraine attacks just as they begin. This medication can cause sedation, so driving up to 8 hours after taking it is not advised.

Newer migraine treatments may have fewer side effects than triptans and antidepressants. They're also safe for people who have other medical conditions like a history of heart disease, stroke, or vascular diseases.

Preventive treatments for chronic migraine

Preventive medications for chronic migraine are intended to stop migraine from occurring in the first place. Typically, this course of treatment is considered when headaches occur more than 4 days per month and other severe side effects, like debilitating auras, coincide with the headaches.

Preventive treatments include:

- ▶ beta-blockers
- ▶ anticonvulsants
- ▶ antidepressants

Relief from Chronic Migraine: Current and emerging treatments

... Acute treatment is intended to provide immediate relief from migraine symptoms, while preventive treatment is meant to prevent a migraine from occurring



● Research suggests that worsening depression is frequently linked to a greater risk of episodic migraine becoming chronic migraine.

- ▶ onabotulinumtoxinA (injection therapy)
- ▶ anti-CGRP monoclonal antibodies

Botox

The effects of most preventive migraine treatment may not kick in for 2-3 months. Your doctor may also want you to take the preventive medication for up to a year, depending on your migraine history and your body's response to treatment. Finding the right dose is a part of the process.

Complementary treatments for chronic migraine

Prescription medications aren't the only source of potential relief for chronic migraine. There are some natural or integrative remedies that may help when used alongside traditional treatments.

These include:

- ▶ aerobic exercise
- ▶ biofeedback
- ▶ relaxation techniques

- ▶ cognitive therapies
- ▶ acupuncture
- ▶ dietary supplements like magnesium, CoQ10, butterbur, or feverfew
- ▶ cyanocobalamin with folate and pyridoxine

Lifestyle changes may also help. Getting enough sleep, hydrating, and limiting caffeine can all provide relief from migraine symptoms.

Antidepressants and migraine

Depression and anxiety disorders are common among people who have migraine. Research suggests that worsening depression is frequently linked to a greater risk of episodic migraine becoming chronic migraine. It's important for doctors to evaluate and treat people with migraine for the presence of depression or anxiety.

Certain antidepressant medications have been used successfully to treat depression and reduce migraine recurrence. One 2019 review found that serotonin-norepinephrine reuptake inhibitors (SNRIs) were shown to

be effective in treating people who live with migraine and depression. But the authors said that more research is needed on the efficacy of selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) in most people living with migraine and depression. One preventive treatment for chronic migraine may also act as an antidepressant. A 2022 review found that Botox can help with mild to moderate depression. How Botox works to reduce symptoms of depression is still being determined.

The takeaway

Chronic migraine is treated both acutely to provide immediate relief for pain and other symptoms, and preventatively to stop migraine from occurring. While chronic migraine isn't dangerous, it is serious due to its disruptive, often debilitating nature.

Consider keeping a migraine journal to track your migraine frequency and symptoms and what medications are or aren't working for you. This will help your doctor find the best course of treatment. **Healthline**

ODD PICTURES OF THE WEEK



▲ A sled dog team pull their rig on a training run before this weekend’s annual sled dog rally in Aviemore, Scotland, Britain.



▲ Swans swim in St James’s Park during the cold weather in London, Britain.



