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28 January, 2024

# Eswatini Sunday

## 8 out of 10 emaSwati households now have access to clean water

By Ncaba Ntshakala

**T**HE Kingdom of Eswatini has made great strides in improving the lives of emaSwati and ensuring they have access to clean drinking water.

A new study has found that 8 out of 10 emaSwati have access to clean drinking water, a significant increase from the last survey. The results of the sixth Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS6) have painted a picture of a nation steadily improving its water situation, particularly for vulnerable populations.

Conducted by the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development with the support of UNICEF, the survey paints a picture of a nation steadily improving its water situation, particularly for vulnerable populations.

The headline finding asserts that nearly 8 out of 10 households (78%) now rely on improved drinking water sources, a commendable rise from 62% in the previous MICS survey conducted in 2014-2015.

This improvement signifies a remarkable leap forward in providing clean water closer to homes, with the survey indicating that most households (72%) have access to these improved sources within a 30-minute walk.

"These findings are a testament to the collective efforts of the government, development partners, and communities in tackling the challenge of water access," reads part of the MICS survey report.

"We are particularly encouraged by the increase in usage of improved sources and the reduction in time spent fetching water, especially for women and children who traditionally bear the brunt of water collection."

The MICS6 delves deeper than mere statistics, shedding light on the lived experiences of Eswatini's people.

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▲ WATER IS LIFE: A new study has found that 8 out of 10 emaSwati have access to clean drinking water, a significant increase from the last survey. (Credit: Riccardo Mayer/The World Bank)

By Ncaba Ntshakala

A WAVE of relief is sweeping across the Kingdom of Eswatini after the Minister of Finance Neal Rijkenberg, shared the long-awaited lifting of the government's hiring freeze policy.

Implemented in 2018 through Circular No. 3, the policy aimed to curb the nation's wage bill by halting new recruitments, replacements, and promotions within the civil service.

Speaking to Eswatini Sunday, the Minister said the policy has been set aside. "The Hiring freeze has been set aside a few months ago".

The news comes as a welcome reprieve for many sectors, particularly education, which has grappled with severe staff shortages in recent years. The minister acknowledged the

## Minister of Finance Neal lifts hiring freeze in Eswatini

challenges: "While the budget for employment remains restricted, the Ministry of Public Service will adopt a conservative approach, prioritizing the filling of critical posts."

This cautious optimism offers a ray of hope for sectors yearning to address staffing gaps and optimise their operations. The education sector, in particular, stands to benefit significantly.

With over 500 open positions and more than 1000 teacher contracts due for renewal, the lifting of the freeze provides much-needed breathing room.

This move promises to improve staffing

levels in schools, potentially enhancing the quality of education and creating a more conducive learning environment for students.

The decision to thaw the hiring freeze policy has been met with widespread applause across various segments of society.

Public servants, who bore the brunt of the policy's restrictions, expressed relief and optimism about potential career progression opportunities.

Businesses and private entities also welcomed the move, hoping it would stimulate economic activity and create new job markets.



## S. Africa stuns the World

**ICJ upholds claims of potential genocide in Israel-Palestine conflict**

Ncaba Ntshakala

IN a historic and groundbreaking ruling, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) has issued a preliminary ruling upholding South Africa's claim that Israeli actions towards Palestinians in Gaza may constitute genocide.

This unexpected verdict sends shockwaves through the international community, potentially reshaping the decades-long conflict and igniting a firestorm of debate.

**South Africa's bold accusation**

In December 2023, South Africa, launched a legal challenge at the ICJ, accusing Israel of committing acts of genocide against Palestinians in Gaza. This accusation, the most serious charge under international law, sent shockwaves through the diplomatic landscape and drew strong condemnation from Israel.

**Court ruling**

The ICJ in its ruling ordered Israel to take measures to prevent and punish direct incitement of genocide in its war in Gaza, although it stopped short of ordering a ceasefire in a case brought forth by South Africa.

"The state of Israel shall... take all measures within its power to prevent the commission of all acts within the scope of Article II of the Genocide Convention," the International Court of Justice (ICJ) said.

In a sweeping ruling, a large majority of the 17-judge panel of the ICJ voted for urgent measures which covered most of what South Africa asked for with the notable exception of ordering a halt to Israeli military action in Gaza.

The court ordered Israel to refrain from any acts that could fall under the Genocide Convention and also ensure that its troops do not commit any genocidal acts in Gaza. Israel must report to the court within a month on what it's doing to uphold the order. The decision is legally binding, but the court has no way to enforce it.

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# South Africa stuns the World: ICJ upholds claims of potential genocide in Israel-Palestine conflict

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**International calls**  
The world reacted after the historic judgement of the ICJ on the South African case against Israel. Amnesty International has called the court's order an "important step" that could help protect Palestinians from "further suffering and irreparable harm".

The ruling issued by the ICJ ordered six provisional measures including for Israel to refrain from acts under the Genocide Convention, prevent and punish the direct and public incitement to genocide, and take immediate and effective measures to ensure the provision of humanitarian assistance to civilians in Gaza. The court has also ordered Israel to preserve evidence of genocide and to submit a report to it, within one month, of all measures taken in line with its order.

European Union also expressed that it expects 'full, immediate implementation' of ICJ orders.

"Orders of the International Court of Justice are binding on the parties and they must comply with them," the European Commission said in a statement. "The European Union expects their full, immediate, and effective implementation," it added.

## Responses

South Africa commended the ruling of the ICJ. In a statement shared, the country

applauded the Court for its swift ruling. It also mentioned that the United Nations Security Council will now be formally notified of the Court's order pursuant to Article 41 (2) of the Court's Statute. The veto power wielded by individual states can not be permitted to thwart international justice, not least in light of the ever-worsening situation in Gaza brought about by Israel's acts and omissions in violation of the Genocide Convention.

"Third States are now on notice of the existence of a serious risk of genocide against the Palestinian people in Gaza. They must, therefore, also act independently and immediately to prevent genocide by Israel and to ensure that they are not themselves in violation of the Genocide Convention, including by aiding or assisting in the commission of genocide," reads part of South Africa's statement.

"This necessarily imposes an obligation on all States to cease funding and facilitating Israel's military actions, which are plausibly genocidal." The Republic further highlighted that above all else, the provisional measures are directly binding on Israel, which is required pursuant to the Court's order and to the Genocide Convention itself, to stop all acts by it that are plausibly genocidal, such as those raised by South Africa in its Application and request for the indication of provisional measures.



▲South Africa's President Ramaphosa's legal advisor, Nokukhanya Jele, listens as South African Foreign Minister Naledi Pandor and South African Ambassador to the Netherlands Vusumuzi Madonsela speak on the day the International Court of Justice (ICJ) rule on emergency measures against Israel following accusations by South Africa that the Israeli military operation in Gaza is a state-led genocide, in The Hague, Netherlands, January 26, 2024.

There is no credible basis for Israel to continue to claim that its military actions are in full compliance with international law, including the Genocide Convention, having regard to the Court's ruling.

"South Africa sincerely hopes that Israel

will not act to frustrate the application of this Order, as it has publicly threatened to do, but that it will instead act to comply with it fully, as it is bound to do," asserted the Republic of South Africa in the statement.

## Expectations

South Africa's President Cyril Ramaphosa in an address to the nation on Friday afternoon said that they expect Israel to abide by the World Court's verdict.

"We firmly believe that following the ICJ

judgement there should be more concerted efforts on a ceasefire," said the President as he addressed the nation. "South Africans will not be passive bystanders while crimes are perpetrated upon other people elsewhere."



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# 8 out of 10 emaSwati households now have access to clean water

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The survey reveals disparities in access across regions, with rural areas lagging slightly behind urban centres.

Additionally, income levels play a role, with wealthier households having higher rates of improved water source usage compared to their less fortunate counterparts. However, the overall trend is undeniably positive.

The government, buoyed by the MICS6 findings, has pledged to intensify its efforts towards achieving universal access to safe drinking water by 2030. This includes further investments in infrastructure development, community-based water management initiatives, and hygiene promotion campaigns.

The MICS6 serves as a valuable roadmap for future planning and resource allocation. Pinpointing areas requiring focused attention empowers policymakers and development partners to tailor their strategies and ensure no one is left behind in the Kingdom's quest for universal water access.

Eswatini is commended for improving access to improved water sources, showcasing a commitment to leaving no one behind in this vital pursuit. The Kingdom of Eswatini ranked 27th in the World Bank's 2020 assessment of access to improved water, the MICS6 paints a picture of advancement.

The survey indicates that nearly 80% of households now rely on improved water sources, a considerable leap from 62% just five years ago. This translates to thousands of emaSwati gaining access to clean and readily available water within their homes or a 30-minute walk, significantly improving their lives and health.

Eswatini's progress puts it ahead of other countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. A WHO/UNICEF progress report published in 2020 showed that the number of people without access to water is growing in Sub-Saharan Africa. The report said it is the only region of the world where this is happening.

About 387 million people lived without access to basic drinking water services in Sub-Saharan Africa in 2020, up from 350 million people in 2000, according to the report.

As of October 2022, about 226 million people in Eastern and Southern Africa did not have access to basic water services, and 381 million people lacked access to basic sanitation services. The report found that the situation is worse in rural areas than in cities. Nine countries (Angola, Democratic

Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Mozambique, Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda) are home to 80% of underserved people in the region.

The report said addressing people's need for water and sanitation in these nine countries and continuing to make progress in other parts of the region is key to improving people's lives and boosting economic growth.

Improved water access brings health, education, and economic benefits.

The World Health Organisation expresses that access to clean water is not just a basic human right, it is essential for health, education, and economic development. Contaminated water is a major source of preventable diseases, such as diarrhoeal disease, cholera, and typhoid fever.

These diseases disproportionately affect children and can lead to stunting, poor school performance, and even death. In addition to its health benefits, clean water access also plays a crucial role in education.

When children don't have to spend hours collecting water, they have more time to attend school and focus on their studies. This can lead to improved educational outcomes and better employment opportunities in the future.

Clean water is also essential for economic development. It is necessary for agriculture, manufacturing, and tourism. Businesses need reliable access to clean water to operate efficiently, and tourists are less likely to visit countries with poor water quality.

People's access to water is set to increase in Eswatini as the country continues to invest in water infrastructure. The government is spending E2.7 billion on the construction of the Mpakeni Dam as part of the Mkhondvo-Ngwavuma Water Augmentation Programme Phase IA (MNWAP).