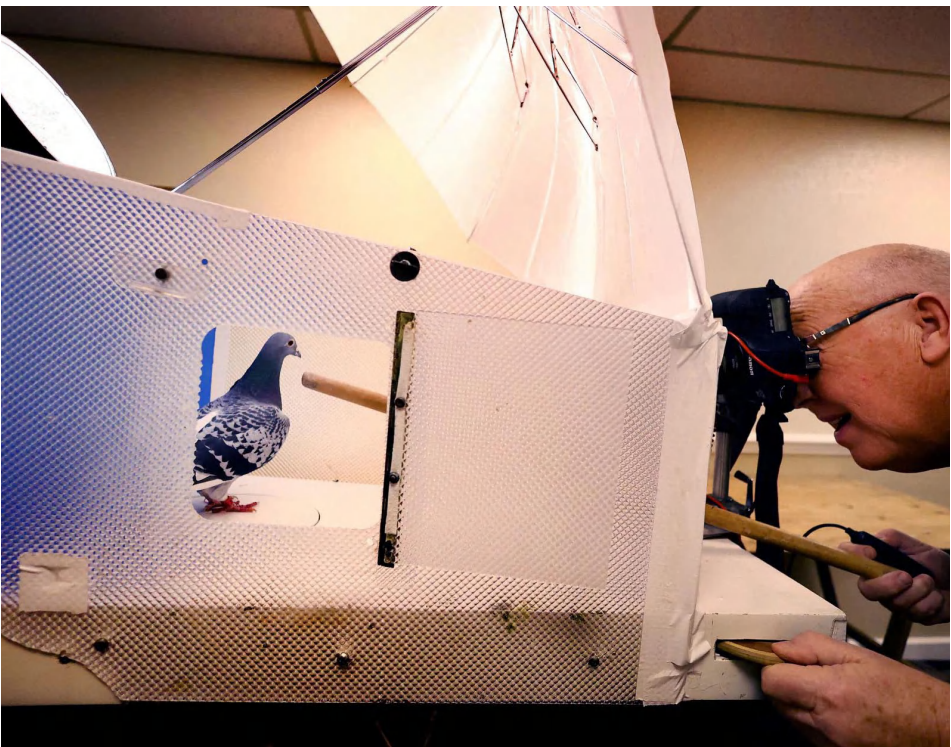
▲ Mathieu Forget poses during a photocall before Dior Menswear ready-to-wear Fall-Winter 2024/2025 collection show during Men’s Fashion Week in Paris



▲ An Egyptian mother and her son sit next to snow sculptures depicting the Great Sphynx and a pyramid during the celebration of World Snow Day, promoting snow sports and encouraging individuals to enjoy winter, at Ski Egypt, in Giza, Egypt



▲ A person walks along the seafront, past the sculpture attraction the Upside Down House, ahead of the arrival of Storm Jocelyn, in Brighton, southern Britain



▲ Photographer Peter Bennett takes pictures of the prize winning pigeons at the British Homing World Show of the Year in the Winter Gardens, Blackpool, Britain.

Sinner wins Australian Open

MELBOURNE - Jannik Sinner ushered in a new era at the Australian Open as the Italian capped off an outstanding fortnight with a superb comeback to outlast Daniil Medvedev and claim his first Grand Slam title on Sunday.

Sinner came from two sets down to beat Medvedev 3-6 3-6 6-4 6-4 6-3 and become the first Melbourne champion for a decade not named Novak Djokovic, Rafa Nadal or Roger Federer in the first title clash since 2005 not to feature any of the “Big Three”.

He dominated the tournament up to the final, with a thumping win over holder Djokovic in the semi-finals, but had to dig deep to take his place as the king and become the first Italian man to bag a major since Adriano Panatta won the 1976 French Open.

“It takes a little while to process everything,” said the 22-year-old after becoming the youngest champion since Djokovic won the 2008 title on Rod Laver Arena.

“I’m extremely happy how I handled things. The situation on court was very, very tough.

“The most important part was the support I had throughout these two wee by beating Djokovic at the ATP Finals and the Davis Cup at the end of last year when he led his country to their second title in the team competition.

A Grand Slam triumph was the next step to keep pace with fellow young gun Carlos Alcaraz, who already has two, and Sinner

went about his task in Melbourne efficiently.

But in Medvedev, he faced a man eager to erase the pain of two defeats in the Australian Open final -- to Djokovic in 2021 and Nadal in five sets in 2022 -- and the Russian showed no sign of having a mental hangover from those clashes.

MULTIPLE COMEBACKS

Having become the first man since Pete Sampras almost three decades ago to reach the final after multiple comebacks from two sets down, Medvedev made a blazing start to ease through the opening set with a double break.