The Mkhondvo Ngwavuma Water Augmentation Project is set to bring water to the Shiselweni Region through the construction of the Mpakeni Dam and water transfer from the Mkhondvo River. The project is funded by AfDB and the government.

The objectives of the Mkhondvo Ngwavuma project are to integrate smallholder farmers into the commercial economy through the establishment of farmer-managed irrigation companies.

The project has however been rocked by scandals with workers complaining about working conditions and treatment by the Chinese company that was awarded the tender.



**L**OS ANGELES - NASA's rover Perseverance has gathered data confirming the existence of ancient lake sediments deposited by water that once filled a giant basin on Mars called Jerezo Crater, according to a study published on Friday.

The findings from ground-penetrating radar observations conducted by the robotic rover substantiate previous orbital imagery and other data leading scientists to theorize that portions of Mars were once covered in water and may have harbored microbial life.

The research, led by teams from the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) and the University of Oslo, was published in the journal *Science Advances*, opens new tab.

It was based on subsurface scans taken by the car-sized, six-wheeled rover over several months of 2022 as it made its way across the Martian surface from the crater floor onto an adjacent expanse of braided, sedimentary-like features resembling, from orbit, the river deltas found on Earth.

Soundings from the rover's RIMFAX radar instrument allowed scientists to peer underground to get a cross-sectional view of rock layers 65 feet (20 meters) deep, "almost like looking at a road cut," said UCLA planetary scientist David Paige, the first author of the paper.

#### Evidence

Those layers provide unmistakable evidence that soil sediments carried by water were deposited at Jerezo Crater and its delta from a river that fed it, just as they are in lakes on Earth. The findings reinforced what previous studies have long suggested - that cold, arid, lifeless Mars was once warm, wet and perhaps habitable.

Scientists look forward to an up-close examination of Jerezo's sediments - thought to have formed some 3 billion years ago - in samples collected by Perseverance for future transport to Earth.

In the meantime, the latest study is welcome validation that scientists undertook their geo-biological Mars endeavor at the right place on the planet after all.

Remote analysis of early core samples drilled by Perseverance at four sites close to where it landed in February 2021 surprised researchers by revealing rock that was volcanic in nature, rather than sedimentary as had been expected.

The two studies are not contradictory. Even the volcanic rocks bore signs of alteration through exposure to water, and scientists who published those findings in August 2022 reasoned then that sedimentary deposits may have eroded away.

Indeed, the RIMFAX radar readings reported

on Friday found signs of erosion before and after the formation of sedimentary layers identified at the crater's western edge, evidence of a complex geological history there, Paige said.

"There were volcanic rocks that we the landed on," Paige said. "The real news here is that now we've driven onto the delta and now we're seeing evidence of these lake sediments, which is one of the main reasons we came to this location. So that's a happy story in that respect."

Reuters

● Remote analysis of early core samples drilled by Perseverance at four sites close to where it landed in February 2021 surprised researchers by revealing rock that was volcanic in nature, rather than sedimentary as had been expected

# Mars rover data confirms ancient lake sediments on red planet



## National Data Protection Awareness Day

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28 January 2024



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## 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





Stories by Ncaba Ntshakala

FOLLOWING a productive week in Uganda for the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and G77 Summits, Prime Minister Russell Dlamini and the Eswatini delegation have set their sights on the upcoming Italy-Africa Summit, carrying the country's unwavering commitment to South-South cooperation and inclusive development. The Prime Minister's voice resonated strongly in Kampala, where he advocated for greater collaboration and solidarity amongst developing nations. Highlighting the challenges faced by the South, he emphasized the need for joint action programs and policies that address shared aspirations and ensure no one is left behind in the pursuit of progress.

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

Eswatini reaffirmed the urgency for global solidarity and international cooperation in addressing development challenges. The Prime Minister pointed to the need for innovative approaches to greening economies and achieving energy sufficiency as crucial factors for sustainable development.

Further at the summit, Eswatini emphasised the importance of collaborating on matters of political and international security. This includes promoting international law, peaceful conflict resolution, the fight against terrorism, and UN reform, particularly the reform of the Security Council.

Beyond Prime Minister Dlamini's efforts, the Uganda summits also provided Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Minister Pholile Shakantu with an invaluable platform to advance Eswatini's diplomatic and international relations.

Minister Shakantu held fruitful meetings with key figures, including the Philippines' Minister of Information and Communications Technology Ivan John Enrile Uy and Cuba's Minister of Foreign Affairs Bruno Rodriguez Parrilla, strengthening bilateral ties and exploring avenues for future cooperation.

# Eswatini champions South-South unity and advocates for Inclusive development



▲ Prime Minister Russell Dlamini addressing the gathering during the summit in Uganda.



▲ Minister of Foreign Affairs Pholile Shakantu with Cuba Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez Parrilla.

## Eswatini economy caught in the crossfire of geopolitical tensions and distant wars in 2023

MOST of the world economies took a dive due to the persisting geopolitical tensions in Europe and the Middle East. While the Kingdom of Eswatini nestled amidst the scenic mountains of Southern Africa may seem far removed from the world's geopolitical maelstrom, the ripples of distant wars cast a long shadow over the nation in 2023.

The ongoing conflicts, particularly the war in Ukraine, have dealt a significant blow to Eswatini's economy and exposed its vulnerabilities to global instability.

The war's primary impact has been on many economies including Eswatini's fragile one,

which is heavily reliant on manufacturing, tourism and agricultural exports. Rising global food and fuel prices triggered by the conflict have eroded purchasing power, leading to higher inflation and dampening consumer spending.

The disruption of global supply chains due to the war further exacerbated Eswatini's economic woes. Shortages of essential raw materials and intermediate goods hampered local production, pushing up manufacturing costs and impacting export competitiveness.

The reliance on imported goods, particularly from conflict-affected regions, made Eswatini particularly vulnerable to these disruptions.

The economic impact of the war cascaded into other spheres of life in Eswatini. The rising cost of living pushed emaSwati into poverty.

“The ongoing conflicts, particularly the war in Ukraine, have dealt a significant blow to Eswatini's economy and exposed its vulnerabilities to global instability”



▲ While the Kingdom of Eswatini nestled amidst the scenic mountains of Southern Africa may seem far removed from the world's geopolitical maelstrom, the ripples of distant wars cast a long shadow over the nation in 2023.

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Making Meal Times Special



By Nokunceda Magagula  
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WOMEN farmers have applied in their numbers for the Innovative Climate Smart Tunnel Production Training Programme.

The programme which is spearheaded by the Women Farmer Foundation (WFF) closed the application process and revealed that 63 per cent of those who applied are women farmers.

According to the WFF Communications Officer Mpumalanga Zwane, the programme is offered by the Woman Farmer Foundation and is open to both males and females. It builds capacity among emaSwati to become climate adaptive and improves their income generation and agri-business management skills.

The programme is set to begin in February. Those who applied will be contacted in due course with the relevant details. Zwane explained that the foundation is in the process of sending applicants the relevant details about the programme, including how they can pay their deposits. Applicants are notified that the deadline for paying deposits is February 13, 2024. Among the applicants is the Woman Farmer of the Year Competition 2023 Top 10 Youth Winners, Fezile Tembe.

Tembe entered the competition through her vegetable enterprise and placed 7th among the Youth. The foundation said it appreciated seeing young people expressing an interest in the programme and showing the desire to grow their businesses.

Tembe said the programme brought an experience that she had been long waiting for. She mentioned that she is hoping to gain more information on how to plant and how to use tunnels to further find ways to farm better as well as meet new farmers.

The closure of the application comes after the WFF announced a 3 months training programme on protective farming in an attempt to help farmers curb the ongoing climate crisis.

"To help farmers and aspiring farmers adapt and lower the risk of climate change, Woman Farmer Foundation is offering a 3-month training programme on protective farming," the statement reads. According to the statement, the programme is designed to merge climate resilience with agribusiness skills- empowering emaSwati with the know-how. This will improve their income generation and, livelihoods while learning about innovative farming methods for the future.

# Women farmers lead application for Innovative Climate Smart Tunnel Production Training Programme

● According to the WFF Communications Officer Mpumalanga Zwane, the programme is offered by the Woman Farmer Foundation and is open to both males and females. It builds capacity among emaSwati to become climate adaptive and improves their income generation and agri-business management skills.

The training will take place at Riders Ranch, Sidvokodvo and trainees will attend classes twice a week. Interested parties need to pay E1 000 for the 3-month programme.

The birth of the programme came after the devastation caused by the storm witnessed in Ngculwini. The storm became a stark reminder that climate crisis should be of concern to everyone including those who are farmers and those with an interest in agriculture.