It was only the third and fourth times that Sinner had dropped his serve in the tournament and he appeared to be troubled by the flat trajectory of his opponent’s shots early in the encounter.

Medvedev’s only previous loss in 51 Grand Slam matches on hardcourts after winning the opening set came at Melbourne Park against Nadal in the 2022 final and the 27-year-old nicknamed the “Octopus” soon got one tentacle on the trophy.

After wasting four chances to break in the second game that had five deuces and lasted nearly 12 minutes, Medvedev got his nose in front 3-1 on his way to wrapping up the second set as Sinner’s hopes of responding faded with the setting sun.

But Sinner grabbed a break back and nearly got another late in the second set as Medvedev showed signs of frailty after more than



▲ Jannik Sinner ushered in a new era at the Australian Open as the Italian capped off an outstanding fortnight with a superb comeback to outlast Daniil Medvedev and claim his first Grand Slam title on Sunday.

20 hours on the court before Sunday but the Russian pushed himself on with plenty of backing from the crowd.

The fourth seed missed a forehand pass at the net after a 31-shot rally in the 10th game of the third set but shrugged it off to break Medvedev and take the set, beginning his comeback in the clash which suddenly had a different feel to it.

(Reuters)

Xavi to leave Barca at the end of the season

BARCELONA manager Xavi Hernandez said on Saturday that he had decided to step down at the end of the season after his side lost 5-3 at home to Villarreal in LaLiga, their third defeat in their last five games in all competitions.

Barca are third in the table on 44 points, 10 behind leaders Real Madrid and eight adrift of second-placed Girona.

“I’d like to announce that as of June 30 I will not continue as Barca coach,” he told a press conference after meeting with club president Joan Laporta for over half an hour.

“It is a situation of common sense and I have decided that on June 30th I will not continue as Barca coach.

“I think the club needs a change of dynamic and I told the president Joan Laporta. As a fan, thinking about the club and the players, I think they will be freed up and will be calmer.

“I think the best thing to do is to leave on June 30th. Having said that, I will give my all for the four months that are left, I think we can have a good season and I hope that the dynamic will change. I believe I am doing the right thing.”

Xavi played for Barcelona for 17 years, making 767 appearances and winning 25 trophies, including four Champions League titles and eight LaLiga crowns.

But despite being a club great and winning LaLiga last term, Barca’s stuttering campaign has put Xavi under pressure.

They were thrashed by Real in



▲ Barcelona manager Xavi Hernandez said on Saturday that he had decided to step down at the end of the season.

the Spanish Super Cup final earlier in January and knocked out in the Copa del Rey quarter-finals by Athletic Bilbao on Wednesday. Barca face last season’s Italian champions Napoli in a Champions League last-16 tie.

“I had a very human conversation with the president (Laporta), with a lot of common sense. The trust is absolute, he even got a little emotional,” 44-year-old Xavi added.

“But I think it is time. I’m not driven by financial matters, but by my heart. I think it’s the best thing for the club. I don’t want to be a problem for the club in my heart.

“This game today is an example that we need a change of direction because it has been unfortunate and it is a time to change this dynamic. I can’t remember a game as cruel as today.

(Reuters)

Liverpool through to FA Cup fifth round, Wolves win game marked by fan violence

LIVERPOOL, England - Liverpool cruised into the fifth round of the FA Cup with a 5-2 rout of Championship side Norwich City on Sunday, to kick off Juergen Klopp’s long goodbye at Anfield.

Liverpool’s beloved manager announced on Friday that he would leave the Merseyside team at the end of this season, his ninth at the helm.

The eight-times FA Cup winners had goals from Curtis Jones, Darwin Nunez, Dioga Jota, Virgil van Dijk and Ryan Gravenberch.

Liverpool will next play either Watford FC or Southampton after that fourth-round game earlier on Sunday ended in a 1-1 draw thanks to a last-gasp goal by Southampton’s Stuart Armstrong to force a replay.

Ben Gibson and Borja Sainz scored for Norwich City, who are ninth in the Championship, 28 spots below Premier League leaders Liverpool in England’s football pyramid.

Wolverhampton Wanderers’ 2-0 victory in their fourth-round match at West Bromwich Albion on Sunday was interrupted for nearly 40 minutes due to clashes involving the two sides’ supporters.

Wolves were leading 2-0 when projectiles were hurled on to one end of the pitch in the 82nd minute, sparking a brawl in a corner at The Hawthorns.

Matheus Cunha and Pedro Neto scored for Wolves, whose manager Gary O’Neil called the disturbances “really disappointing”.

“Up until that point it was a good tie with good atmosphere,” O’Neil told ITV. “How people behave at football is really important and we need to look at that, make sure everyone is safe. When we came back out the atmosphere had gone, it was really sad to see.”

(Reuters)



▲ Wolverhampton Wanderers’ 2-0 victory in their fourth-round match at West Bromwich Albion on Sunday was interrupted for nearly 40 minutes due to clashes involving the two sides’ supporters.



AFRICA CUP OF NATIONS 2024



ABIDJAN - Guinea scored with the last kick of the game to end the giant-killing run of Equatorial Guinea at the Africa Cup of Nations and book themselves a slot in the quarter-finals with a 1-0 victory at Alassane Ouattara Olympic Stadium on Sunday.

Mohamed Bayo's superb glancing header in the eighth minute of stoppage time in the last-16 clash proved the difference after Equatorial Guinea, who were down to 10 men in the second half, missed a penalty.

Guinea ended a long sequence of losses in the knockout stage of the Cup of Nations but took their time, and rode their luck, to claim victory.

It came after a spell of probing football at the end of the game and from an accurate cross on the right from full back Ibrahim Diakite that Bayo expertly flicked into the net, in a small gap between the near post and the goalkeeper.

Guinea had brought on the Bundesliga-based pair of Naby Keita and Serhou Guirassy to inject urgency into their attack and they slowly took command in the closing stages, setting up several chances.

Guinea had a man advantage from the 55th minute when Equatorial Guinea's influential holding midfielder Federico Bikoro was sent off for a high-foot tackle on Bayo that was dangerous.

But despite the disadvantage, Equatorial Guinea should have gone ahead just minutes later when Iban Salvador was clipped from behind in the penalty area by wing back Se-

Last gasp win for Guinea sees them into last-8

kou Sylla.

It took a lengthy VAR review before the referee awarded the kick but Emilio Nsue, the tournament's leading scorer with five goals, hit his effort against the upright with the goalkeeper going the other way.

Equatorial Guinea then looked to play for time and try and force the game to an extra 30 minutes and post-match penalties.

However, Guinea snatched victory to end the fairytale run of the small central African nation, who had finished ahead of hosts Ivory Coast and Nigeria in Group A and who on Monday produced a shock by thrashing the Ivorians 4-0.

Guinea had the best chance of a pedestrian first half when they broke on the counter-attack after defending a corner and Aguibou Camara was running toward the opposing goal, but then inexplicably hesitated and allowed full back Basilio Ndong to steam across from the left and make a convincing tackle.

Guinea now meet the winner of Sunday's later game between the Democratic Republic of Congo and Egypt in San Pedro.

(Reuters)



▲ Mohamed Bayo's superb glancing header in the eighth minute of stoppage time in the last-16

Morocco coach has suspension lifted, can return for last - 16 game against S.A

ABIDJAN, Ivory Coast — Walid Regragui has had his suspension lifted, clearing the Morocco coach to return for the team's Africa Cup of Nations last 16 game against South Africa on Tuesday.

The Confederation of African Football said Sunday it had partially upheld the appeal filed by the Moroccan federation against Regragui's four-game ban — with two suspended — for his part in the heated scenes at the end of the team's match against Congo the week before.