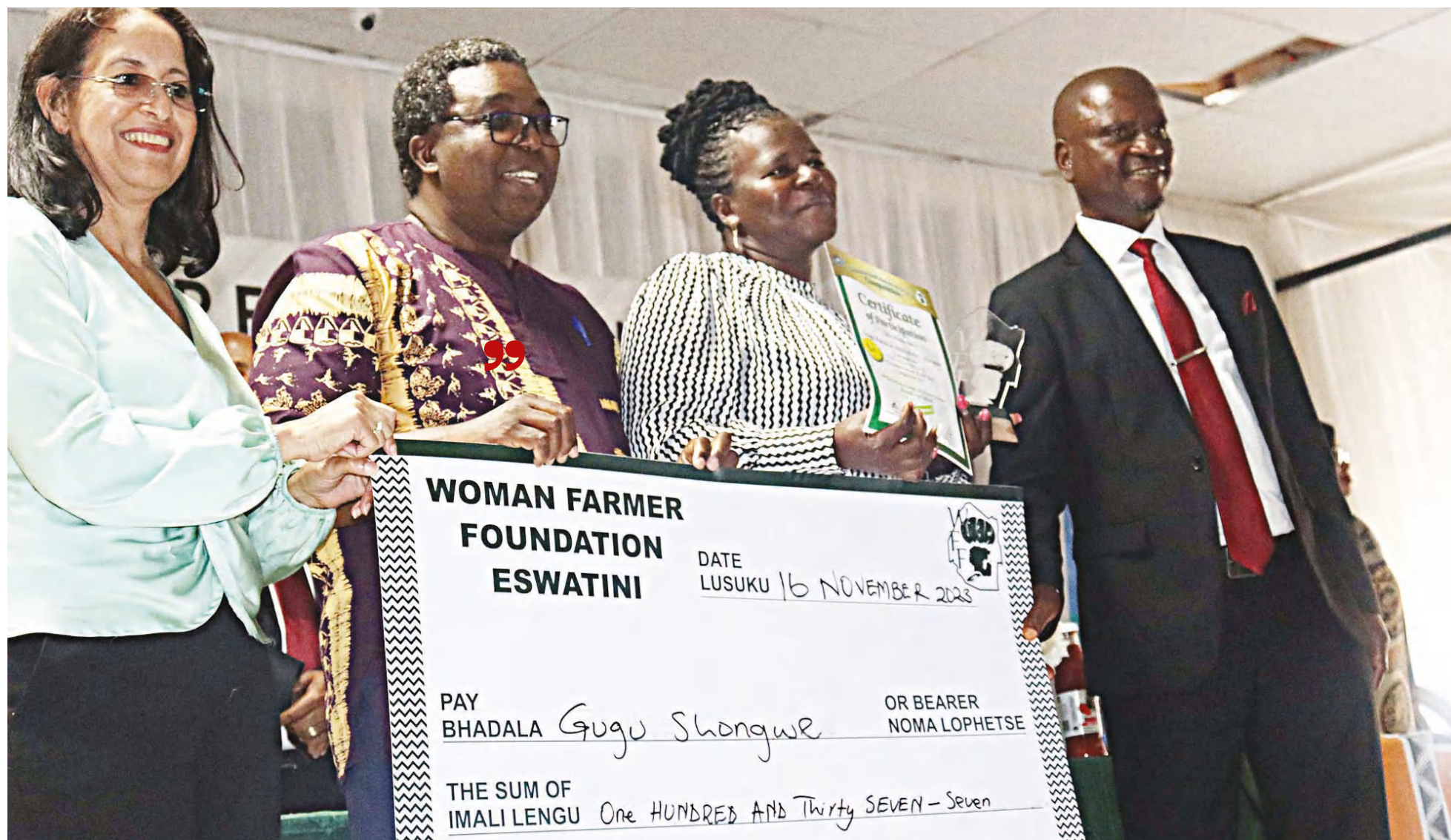
The founder and director of WFF, Sonia Paiva, said that being a landlocked country, emaSwati youth need to be climate resilient, as climate change is here to stay.

## Adapt

She said they need to adapt and be more innovative and apply the climate-smart initiatives, this is not only applicable to the agriculture sector but to all the industries. "Our youth need to be more capacitated and knowledgeable about the effects of climate action. Communicating climate change is complex and needs to be simplified for all the youth to understand its effects," she said.

Paiva mentioned that there is a great need to address the impacts and causes of climate change, and it must begin with strengthening the nation's ability to make decisions about its future. She added that this means investing in the youth who will help shape those decisions.

"When the vulnerability of small countries to climate change is reported in international media, it is often accompanied by images of houses and roads inundated with water, families standing among ruined homes, and children barefoot along swollen riverbeds. This action fails both the stories being told and the readers. People are not the only victims but the environment, business as well as the farmers," Paiva said.



▲ From left to right, Founder and Executive Director of WFF Sonia Paiva, PS of the Ministry of Agriculture Sydney Simelane, Winner of the 2023 Woman Farmer of the Year Nokuthula Mkhabela and Minister of Agriculture Mandla Tshwaka.

## Panama Canal taps coffee farmers to help heal area hit by deforestation, drought

CAPIRA - An incentive program for coffee farmers in Panama who have planted scores of trees near the country's namesake canal also seeks to benefit the key global waterway, which has recently suffered from major drought that has crimped the flow of trade.

The 15-year-old program aims to slow the accumulated environmental damage, including soil erosion and the contamination of local rivers, that have contributed to the canal's falling water levels.

At the same time, it allows farmers to expand their plantings and even access higher prices for the robusta beans they produce.

To date, the Panama Canal Authority (ACP) has spent \$32 million on the program, which is used to train coffee farmers to adopt more environmentally friendly methods as well as help them access certifications that offer a premium for their beans.

"It improves our economy. It helps the

climate. We can protect the rivers and it helps the canal better cope with droughts," said Roberto Benitez, who leads a local coffee growers group.

"It's true that by reforesting the farms with coffee we don't solve everything," he added. "But it helps."

## Initiative

Some 1 700 local farmers benefit from the initiative. During the last coffee harvest, around 10 600 60-kilogram bags of robusta beans were harvested in the Capira area, home to many of the program's farmers, located on the canal's western basin.

Experts credit the project with helping to slow the damage to the surface water sources crucial to the functioning of the canal, through which around 5% of global trades passes, at a time when the ACP has been forced to reduce crossings due to severe drought.

ACP head Ricaurte Vasquez praised the farmers, arguing that they make the

interoceanic waterway more resilient to the global climate crisis.

"While they work to optimize their activity, they're doing great work to protect the water for the population as well as guarantee the canal's operations," he said.

Reuters

“

It improves our economy. It helps the climate. We can protect the rivers and it helps the canal better cope with droughts

”



▲ Coffee fruits are seen at the hydrographic basin of the Panama Canal, as part of a project by the Authority of the Panama Canal (ACP) to avoid soil erosion, in Ciricito, Capira, Panama, January 19, 2024.

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By Karabo Ngoepe  
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MINING can be critical to a nation's economic well-being. Many countries have their economic activity carried by the sector with the impacts felt on a national or regional level.

Eswatini, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Botswana and Zambia are just examples of economies built on the backdrop of the mining industry. Mining is a crucial industry that has been around for centuries. It provides important resources that are used in various sectors, including construction, energy, and technology. Despite this, Brimco reports that mining has often been viewed negatively due to the environmental impacts it can have. However, it's important to consider the economic benefits of mining. So what are the benefits? We list about 9 positive impacts of mining on economies.

Job Creation and Employment Opportunities

One of the significant benefits of mining is the creation of employment opportunities. The mining industry requires a diverse workforce, ranging from skilled engineers and geologists to machinery operators and support staff. This sector often provides both direct and indirect employment, positively impacting local communities and regional economies. Direct employment in mining involves jobs within the mining companies themselves, such as miners, technicians, engineers, and administrative personnel. These positions offer competitive wages and benefits, attracting skilled workers and contributing to local economic stability. Mining operations often require a range of support services, such as transportation, logistics, and maintenance, which further generate employment opportunities. Maloma Colliery Mine in Eswatini is an example of the job creation possibilities. The mine employs about a thousand people. The mine's operations have created numerous indirect jobs in the surrounding communities, including suppliers, contractors, and service providers. This job creation has had a positive ripple effect, boosting the local economy and supporting businesses in the region.

Economic Growth and Development

The Mining and metals sector plays a vital role in promoting economic growth and development in both developed and developing countries. The extraction and processing of minerals contribute to the expansion of the industrial sector, diversification of the economy, and enhancement of productivity. By providing essential raw materials for manufacturing, construction, and energy production, mining acts as a catalyst for economic progress. The growth of mining activities often leads to the establishment of downstream industries, creating a ripple effect throughout the economy. For example, the demand for mining equipment and machinery stimulates the manufacturing sector, generating additional employment and revenue. The development of mining-related infrastructure, such as power plants and transportation networks, supports other sectors and facilitates economic integration. The economic transformation of Chile, driven by its mining industry, exemplifies the positive impact of mining on economic growth. With abundant copper reserves, Chile has become the world's largest copper producer. The revenue generated from copper exports has fueled the country's economic development, allowing investments in education, healthcare, and infrastructure.

Foreign Exchange Earnings and Balance of Trade

One significant benefit of mining is its contribution to a country's foreign exchange earnings and the balance of trade. Mining activities often involve the extraction and export of valuable minerals and resources,

which can generate substantial revenue from international markets. These earnings contribute to a country's foreign exchange reserves, enhancing its ability to engage in international trade and finance. Mineral exports can significantly impact a nation's balance of trade by increasing exports and reducing import dependency. The revenue generated from mining exports helps to offset trade deficits, improving the overall trade balance. This, in turn, strengthens the country's economic stability and reduces reliance on external sources of financing. South Africa, one of the world's leading mining nations, has experienced the positive effects of mining on its balance of trade. The country is rich in mineral resources, including gold, platinum, and diamonds, which have been major contributors to its foreign exchange earnings. The export of these minerals has played a crucial role in South Africa's trade balance, contributing to its economic growth and stability. For resource-rich countries, mining can be a significant source of foreign exchange earnings. For example, in 2020, Australia's mining industry accounted for over 75% of the country's total merchandise exports.

Technological Advancements and Innovation Spillover

The mining industry has been a catalyst for technological advancements and has sparked innovation that extends beyond its sector. Mining operations require advanced equipment, machinery, and processes to extract and process mineral resources efficiently. As a result, mining companies invest in research and development, leading to the development of cutting-edge technologies. Collaboration between mining companies and technology firms has been instrumental in driving innovation. For example, the integration of automation, robotics, and artificial intelligence (AI) in mining operations has enhanced productivity, safety, and cost-effectiveness. These technological advancements not only benefit the mining sector but also find applications in other industries such as manufacturing, construction, and healthcare.

Infrastructure Investment

Mining activities often require substantial infrastructure development, which in turn contributes to economic growth and development. The construction and maintenance of critical infrastructure in mining regions have a positive impact on the local economy and the overall socio-economic well-being of the community. One significant aspect of infrastructure investment in mining regions is the improvement of transportation networks. To transport extracted minerals from remote mining sites to processing facilities or export terminals, transportation infrastructure such as roads, railways, and ports needs to be developed or upgraded.

Mining Focus: Part II

# Economical impacts

These infrastructure projects create job opportunities, stimulate economic activity, and facilitate the efficient movement of goods and people. Mining companies often invest in water treatment facilities, ensuring access to clean water for local communities. Sanitation infrastructure, including waste management systems, is also enhanced, promoting public health and environmental sustainability.

Contribution to Government Revenues and Public Services

Mining plays a crucial role in contributing to government revenues and funding public services, which are essential for socioeconomic development. Through various mechanisms such as taxes, royalties, and other fiscal instruments, the mining industry generates substantial revenue streams that support public expenditure and the provision of vital services to citizens. One significant contribution of the mining sector to government revenues is through tax payments. Mining companies are subject to corporate income taxes, which generate significant income for governments. Additionally, governments often implement specific mining-related taxes or levies, such as resource rent taxes or royalties, which are calculated based on the volume or value of minerals extracted. These revenue streams contribute to public coffers and can be allocated to finance various public goods and services.