CAF's appeal board said it was setting aside the suspension and a fine of \$5,000 imposed on Regragui. It confirmed the fines of \$20,000 each on the soccer federations of Morocco and Congo, plus the \$10,000 fine on the Moroccan federation "for the use of smoke bombs by its supporters during the match," with half the amount suspended.

The Moroccan federation had argued it was an "unjust decision" to ban Regragui because the coach "did not commit any behavior that violates the spirit of sportsmanship."

Regragui sat out Mo-

rocco's final group game as the Atlas Lions defeated Zambia 1-0 in the first game after his suspension.

Regragui and Congo captain Chancel Mbemba had a heated exchange after their teams' match ended 1-1 in San Pedro on Jan. 21. It led to a melee between players and officials from both teams that continued as they went down the players' tunnel.

Mbemba implied to journalists after the game that Regragui insulted him, but the Morocco coach on Tuesday denied making any racist comments.

Mbemba's Instagram account was subjected to a stream of racist abuse, while Regragui said he received death threats in the fallout.

(Newsday)



▲ Walid Regragui has had his suspension lifted, clearing the Morocco coach to return for the team's Africa Cup of Nations last 16 game against South Africa on Tuesday.

Côte d'Ivoire hoping to make amends against Senegal

IT'S all set. Defending champions, Senegal will come up against host, Côte d'Ivoire on Monday, 29 January at the Charles Konan Bani Stadium, Yamoussoukro for the Round of 16 clash of the TotalEnergies CAF Africa Cup of Nations Côte d'Ivoire 2023.

The game promises to be a tough encounter based on the ambitions of the two sides in the ongoing TotalEnergies CAF AFCON Côte d'Ivoire 2023. With the Elephants looking to correct the wrongs of the group stage, they will go all in.

The Teranga Lions qualified from their group unbeaten and will be hoping to continue with the same energy in the knockout stage.

Côte d'Ivoire wants to make up for their poor showing in the group stage, which they progressed with only 3 points as one of the best third-placed teams.

The Elephants will want to compensate their home fans for the poor showing in their last two games against Nigeria and Equatorial Guinea by eliminating Senegal and qualifying for the quarter finals.

Aliou Cisse - Senegal coach

"Our team is going through a good period after three matches, where we achieved good results in the group stage, and I am satisfied with it. We are in a good state to focus. The statistics are there and I cannot change the past and the results. We are in the present, and we will remain focused.

Faye Emers - Côte d'Ivoire coach

"We prepared well for the Senegal match, and we will enter the match with confidence a lot of confidence. The players are motivated. I know the group well, and I have been with them for a year and a half. The players know what to expect from them in the Senegal match. We will enter the match with good confidence.(CAF Online)



▲ Defending champions, Senegal will come up against host, Côte d'Ivoire on Monday, 29 January

Eswatini Crashes out of African Games qualifiers

By Sibusiso Masilela
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THE country’s African Games beach volleyball dream is over. This follows the beach volleyball national team exiting the African Games qualifiers played over the weekend in Botswana. The country lost in both male and female categories, ending their dream of making it to the continental games scheduled for March in Ghana. The male duo of Nduku Masangane and Mlamuli Simelane lost all their pool matches against South Africa, Mozambique and Namibia. The ladies comprising Nonhlanhla Khoza and Nokulunga Kunene suffered the same ordeal as they went down to Botswana, Mozambique and Angola. Top male player Masangane said he was happy with their performance despite losing. “We did our best even though we didn’t have enough time to gel as a team. I am confident that we will improve in the next international competitions. We are grateful for the support that we have received from the Eswatini Sports and Recreation Council and the Eswatini Olympic and Commonwealth Games Association (EOCGA) during the tournament.



Team Eswatini results		
Males		
Mozambique	2-0	Eswatini
South Africa	2-1	Eswatini
Namibia	2-0	Eswatini
Ladies		
Mozambique	2-0	Eswatini
Angola	2-0	Eswatini
Botswana	2-0	Eswatini



▲ Eswatini beach male and female volleyball teams during the African Games qualifiers in Botswana.