Economic Resilience and Stability

One of the notable positive effects of mining on the economy is its contribution to economic resilience and stability. The presence of a robust mining sector provides countries with a stable revenue source, counteracting economic downturns and enhancing overall economic resilience. Diversification of the economy is a key factor in economic resilience, and the mining sector plays a vital role in achieving this diversification. During periods of economic downturn or recession, mining operations often continue to generate revenue, providing stability to the economy. The steady income stream from mining activities can help offset declines in other sectors and contribute to maintaining overall economic stability. This stability is especially crucial for countries heavily dependent on commodity exports, as mining revenue acts as a buffer against external shocks, such as fluctuating commodity prices or global economic crises. An example of the positive effects of mining on economic resilience and stability can be seen in the case of Botswana. The country's mining sector, particularly the diamond industry, has played a pivotal role in its economic development and stability. Botswana is known for its rich diamond deposits, which have been a major source of revenue and foreign exchange earnings for

the country. The government of Botswana has effectively managed its diamond resources by implementing sound governance and transparent policies, ensuring a sustainable and responsible approach to mining. This has contributed to the country's economic resilience and stability.

Environmental Stewardship and Sustainability Efforts

While the economic benefits of mining are significant, it is equally important to address the environmental impacts and promote sustainability within the industry. Mining companies are increasingly recognizing the need for environmental stewardship and implementing measures to minimize their ecological footprint. Adoption of responsible mining practices and compliance with stringent environmental regulations are essential for mitigating the negative environmental effects of mining operations. This includes proper waste management, water conservation, and emissions control. Mining companies are investing in advanced technologies and best practices to reduce their environmental impact, such as using innovative extraction techniques, implementing reclamation plans, and rehabilitating disturbed land areas.

Global Trade and Investment Attraction

The positive effects of mining on the economy extend beyond domestic boundaries, playing a vital role in global trade and attracting foreign investment. Mining exports contribute significantly to a country's international trade, fostering economic growth and strengthening its position in the global market. The extraction and export of mineral resources create opportunities for international trade by supplying raw materials to other countries. This stimulates economic activity and generates foreign exchange earnings, which are crucial for balancing trade deficits and promoting economic stability. Mining exports can include various commodities such as metals, minerals, gemstones, and energy resources, catering to the diverse needs of global industries.

Mining a Force for Economic Good

While mining operations may have certain negative implications for the environment, their substantial positive impact on the economy cannot be overlooked. While it is essential to address the environmental concerns associated with mining, advancements in technology and the implementation of stringent regulations offer avenues for minimizing its adverse effects.

Catch part three of the mining series in the next edition of the Eswatini Sunday.





# Canada caps foreign student intake

TORONTO - Canada on Monday announced a two-year cap on the intake of foreign students after explosive growth in recent years aggravated the country's housing shortage. Last year Canada issued nearly 1 million study permits, about three times that of a decade ago, according to government data. The new proposal will cut the intake by nearly a third.

Here is how the new plans will work and what is at stake.

**WHAT ARE THE DETAILS?**  
Canada's immigration minister, Marc Miller, said the Liberal government will introduce a temporary, two-year cap on student visas, which will result in the issue of about 364,000 visas in 2024.  
The new proposals will also set limits on post-graduate work permits issued to foreign students, which will likely encourage them to return to their home countries. The permits were previously seen as an easy path to securing permanent residency. People pursuing master's or post-doctorate programs will be eligible for a three-year work permit.  
Spouses of international students enrolled in other levels of study, including undergraduate and college programs, will no longer be eligible, Miller said. The acceptance of new study permit applications in 2025 will be subject to reassessment at the end of the current year, he said.

**WHY IS THE GOVERNMENT CRACKING DOWN?**  
Canada has emerged as a popular destination for international students since it is relatively easy to obtain work permits after finishing courses. But the surge in international students led to an acute shortage in rental apartments, which pushed up rents. In December, rents nationwide rose 7.7% from a year earlier, according to Statscan.  
Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's popularity



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has been dented mainly due to the affordability crisis, and opposition Conservative Party leader Pierre Poilievre has taken a commanding lead over Trudeau in opinion polls ahead of an election next year.  
Apart from the rental crisis, the government has also been concerned about the quality of education provided by some of the institutions.  
**WHOM WILL THIS IMPACT?**  
International students contribute about C\$22 billion (\$16.4 billion) annually to the Ca-

nadian economy. The move will hurt many educational institutions that had expanded their campuses in the hope of a continued inflow of students.  
Ontario, the most populous province, received the biggest share of international students. Some businesses, including restaurants and retail sectors, have warned that a cap on foreign students will create a shortage of temporary workers. Restaurants across Canada are grappling with labour shortages with nearly 100,000 vacancies, and international

students made up 4.6% of 1.1 million workers in the food service industry in 2023, a lobby group told Reuters last week. Canadian banks had benefited from the influx of new students, as each student was required to have a Guaranteed Investment Certificate (GIC) of more than C\$20,000, a prerequisite for international students to cover living expenses.  
The vast majority, about 40%, of foreign students come from India, with China coming in second with about 12%, according to official data from 2022.



▲ Canada's immigration minister, Marc Miller, considers capping international students to address the overwhelmed system and housing demand.

The University of Toronto said in a statement that it looks forward to working with all levels of government to ensure that the allocation of study permits recognizes institutions like U of T and addresses the problem where the challenges lie. (Reuters)

## What happens to learners when they are left in the lurch by the organisation meant to help them?

By Edwin Naidu

In a major blow for transformation, hundreds of students who have completed learnerships for critical skills in the insurance sector have been denied their accreditation certificates from the Insurance Sector Education and Training Authority (Inseta).  
As a result, they cannot work in the insurance industry and up to two years of training may have been in vain. Scores of students are being denied the opportunity to work in the sector dealing with long-term insurance, short-term insurance, life insurance, insurance and pension funding, risk management, unit trusts, administration of health insurance, funeral insurance, reinsurance, and ancillary and intermediary services. Some have been awaiting their certificates since 2020.  
Carol Mentz, a learner, asked Inseta to conduct quality assurance and issue her with a certificate. It was a requirement for her job application at Hyundai, the South Korean car manufacturer. Unfortunately, due to not receiving the certification, she lost her job. In emails, she pleaded with the Inseta to help load the accreditation onto the system so that she could work. It never happened.  
Learner Craig McLachlan has been awaiting his certificate since 2022. He urgently needed to show proof of his qualifications to his employer. The learner's commission was stopped because of the non-certification.  
Another learner, Vuyolwethu Mlamlela, was fortunate. He was fired because he did not have his accreditation. However, following extensive interventions from his training institution, he was reinstated after receiving the certification.  
At least 192 students who have completed the skills training programme are awaiting accreditation for 2023. It has been estimated that another 555 have not been accredited since 2020 because the data may have been lost or mysteriously disappeared.

In another twist, some students may have received their certification without putting in the hours. The Inseta's inaction on certificates means that instead of helping students, it is throwing them out into the street.  
The students are in the cross-fire involving the Inseta and the respected skills development provider, the Graduate Institute of Financial Sciences (GIFS), through whom hundreds of students have undergone training.  
The penny dropped when GIFS complained to the public protector about alleged corrup-

tion, inefficiencies and operational matters of concern related to the management of students' accreditation. The Inseta maintained an uncompromising attitude, going to the extent of axing GIFS, which has been involved in the industry for almost two decades. Whistle-blowers are not protected in South Africa.  
While GIFS says it wants to prevent the Inseta from being "captured", avoiding a long-term collapse of the sector, the students are suffering.  
It also begs the question, what is the Inseta doing to honour its mandate to "grow the pool and quality of critical and scarce skills within the insurance sector" when hundreds of students are left in limbo?  
This conduct occurs against a backdrop of corporations contributing massively to the Skills Development Levy.  
Yet, annually under the Inseta's watch, learnership funding has been cut – so much for giving youth in the country a chance. It has emerged that employers who question the reduced funding and Inseta's poor service delivery are victimised or, like in the GIFS case, have their funding cut.  
On October 17 last year, GIFS asked the public protector to intervene, expressing concern that the Inseta was riddled with corruption. Despite being framed as a neutral regulatory body, GIFS uncovered evidence that the Inseta deliberately streams prospective learners to one favoured learning institution whose educational practices have been questioned.  
The head of this rival training body favoured by the Inseta labels it "a frivolous competitor making claims". The public protector takes it seriously enough to warrant a probe.  
Ironically, GIFS' whistle-blowing has resulted in the Inseta launching a public campaign to discredit it and put it out of business despite the educational institution's crucial role in training most of South Africa's insurance professionals.  
When the institute closed for the end-of-year holiday on December 14 last year, the Inseta sent GIFS a letter at 5:38 pm informing it of its immediate de-accreditation as a Skills Development Provider. They warned other service providers not to work with them – or face the music.

GIFS programmes form part

of the National Qualifications Framework and were approved by the South African Qualifications Authority. They're experts when it comes to skills development in the country. In addition, the Inseta itself had awarded GIFS full accreditation status up to June 2024 in line with its practice of awarding certification annually.  
So, GIFS turned to the courts for help. In an urgent High Court interdict application on January 4 this year, GIFS' legal counsel accused the Inseta of corporate bullying and victimisation. They argued that Inseta's withdrawal of GIFS' accreditation was based on a GIFS fraud investigation report compiled just over two years ago, now under review in the courts.  
GIFS maintains the report is fraught with trumped-up allegations, overt bias, glaring irregularities and multiple procedural flaws. It has only held off on its legal review as the Inseta renewed its accreditation after the report was finalised in 2021.  
But the court ordered the Inseta to reinstate GIFS' full certification within 24 hours; withdraw all unlawful notifications it had distributed to industry stakeholders informing them of GIFS' de-accreditation; reassure the public on its website and via email of the complete restoration of GIFS' accreditation and pay the costs of GIFS' legal counsel.  
The Inseta has ignored the court order. CEO Gugu Mkhize dismissed questions about the case and the complaint before the public protector. That is how bullies operate. They are going to appeal and waste taxpayers' money while learners are left in the lurch.  
With the minister deflecting a scandal and the lack of delivery from the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS), one can understand his attention is elsewhere. But what about the Quality Council for Trade and Occupations (Qcto) doing its job and holding the Inseta accountable for its delay in issuing certification that jeopardises the very young people who need the piece of paper they worked hard for?  
The silent Qcto is responsible for quality assurance and the oversight of the design, accreditation, implementation, assessment and certification of occupational qualifications, part-qualifications and skills programmes. Why look the other way?

The Inseta's belligerence now means that students without proof of their qualifications risk losing their livelihoods. Is that how we look after learners?  
Edwin Naidu is a communications professional and Editor of Inside Education. (The article first appeared in the African)



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# Inyatsi eyes African expansion

By Ncaba Ntshakala

... supports King’s vision for First World status advancements

INYATSI Group Holdings Executive Chairman Michelo Shakantu has declared the company’s pivotal role in the Kingdom’s ambitious vision for a “First World” country.

In a recent TikTok video, Shakantu highlighted the Kingdom’s unique characteristics that make it the ideal springboard for Inyatsi’s Pan-African aspirations.

“Eswatini is a beautiful country, it’s an exceptional country, it is one of the few countries that has given us a vision, and that vision is to create a first world”, declared Shakantu.

He emphasized the significance of this vision extending beyond Eswatini’s borders, serving as a beacon for progress across the continent.

**Innovation**

Shakantu likened Eswatini to a “pump” propelling Inyatsi’s expansion into the rest of Africa. The Kingdom’s stable political environment, supportive leadership, and strategic location create a fertile ground for innovation and growth.

“It is for that reason that we are truly committed to the Kingdom of Eswatini,” Shakantu asserted. Inyatsi’s dedication to Eswatini translates into continued investment within the Kingdom. Shakantu pledged support, while also acknowledging the unwavering



▲Inyatsi Group Holdings Chairman Michelo Shakantu.

ing support received from His Majesty, King Mswati III, the King’s vision and the Eswatini government.

This collaboration aims to not only elevate Eswatini to a First World standard but also to leverage its success as a model for development throughout Africa. The remarks underscored Inyatsi’s ambition to “export Eswatini” to the continent.

**Successes**

By replicating the Kingdom’s successes in other African nations, Inyatsi strives to create a domino effect of progress, uplifting the entire continent towards sustainable economic growth. Shakantu’s bold vision positions Inyatsi as a leader in Africa’s development narrative.

Eswatini’s role as the company’s launchpad and the commitment to “exporting” its success model presents a compelling framework for sustainable and impactful transformation across the continent.

With Inyatsi at the helm, Africa’s journey



▲Inyatsi Group Holdings Building.

towards a First World future may hold exciting possibilities in the years to come. Michelo Shakantu is the leader of Inyatsi Group Holdings which is 100 percent Eswatini owned.

It has positioned itself to be a globally competitive player whilst keeping its presence in its home country of Eswatini. The group is a diversified corporation with a presence in 11 African countries. It is one of the leading and most successful corporations in the region. Originally established in 1982 as a construc-

tion company, the Group has established a footprint in multiple sectors including construction, mining, telecommunications, financial services, health care, insurance, manufacturing, media, and property.

According to Inyatsi, the company’s success is built on a strong foundation of core values,

ethical business practices, and a commitment to sustainable business partnerships. It is led by a team of experienced executives with a proven track record of delivering results in challenging environments, and it is well-positioned to continue its growth and expansion across the African continent.

AGAINST the backdrop of a snowy Alpine landscape, the World Economic Forum (WEF) Annual Meeting concluded last week, leaving behind a whirlwind of ideas, collaborations, and renewed emphasis on global cooperation.

From CEOs to presidents, academics to activists, nearly 3,000 leaders from diverse backgrounds converged in Davos to tackle the most pressing issues facing the planet.

Even though the event has faced criticism for its elite and expensive nature, the Davos summit remains relevant, if only for the glimpse it offers into how the rich and powerful react to the most pressing issues.

## Artificial intelligence

Artificial intelligence (AI) emerged as a central theme, with experts debating its potential to revolutionize industries while navigating ethical considerations. The launch of the “AI Governance Alliance”, a multi-stakeholder initiative aimed at responsible AI development, signalled a commitment to harnessing its power for good.

hile its many transformational abilities for human welfare were discussed, so were the need for regulation, fear of job losses, the risks of impersonation and misinformation, and the inequalities it can potentially worsen. The overall mood, however, seemed to be that the positives outweigh the negatives, and human intelligence did not face a major threat from AI.

This sentiment was perhaps best encapsulated by Sam Altman, CEO of OpenAI, who until a few months ago was raising warnings of “the risk of extinction from AI”. “Humans know what other humans want. Humans are going to have better tools. We’ve had better tools before, but we’re still very focused on each other,” Altman said in Davos, according to the WEF.

## Climate change

Climate change remained a pressing concern, with discussions urging ambitious action and long-term strategies. The Forum unveiled a “Climate, Nature, and Energy Compact,” aiming to accelerate the transition to a low-carbon future through public-private partnerships.

The need for businesses to adapt to climate change and for countries to unite for action against it despite differences was the main topic. Ajay Banga, President, of the World Bank Group, said, we have an “existential climate crisis on our hands and a sense of urgency is our only saviour.”

Others spoke about the ultimate benefit businesses will reap from adopting sustainable practices and about the need to allocate resources correctly in the fight against climate change. Belgian trade unionist Luc Triangle reminded rich countries of their role.

“Developed countries have to assist in the

# Davos dialogues: Global leaders forge cooperation in face of pressing challenges



financing of climate action in the developing countries because if we don’t do that, this inequality will only grow and you will have winners and you will have losers...Rebuilding trust cannot be limited to only several countries. It has to include the whole world,” he said, as quoted by the WEF.

## Global growth

Global growth, in the shadow of economic uncertainties, was on the agenda. Leaders emphasized the need for inclusive and sustainable development models, prioritizing investments in education, healthcare, and infrastructure. The Forum launched the “Future of Growth Initiative” seeking

innovative solutions to bridge the economic divide and foster shared prosperity.

## Manufacturing

The future of manufacturing, with its potential for automation and reshaping workforces, received attention. Discussions focused on equipping individuals with the skills needed to thrive in a transforming landscape while ensuring technological advancements benefit all.

## Energy

Energy security, under the shadow of geopolitical tensions, was also addressed.

Leaders emphasized the need for diversifying energy sources and accelerating the transition to renewables, fostering collaboration across regions and industries.

## Davos discussions impact on Eswatini

Though geographically distant, the ripples of the Davos discussions reach far and wide as they impact Africa and the world at large. For Eswatini, the forum’s emphasis on cooperation holds immense potential.

Eswatini’s burgeoning tech sector can benefit from the global dialogue on responsible AI development, ensuring ethical practices and maximizing its potential for economic

growth and social good with the Royal Science Technology Park (RSTP), the Kingdom can maximise its efforts towards responsible AI development.

The nation’s ambitious renewable energy targets resonate with the Davos discussions, presenting opportunities for collaboration and attracting green investments. Inclusive growth is particularly relevant for Eswatini, where income inequality remains a priority of the government’s efforts.

The forum’s focus on empowering communities and investing in education aligns with the nation’s development goals as such tops the agenda of the government of Eswatini and is enshrined on the country’s National Development Plan

(NDP) 2023/24 – 2027/28, with an expenditure of E157 billion.

Finally, Eswatini’s strategic location, bordering South Africa and Mozambique, positions it as a potential hub for regional energy cooperation. By embracing renewable energy solutions and fostering partnerships, Eswatini can contribute to a more secure and sustainable energy future for the entire region.

The World Economic Forum, though often criticized for its exclusivity, provided a crucial platform for diverse voices to converge and forge common ground. While challenges remain daunting, the resounding emphasis on cooperation offers some hope, not just for Davos’ elite, but for nations like Eswatini striving for sustainability and growth.



# Four African cloud startups to watch in 2024

Cloud services have been revolutionizing the African technological landscape recently, opening up extraordinary opportunities for innovation as well as economic growth to African companies. Africa's interest in and adoption of cloud-based computing has skyrocketed, as many businesses are utilizing cloud services.

Moreover, PWC's EMEA Cloud Business Survey 2023 showed that companies that adopt cloud-based solutions have seen a positive impact on their businesses.

According to Deloitte's TMT Predictions 2024, demand for local cloud solutions will rise due to data growth, cybersecurity threats and geopolitics.

## Impact of AI on cloud services

The fast adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) is triggering potential cloud services growth as the industry transitions to serve the growing AI demand.

However, the interest and investment in generative AI could disrupt how the cloud industry will grow.

Cloud providers will need to carefully balance serving existing customers while creating new opportunities for the ongoing surge in AI interest.

Connecting Africa has compiled a list of four cloud-powered startups that have been making an impact in the lives of the communities they serve and are worth watching in 2024.

### 1: Cloud ZA

Founded in 2015, Cloud ZA is a cloud system integrator and services provider. According to its website, Cloud ZA's certified and skilled cloud engineers help with digital transformation, modern web application development and deployment.

The company says it simplifies powerful cloud technologies and increases productivity by finding the most optimized way to run different organizations' workloads.

Cloud ZA recently announced its efforts to assist startups in South Africa by leveraging the power of Amazon Web Services (AWS) to accelerate their cloud journeys.

Currently, an advanced tier AWS partner and working towards achieving premier tier partner status, Cloud ZA aims to bridge the gap to deliver tailored solutions to startups in Cape Town and Johannesburg.

The company aspires to be the go-to cloud professional services provider by offering migration services and managed IT support to businesses.

It also seeks to provide efficient ways for companies to run their workloads in the cloud and provide opportunities to skilled individuals.

### 2: Deimos

Cloud technology and professional services company Deimos is on a mission to be the leading cloud-native technology company in Africa.

It helps businesses migrate to and adopt cloud-native approaches to technology and get the best return on investment from the cloud. "In essence, we help businesses make smart



▲Cloud ZA is a cloud system integrator and services provider. According to its website, Cloud ZA's certified and skilled cloud engineers help with digital transformation, modern web application development and deployment.



▲Kenyan fully automated cloud infrastructure startup Angani enables businesses to leverage the flexibility of the cloud for data workloads such as enterprise applications and web applications.

cloud-based decisions by providing services like being a Premium Google Cloud Partner, where we help existing Google Cloud customers who have outgrown their current infrastructure, and scale. That allows them to unlock the full potential of the Google Cloud Platform," said Deimos CEO Andrew Mori in an interview with Connecting Africa.

"We also offer professional services where we help clients develop cloud-native systems and undergo platform modernization, where they convert legacy software as well as infrastructure to the cloud," he continued.