▲ REPS pool club players celebrating their triumph in the Eswatini Pool Festival team category on Saturday night at Manzini Pool club.

REPS crowned pool Festival championships

By Sibusiso Masilela
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ROYAL Eswatini Police Service pool has re-written the history books by becoming the first team to win the Eswatini Pool Festival team tournament. The police side got the better of Ludzeludze by 13-8 during the finals of the teams’ category played on Saturday evening at Manzini Pool Club. The police side took home an improved E4 500 first prize money while the runner Ludzeludze, received E25 00. REPS booked their place in the finals with a resounding 13 -9 win over rivals Correctional while Ludzeludze outsmarted Malk-

erns 13-5. The tournament Coordinator Sithembiso ‘Dodge’ Matsebula congratulated the champions for their achievement. “We are pleased with the proceedings of the tournament. Congratulations are for the champions and we are looking forward to a bigger and better tournament next year,” he said. He further appreciated the support from the Eswatini Sport and Recreation Council (ESRC). “We are grateful for the support that we have received from ESRC which contributed immensely towards the success of the tournament,” he said. ESRC contributed E45 000 towards the pool spectacle which also involved singles categories where International players were in attendance.

Professional golf trio knocked out of Mediclinic Invitational

By Ntokozo Magongo
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LOCAL Professional golfers who are playing under the Sunshine Tour could not make it to the last two final days of the Mediclinic Invitational. The three players are James Pennington, Mandla Dlamini Jnr and Brandon-Jude Rennie. They were part of the over 60 players from the 143 that could not cut on the second day of the four rounds tournament. This was the first tournament of the year, 2024 and the three players entered for the tournament. It was Mandla Dlamini Jnr who finished ahead of the two other players on the 121 position while Brandon-Jude Rennie’s campaign ended on the 134 spot with James Pennington finishing on 136. The final day of the tournament was on Sunday at the Maccauvlei Golf Club. The tournament was sponsored to the tune of E2 million with the winner taking over E300 000. Meanwhile, it is set to be an action-packed



▲ Brandon-Jude Rennie.

season for the players as the next tournament is the SDC Open to be played from February 1 to 4th at the Zebula Country Club. The trio is currently under the reserves and it will be confirmed on Monday or Tuesday if they are to be part of the over 100 golfers set to take it to the greens.



▲ James Pennington.



▲ Mandla Dlamini.

Leopard in E300k Macron deal

By Sibusiso Masilela
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CURRENT league joint-leaders, Royal Leopard will be trendsetters even outside the field of play, as they are on the verge of clinching a E300 000 technical sponsorship deal with Italian sportswear company, Macron.

The team recently purchased a consignment from their potential partners, which they used during the 1-0 win over Madlenya at Prince of Wales Ground on Saturday.

A source close to the matter revealed that the two parties were in the process of finalising the technical sponsorship.

“Leopard and Macron are in the process of securing a deal with Macron worth E300 000. Talks are at an advanced stage between the two parties,” the source said.

Royal
Leopard
Chief



◀Royal Leopard has clinched a deal with Italian sportswear company, Macron.

Executive Officer Frank Hurube only confirmed their possible partnership with the European company.

“We have purchased two expensive sets of kits from Macron for the players and technical bench, plus officials. I am not in a position to reveal any figures but we will conclude a deal with them once we purchase the second consignment,” he said.

Other teams that have recently clinched technical sponsorship include Nsingizini Hotspurs with another Italian company Primo.

The Edwin Matsebula-led side is in joint leadership with Green Mamba with 28 points after their hard-fought win over the Siphofaneni-based side. They are only second due to a lower goal difference to the defending champions.



▲Royal Leopard Junior Magagula was the MTN Premier Legaue best player for the month of December.

‘Ready to fight for league title’ — Junior

By Ntokozo Magongo
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ROYAL Leopard midfielder Junior Magagula believes the being knocked out of the Ingwenyama Cup was a blessing in disguise.