Deimos' goal is to help developers and companies adopt engineering best practices and make smart technology decisions in a

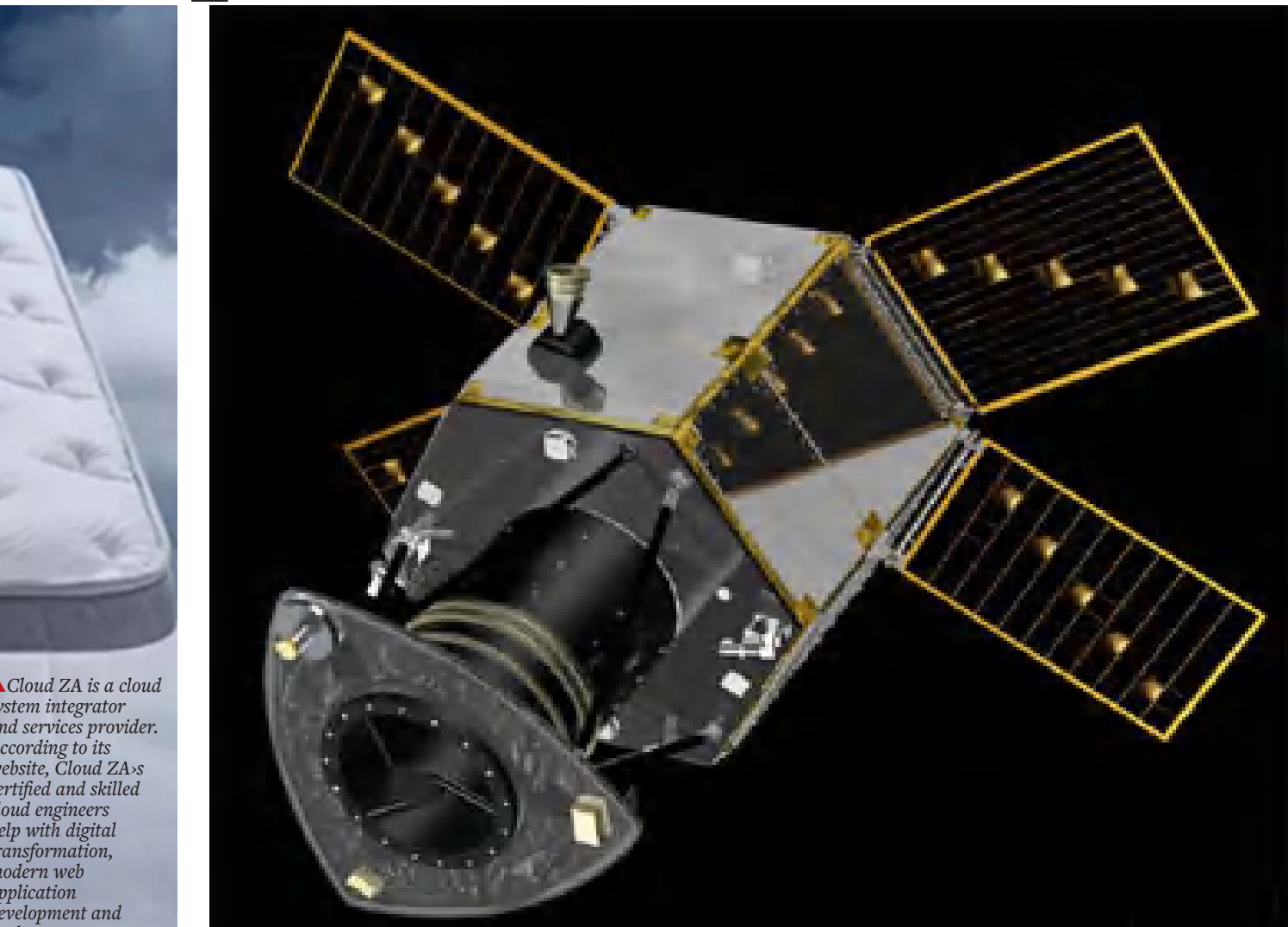
cloud-native world.

In December 2022 Deimos announced that it had achieved one of the earliest Google Cloud Security specializations in Africa. This means that the company has proven its expertise in building customer security solutions using Google Cloud technology.

### 3: Angani

Kenyan fully automated cloud infrastructure startup Angani enables businesses to leverage the flexibility of the cloud for data workloads such as enterprise applications and web applications.

The company's cloud services are certified



▲Cloud technology and professional services company Deimos is on a mission to be the leading cloud-native technology company in Africa.



▲eBiashara is a Kenyan supply chain finance platform that has expanded to offer scalable cloud solutions to its customers.

for meeting high-quality operational standards in a secure environment and allow clients to host their virtual data environments in the cloud or utilise pre-existing services.

Angani enables businesses to leverage the flexibility of the cloud for data workloads such as enterprise applications and web applications.

"We buy infrastructure in bulk and proceed to lease/rent it out to you at a reduced rate, thus taking away the expense and headache of having to buy and maintain your IT infrastructure in-house," the company said on its website.

The company operates from three secure and redundant data centres in Kenya, with

POPs in Rwanda, Uganda and Tanzania.

### 4: eBiashara

eBiashara is a Kenyan supply chain finance platform that has expanded to offer scalable cloud solutions to its customers.

"We are a tech startup specializing in addressing key supply chain challenges, including capital access, operational efficiency and payments through innovative cloud-based technology solutions," eBiashara CEO Baiju Shah told Connecting Africa in an interview.

"We are AWS partners and are leveraging our expertise in delivering resilient and scalable cloud solutions to our clients. Addition-

ally, our commitment extends to Microsoft products, further enhancing our cloud services," he explained.

Shah said that whether optimizing infrastructure, deploying cloud-based applications, or ensuring secure data management, eBiashara's approach harnesses the capabilities of both AWS and Microsoft to provide cutting-edge cloud solutions.

"In addition to our finance platform, we provide a suite of technology solutions, infrastructure, and IT resources. These offerings empower businesses across sectors to run their operations with maximum efficiency," he explained. (The article first appeared on Connecting Africa)



▲Jeff Bezos and ex-wife Mackenzie Scott.

## Mackenzie Scott trims Amazon Stake by \$10 billion

MACKENZIE Scott, the ex-wife of Amazon.com billionaire Chief Executive Jeff Bezos, sold 65.3 million shares in the e-commerce giant last year, Bloomberg News reported on Friday.

The share sale forms about 25% of the philanthropist's Amazon stake in the e-commerce giant and would be worth \$10.4 billion at Amazon's Friday closing price, the report said, citing a regulatory filing.

Reuters could not immediately confirm the filing. Scott did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

She received a 4% stake in Amazon as part of her divorce from the company's founder in 2019. The stake, worth \$36 billion at the time, made her one of the richest women in the world.

Scott, who pledged in 2019 to donate half her fortune to charity, has given millions of dollars to various causes. Her net worth on Friday stood at \$42.6 billion, according to Forbes.

(Reuters)



## Big Tech, media firms start off 2024 with fresh U.S. job cuts

BIG Tech and media companies in the U.S. have kicked off 2024 with fresh plans to cut jobs, signalling the spate of layoffs seen last year will likely continue as firms navigate persistent economic uncertainty.

Here are some of the job cuts announced by tech and media companies in January.

### Amazon

Jan. 18 - The Buy with Prime unit laying off less than 5% of its employees.

Jan. 11 - Audiobook and podcast division Audible laying off 5% of its workforce, according to a memo from the head of the division.

Jan. 10 - Amazon set to lay off several hundred employees in its streaming and studio operations, extending job cuts into 2024.

Jan. 9 - Streaming unit Twitch to cut 35% of its staff, or about 500 workers, as reported by Bloomberg News.

### Alphabet

Jan. 22 - X Lab, Alphabet's division for developing new technology, laying off dozens of workers and turning to outside investors for

funding.

Jan. 16 - Google, part of Alphabet, laying off hundreds of employees in its advertising sales team.

Jan. 11 - Google laying off hundreds of people across teams, including the hardware team responsible for Pixel, Nest and Fitbit, and the majority of those in the augmented reality team.

### Salesforce

Jan. 26 - Salesforce laying off about 700 employees, roughly 1% of its global workforce, according to the Wall Street Journal.

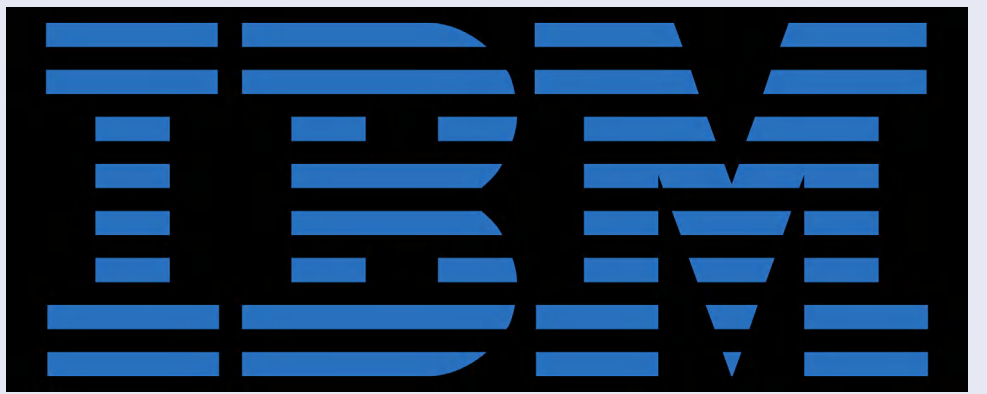
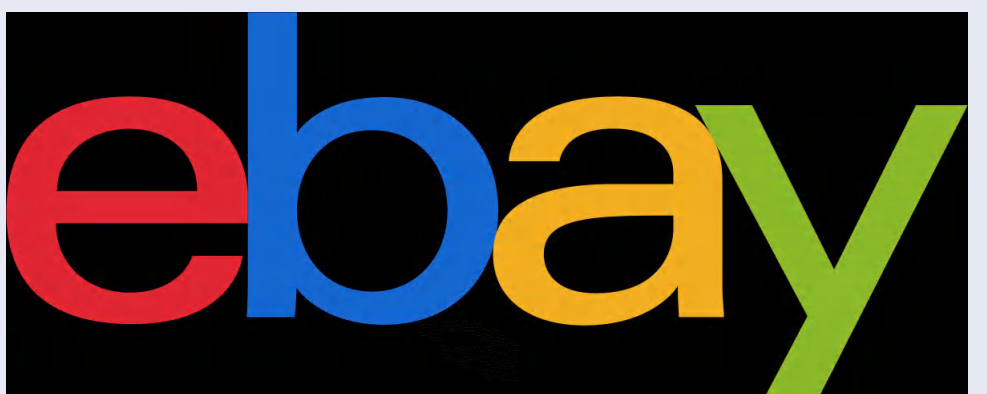
### Microsoft

Jan. 25 - Microsoft set to lay off 1,900 employees at Activision Blizzard and Xbox.

Jan. 25 - Paramount Global plans an unspecified number of layoffs, and aims to become a leaner organization.

### Business Insider

Jan. 25 - Business Insider plans to lay off around 8% of its staff, according to CEO Barbara Peng. (IBM)





# Thought Leaders

By Eswatini Sunday Reporter

FOR Gogo Sidudla Maziya of Ntandweni and her 10 grandchildren - having to survive on her meagre monthly E500 social grant for the elderly from the Deputy Prime Minister's Office - the price of basic foodstuffs such as bread is becoming unaffordable.

Gogo Maziya, 65, who lives under the Dvokodvweni Inkhundla in the Lubombo region, told the Eswatini Sunday that she and her entire family, mostly grand-children, often go to bed hungry when they run out of food.

Most recently, the Minister of Commerce, Industry and Trade, Manqoba Khumalo announced that a loaf of brown bread, weighing 700g, has increased from E11.33 to E13.68 - a 20.7 per cent hike.

For Gogo Maziya who was purchasing two loaves of bread daily, it means that for each loaf of brown bread, she now had to spend E141 more per month.

"It is not bread alone for us as we are also struggling to put a decent meal on the table daily. We once had three meals a day which were breakfast, lunch and supper but due to skyrocketing food prices, we now eat once a day," the elderly woman said.

Gogo went on to say that at times, they go to bed on empty stomachs because the social grant disbursements are sometimes delayed.

"As you see these children, their great challenge is hunger and most are treated for malnutrition in clinics and hospitals," Gogo Maziya said.

"As we are speaking now, I haven't had any meal, but only a sugar solution (water mixed with sugar) for the past three days. I am in pain because I sometimes think the children do not deserve to go through such hardship," Gogo Maziya said, adding that even bread has become unaffordable.

"We can only afford to purchase bread at least once a month but food prices have been escalating as years pass by. We used to survive by eating bread in the yesteryears because it was affordable to almost all people, even the impoverished emaSwati like me," Gogo Maziya lamented.

When asked about the whereabouts of her children, Gogo Maziya said they were currently unemployed and were seeking employment in the towns and cities.

Gogo Maziya's case is not an isolated one. Thousands of elderly people are in the same predicament. The Eswatini Sunday spoke to Health Motivator, Gcinaphi Sifundza who said the whole constituency has hundreds of elderly people who are in dire need of food supply and healthcare.

"Every day as health motivators, we wake up to calls from every community in this constituency and I must say they are all suffering from hunger or hunger-related illnesses. It is not easy for us and the Members of Parliament (MP)," said Sifundza.

Sifundza appealed to the Eswatini Government to explore permanent solutions and adhere to the order of His Majesty King Mswati III to alleviate poverty and hunger in communities, a call he made at Sibaya in October before announcing Prime Minister Russell Dlamini.

Consumers like Gogo Sidudla Maziya had a worse buying experience in the past financial year, 2022/23, according to the International Food Research Policy detailed report instituted by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) which showed that consumers have had to pay 5 to 30 per cent more whenever they go shopping for perishable and non-perishable goods in the market.

This soaring food prices amplified the struggles faced by those already living in abject poverty, the IMF study has found.

Furthermore, the IMF report reveals that the ripple effects of soaring food prices extend beyond the dinner table. In impoverished communities, the strain of escalating food costs reverberates throughout every aspect of daily life, impacting healthcare, education, and overall well-being.

Eswatini's economy, like many emerging market economies, was and is still recovering from the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic and the Russia/Ukraine war which has led to high food inflation and cost of living.

Bongani Bhanyaza Mdluli, the Chairman of the Consumers



▲ Gogo Maziya of Ntandweni under Dvokodvweni Inkhundla says she is struggling to put food on the table as food prices have skyrocketed.



▲ The Chairman of the Consumers Association Bongani Bhanyaza Mdluli has urged the government to consider subsidising essential products such as flour, to combat the ongoing surge in prices within the market.



▲ A tale of poor emaSwati in the red as staples prices soar - Make Gcinaphi Sifundza who is a Health Motivator under Dvokodvweni Constituency.

## Poor households bear the brunt of soaring food prices

Association has urged the government to consider subsidising essential products such as flour, to combat the ongoing surge in prices within the market.

Mdluli stressed the necessity of this intervention, highlighting that the soaring costs are placing immense strain on the population, with over 30 per cent of citizens currently living below the poverty line.

Mdluli emphasized the critical need for immediate action, asserting that targeted subsidies could serve to alleviate the financial burden on the most vulnerable members of society.

Amidst the mounting pressures facing consumers, all eyes now turn to the government as citizens await a substantive response to the escalating cost of living.

### Assertions

Mdluli's assertions are in line with the IMF's advice that as nations strive to address this pressing issue, it is crucial for policymakers and stakeholders to proactively seek out sustainable solutions that safeguard the most vulnerable members of society.

In times of economic turmoil, the IMF states that the plight of those grappling with poverty

● In times of economic turmoil, the IMF states that the plight of those grappling with poverty and food insecurity must remain at the forefront of collective consciousness.

and food insecurity must remain at the forefront of collective consciousness.

The IMF says while the challenges posed by surging food prices are undeniably daunting, "it is through a spirit of empathy, collaboration, and unwavering commitment that we can aspire to alleviate the burden faced by the most marginalized among us".



▲▼ Consumers like Gogo Sidudla Maziya had a worse buying experience in the past financial year, 2022/23, according to the International Food Research Policy detailed report instituted by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) which showed that consumers have had to pay 5 to 30 per cent more whenever they go shopping for perishable and non-perishable goods in the market.







▲ The International Court of Justice (ICJ), the principal judicial organ of the UN, holds public hearings on the request for the indication of provisional measures submitted by South Africa in the case South Africa v. Israel on 11 and 12 January 2024, at the Peace Palace in The Hague, the seat of the Court. Session held under the presidency of Judge Joan E. Donoghue, President of the Court. The Court's role is to settle, in accordance with international law, legal disputes submitted to it by States and to give advisory opinions on legal questions referred to it by authorized UN organs and agencies.



Abbey Makoe

# World Court deals a hammer blow to the insulated Israeli impunity

**A**S EXTREME hunger turned into famine and the death toll exceeded 26,000 in Israel's genocidal military operation across the Gaza Strip, the world sighed with measured relief in the wake of adverse findings against Israel by the International Court of Justice at The Hague.

The case had been brought against the State of Israel by the government of South Africa. It is a case with diverse and far-reaching geopolitical implications. First and foremost, it does to Israel what has never been done to the Jewish State over the past 75 years of its systematic subjugation of the Palestinian people.

The ICJ ruling strips Israel of its US-induced impunity against international humanitarian law. It opens Tel Aviv to global scrutiny like never before. Additionally, it removes whatever was left of Israel's moral standing among the community of civilised nations.

Detractors of South Africa's bold and courageous move to check-mate Israel before the apex court in the world are visibly licking their wounds.

The Ramaphosa administration has stayed true to the ethos and values of the ANC's shining light – Nelson Mandela – who vowed that South Africa cannot claim to be free until the Palestinians are free.

The majority of the nations of the world are also pleasantly behind South Africa in this matter. The overwhelming vote for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza remains evidence of the global push against Israeli brutal genocide against the people of Palestine.

Predictably, apartheid Israel remains defiant in the wake of the damning findings by the ICJ. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, facing mounting domestic pressure to relinquish his post, spewed expected baloney.

He described SA's allegations of genocide against Israel as "outrageous". In a lump-in-the-throat moment, Netanyahu said Israel was taking great care not to harm civilians in Gaza.

But, thanks, particularly to social media, visual evidence of Israeli brutality characterised by what South Africa's legal team argued at The Hague that it amounted to "collective punishment" – the world can watch timeously when US-supplied bombs rain on Palestinian civilians.

This is why, in part, this week's ruling by the ICJ is historic. Human Rights Watch in SA described the ICJ ruling as "seminal".

Going forward, the dice will be heavily loaded against Israel, The US, the UK and a few other powerful Western backers who are known to hunt in packs. Despite the hopeless pushback by Israel and its allies through quite a poor attempt at spinning the ICJ ruling claiming the court did not pronounce verbatim SA's calls for a "cease-fire", the list of findings is just as too bad for Tel Aviv and Washington, in particular.

As for the Biden administration, the findings pave the way for possible litigation against Washington as aiding and abetting Israel's genocidal military operations in Gaza.

Indeed, the US does possess veto power as a permanent member of the UN Security Council. Historically, the US had abused this veto power by shielding Israel from international scrutiny about the country's litany of excesses against the Palestinians.

As the Palestinian ambassador to the UN, Riyad Mansour said whilst reacting jubilantly to the ICJ ruling: "Pasten your seat belts – we are entering very interesting times."

In SA, there's been a chorus of celebrations across the social and political spectrum, led by President Ramaphosa, a leader who deserves great praise for his fearless stance in support and defence of the people of Palestine. President Ramaphosa stood up almost alone, despite the lurking dangers that could very easily include America's foreign policy trump card – regime change.

Said President Ramaphosa in response to the ICJ ruling: "We expect Israel as a self-proclaimed democracy to abide by the ruling of the International Court of Justice."

SA's Minister of the Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO), Dr Naledi Pandor, speaking from The Hague, said the ruling sends "a clear message to Israel" that international law is binding and therefore, must abide by the commands of the ICJ.

The ICJ has ordered Israel to, among other emergency measures, "take steps to prevent acts of genocide in Gaza". Israel must also report to the ICJ about what steps the country has taken to stop the indiscriminate



▲ Everybody is fully aware that the US has provided financial, military and diplomatic support for Tel Aviv for years, whilst pulling wool over everybody's eyes by claiming that they care for the Palestinian civilians that they bomb every day.

killing of civilians and ensure international aid reaches Gaza unhindered.

What I found particularly encouraging was the order to Israel by the ICJ that the country must ensure that none of the Israeli soldiers carries out any genocidal activity in Gaza.

Additionally, Israel has been ordered to take steps against war-mongers and other loud-mouths who utter words encouraging genocide against the Palestinians. This is a tall order for Israel. The war-mongers are to be found inside The Knesset, the war cabinet, the settlements and throughout various spheres of apartheid Israel. The long and short of the ICJ's ruling, in the opinion of Minister Pandor, is simply that there is no way they can abide by the emergency orders without an atmosphere of a ceasefire. The ICJ might therefore not have called it thus, but then again, it's all about semantics.