He said this will give them enough time to focus on the MTN Premier League were they are currently challenging the defending champions, Green Mamba, Mbabane Swallows and Young Buffaloes.

They are top of the table after their 1-0 win over Madlenya on Saturday with Green Mamba playing a goalless draw against Mbabane Swallows. Magagula was on Saturday named the MTN Premier League

player of the month for December. He was awarded with the cheque on Saturday at Mavuso Sports Centre.

“In December it is true that were at our best as we did not lose any match. But we then lost focus especially in the Ingwenyama Cup where we lost in the first stage of the tournament. We have past that and it gives us plenty of time to focus on the league. We need to be consistence in our game,” he said.

Leopard suffered a shocking 3-1 defeat to Nsingizini Hotspurs before the win against Madlenya on Saturday.

Magagula said he was happy with the award but he dedicated it to his team-mates. He said there is still a lot to fight for and he believes they will gain consistence and challenge for the title.

By Ntokozo Magongo
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MBABANE Swallows suffered yet another huge blow ahead of the Ingwenyama Cup quarter-finals.

Lanky striker Sandile Hlatshwako suffered an ankle injury on Saturday during the goalless draw against Green Mamba at Mavuso Sports Centre that is set to keep him out of action for sometime. He was substituted in the first half of the match.

Swallows are still hoping for a quick return of Felix Badenhorst who dislocated his shoulder during the 1-0 win over Tambankulu Celtics during the Ingwenyama Cup last 16 match played at Mayaluka Stadium.

Hlatshwako was the scorer of the goal in the 1-0 victory against the National First Division League side that had shocked Royal Leopard by eliminating them in the last 32 stage of the tournament. A source close to the matter said the player was yet to be

Bird’s Sandile Hlatshwako joins Felix on the sidelines

assessed by the medical team and they will confirm how serious the injury is.

“He had to be substituted during the game and taken away by the paramedics which are sign that the injury was serious. It is unfortunate because the number of injured players seems to be increasing every week,” said the source.

Swallows Coach Caleb Ngwenya said he was yet to know from the medical team about the seriousness of the injury to Hlatshwako.

Swallows are challenging for both the MTN Premier League and the Ingwenyama Cup. They are part of the eight teams that will be drawn during the Ingwenyama Cup quarterfinals billed for Monday at the Sincephetelo Motor Vehicle Accident Fund (SMVAF). Other teams in the quarterfinals are Mbabane Highlanders, Green Mamba, Nsinginzi Hotspurs, Madlenya, Yong Buffaloes, Ezulwini United and Pigg’s Peak Rangers.



▲Sandile Hlatshwako goes out injured during the goalless draw against Green Mamba at Mavuso Sports Centre on Saturday.

E30 000 salary for Mxolisi in Botswana

... Former Green Mamba captain, Mxolisi Mkhonto to earn E30 000 per month and will also receive a signing-on-fee of E80 000 after penning a two-year deal with Botswana’s Jwaneng Galaxy last week.

By Ntokozo Magongo
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FORMER Green Mamba Captain Mxolisi Mkhonto will earn about E30 000 per month at his new club, Jwaneng Galaxy.

The National team, Sihlangu player signed a two-year deal with Botswana’s Jwaneng Galaxy last week. The signing fee is reported to be around E80 000. He is the second player to join the Botswana Premier League team after former Mbabane Highlanders Banele ‘Stiga’ Ndzabandzaba who signed for Police XI.

A source close to the matter said the whole salary when converted from the Botswana’s currency, Pula to South Africa’s Rands is around E30 000 excluding some bonuses. Mkhonto left the country on Thursday and signed on the dotted line on Saturday.

Mkhonto watched his side winning 1-0 against VTM on Saturday afternoon. He will be working under South Africa born coach Morena Ramorebodi who led Bafana Bafana during the COSAFA Cup in July in the coastal city of Durban last year. Jwaneng Galaxy sits third on the log tables with 19 points after nine games. They are behind Rollers and Gaborone United who are placed first and second respectively.



▲ Mxolisi Mkhonto after signing his contract with Botswana-side, Jwaneng Galaxy.

“Teams under the Botswana Premier League are paid anything between E15 00 and E40 000. It is good money when you consider that the highest paid player in Eswatini is around E20 000 including the international players,” said a source closer to the player’s deal.

Mkhonto is the fourth LiSwati to ply

his trade internationally as he joined the likes of Justice Figareido playing for South Africa’s DStv side Richards Bay, Lindo Mkhontfo plays for Zesco United in Zambia and Ndzabandzaba in Botswana.

Mkhonto was named player of the season last season after inspiring his side to the MTN Premier League title.

Bishop Lukhele edges closer to Birds’ return

By Sibusiso Masilela
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MBABANE Swallows are edging closer to a reunion with their former president Archbishop Bheki Lukhele.

The popular man of the cloth has reaffirmed his love and passion for the capital city giants after watching the crowd-pullers’ goal-less draw against Green Mamba on Saturday at Mavuso Sports Centre.

“I am still a Swallows person and I never left the team. Sandile Zwane (Governor) can explain everything to you,” he said, before driving out of the stadium in a sleek BMW sedan.

Zwane could not be reached for comment at the time of compiling this report.

Meanwhile, the club’s Public Relations Officer (PRO) Knowledge Ngwenya said they were still in talks with Lukhele over a possible return to the team.

“Bishop Lukhele has been a Swallows person through thick and thin. He has been supporting us and we are only finalising some loose ends on the part of him being the club president,” he said.

Lukhele recently splashed over E400 000 as festive bonuses to the players and technical staff.

He was previously in charge of the team for three seasons and was instrumental in the engagement of international coaches such as Honour Janza (Zambia) and Christopher Ennin (Ghana) respectively.

MTN Premier League:

It’s a valuable draw – Wanderers’ Mlaba

By Sibusiso Masilela
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MANZINI Wanderers captain Mlamuli ‘Mlaba’ Nkambule has appreciated the point which they got against Moneni Pirates.

The seasoned ex-Mbabane Highlanders player said this after he was named the man of the match during their 2-all draw during the hub derby at Mavuso Sports Centre on Saturday.

“This is a fair result for us and a confidence booster in our relegation fight. We will continue working hard in the next matches until the end of season,” he said.

He further thanked the team supporters for supporting them in numbers.

Meanwhile, the ‘Weslians’ head coach Nyanga ‘Crooks’ Hlophe commended his charges’ performance.

“I am happy with the performance of our players after we showed character by coming from a two-goal down to get a hard fought draw. Such kind of resilience will help us to survive relegation at the end of the season,” he said.

Pirates head Coach Gcina Dlamini



▲ Manzini Wanderers equalising goal against Moneni Pirates in the match that ended 2-all.

said the result was a true reflection of the match.

“This was a tough match and the result shows that this was a derby. We will continue fighting until the end,” Dlamini

said.

A trademark Mlamuli ‘Mlaba’ Nkambule free-kick and Banele ‘Banny’ Mdluli goal cancelled out a Wandile ‘Shaka’ Simelane brace during the traditional hub derby.



▲ Manzini Wanderers Mlamuli ‘Mlaba’ Nkambule was the man of the match during the 2-all draw against Manzini Wanderers at Mavuso Sports Centre during the MTN Premier League game.



**Last gasp win
for Guinea
sees them
into last-8**
Page 20



**Bishop
Lukhele
inches closer
to 'Birds' return**
Page 23

Eswatini *Monday 29
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Daily News

Sport



E30k salary for Mxolisi in Botswana

... Former Green Mamba captain, Mxolisi Mkhonto to earn E30 000 per month and will also receive a signing-on-fee of E80 000 after penning a two-year deal with Botswana's Jwaneng Galaxy last week. **Page 23**