Defenders of Israel especially in Washington were

lying without shame as they reeled from the damning findings. John Kirby, national security spokesperson in the White House, said the Biden administration was on the same page with the ICJ. I don't know what Kirby and his ilk had been smoking.

Everybody is fully aware that the US has provided financial, military and diplomatic support for Tel Aviv for years, whilst pulling wool over everybody's eyes by claiming that they care for the Palestinian civilians that they bomb every day.

In the final analysis, it matters little what the well-sourced public relations machinery of Israel's backers spins the ICJ findings. One thing is crystal clear: Israel has been outed. The sins of Tel Aviv have been laid bare by a morally upright voice of the voiceless Palestinians that is SA. Never again will the plight of the Palestinian people remain relegated to the obscure agenda of the international system.

The issue of the two-state solution guaranteeing Palestinian statehood side-by-side with Israel will likely never be removed from the UN agenda ever again. This is in large measure thanks to SA and many others across the global south that have spoken louder and louder amidst the unfolding genocide in Gaza.

Israel indeed does have a right to security, but that security should never be at the expense of the security of the Palestinians. To this end, the entire international community that adheres to multipolar ethos must strengthen their resolve to pressure the US, UK, Canada, Germany, Italy and other Western subscribers to a "rules-based world order" to refrain from hindering the final attainment of Palestinian statehood. Failure to do so guarantees them a harsh judgment at the end of history.

Abbey Makoe is a former journalist turned columnist who focuses on geo-politics.

## President Cyril Ramaphosa commends ICJ ruling on Gaza

South African President Cyril Ramaphosa said Israel's alleged crimes against Palestinians in Gaza have been "laid bare" in the International Court of Justice's ruling on Friday.

Ramaphosa also said his country, which lodged the genocide case against Israel at the top U.N. court, is happy that "the Palestinian people's cries for justice have been heeded by an eminent organ of the United Nations."

The court ruled in a preliminary order that Israel must do all it can to prevent deaths, destruction and any acts of genocide in its offensive in Gaza, but did not order a cease-fire by Israel, which South Africa had pushed for.

Ramaphosa, in a live television address in South Africa hours after the ruling, called for a ceasefire to enable negotiations for "Israel and Palestine to live side by side".

He also explained why South Africa brought the case to the world court, comparing Israel's actions in Gaza to South Africa's own history of apartheid under the previous system of white minority rule that forced most Black South Africans to live in "homelands" and denied them the right of freedom of movement among many other oppressive policies.

Leading rights groups in Israel and abroad and Palestinians have accused Israel and its 56-year occupation of the West Bank of morphing into an apartheid system that they say gives Palestinians second-class status and is designed to maintain Jewish hegemony from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea. "Some have told us that we should mind our own business and not get involved in the affairs of other countries," Ramaphosa said. "Others have said it is not our place. And yet it is very much our place as a people who know too well the pain of dispossession, discrimination, state-sponsored violence."

The death toll from the Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip surpassed



▲ The court ruled in a preliminary order that Israel must do all it can to prevent deaths, destruction and any acts of genocide in its offensive in Gaza, but did not order a cease-fire by Israel, which South Africa had pushed for.

26,000 on Friday as the International Court of Justice ordered Israel to limit deaths and damage but stopped short of asking a cease-fire in the Palestinian territory.

The Health Ministry in Hamas-ruled Gaza said that 26,083 people

have been killed and more than 64,400 wounded since Oct. 7, the day militants from the territory launched a surprise attack in southern Israel, killing around 1,200 people and taking about 250 hostages.

(Africa News)



▲ South African President Cyril Ramaphosa said Israel's alleged crimes against Palestinians in Gaza have been "laid bare" in the International Court of Justice's ruling on Friday.



# Fractured world changing investment geography

**L**ONDON - The quasi-Cold War between Washington and Beijing, and rising protectionism, are already hurting foreign direct investment. Though some countries are gaining from China's falling FDI, overall cross-border investment is down. If Donald Trump becomes U.S. president again, it will take another blow.

FDI – long-term cross-border investment – fell to 1.7% of global output in 2022, according to the World Bank. In 2007, just before the global financial crisis, it was 5.3%. It also dropped another 18% last year, after excluding flows through major “conduit” economies which often amount to double-counting, according to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

China has seen a dramatic fall-off in capital inflows. Incoming FDI was only \$16 billion in the first nine months of last year, down from \$344 billion in 2021 as a whole, according to China's State Administration of Foreign Exchange. Disinvestment by foreign companies is nearly outweighing capital arriving in the form of new investments.

Geopolitical tension isn't the only factor depressing investment flows and changing their direction. Higher interest rates and slow economic growth, which global conflict is partly responsible for, have been a big dampener on FDI in recent years.

More expensive money has hit developing economies particularly hard. After adding a risk premium, the higher cost of capital has priced out many investment opportunities. Worryingly, the number of new renewable energy projects in developing countries fell by a quarter last year, according to UNCTAD.

Meanwhile, China's rapid switch from a fast-growing to a slower-growing economy is one reason for the sharp fall of investment into the People's Republic, says Jacob Kirkegaard, a fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics (PIIE). The fact that China's population shrank for the second year running in 2023 underlines the weak economic outlook.

But curbs on high-tech investment into China by the United States and its allies, as well as rising concerns among multinational companies about getting caught in the geopolitical cross-fire, are also behind the drop-off in capital flows.

## STICK WITH YOUR FRIENDS

Companies often prefer to invest in friendly states. But as geopolitical tension has mounted, this trend has grown. Over half of FDI went to countries that voted similarly at the United Nations General Assembly in 2021, up from around 40% in the first decade of this century, according to the International Monetary Fund.

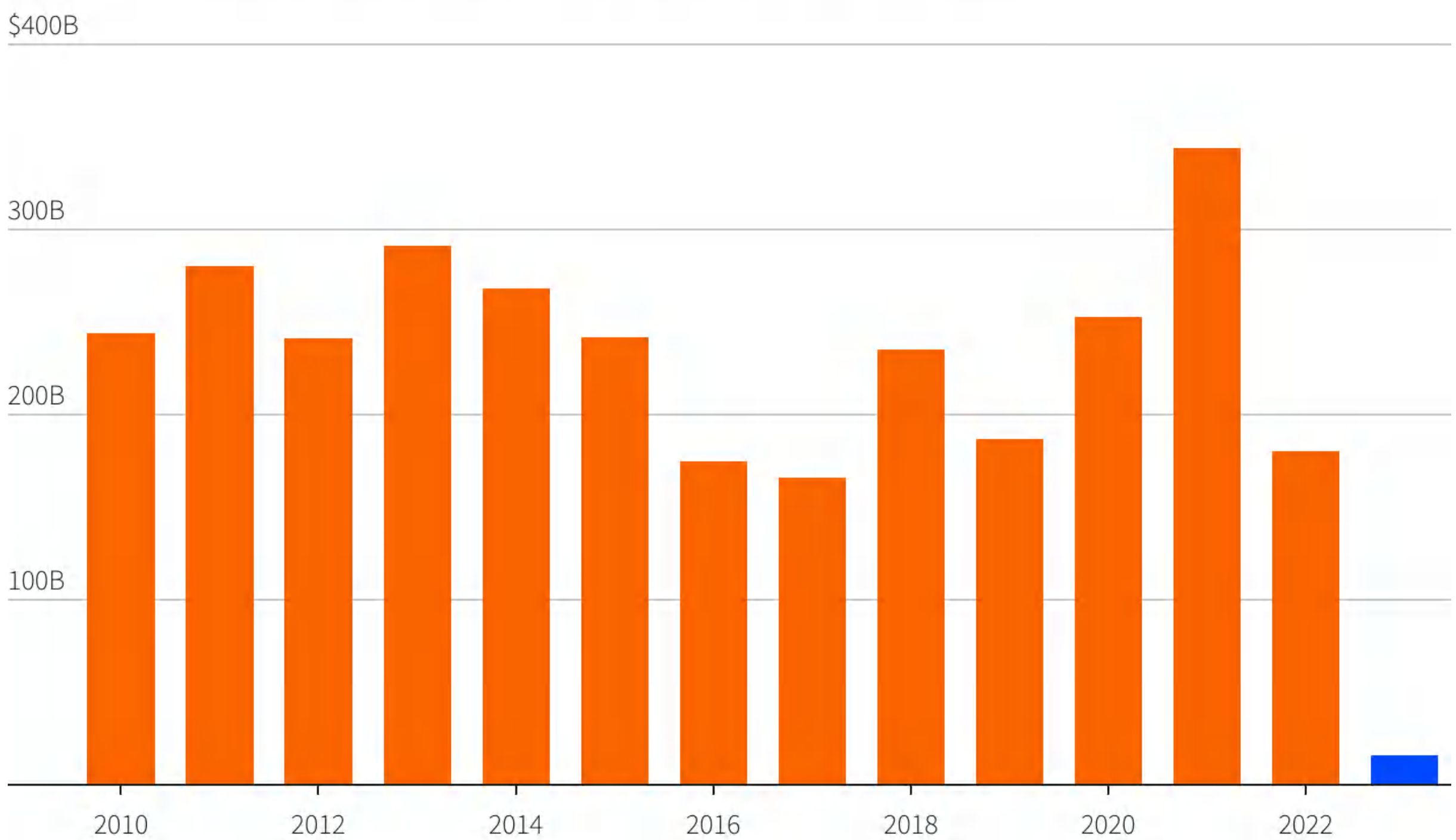
Since then, the world has become more troubled – with Russia invading Ukraine, and greater friction between the United States and China. The U.S. and its allies have responded with initiatives such as “friend-shoring” and “de-risking”, which aim to cut dependency on China for strategic goods by building supply chains in friendly countries.

They are also more wary of investment by the People's Republic in their own strategic industries – think of how the United Kingdom bought out the Chinese investor in a nuclear power plant in 2022. Chinese companies have sought to find a back door to the U.S. market by directing investment to countries which have good relations with Washington. For example, China's Ling-gong Machinery Group is establishing an industrial park in Mexico close to the U.S. border which is expected to generate \$5 billion in investment.

The Group of Seven large industrial nations have also started competing with China's \$1.3 trillion Belt and Road Initiative. They aim to channel up to \$600 billion to developing countries by 2027 to help them build infrastructure, for example by fast-tracking green transitions in places such as Vietnam.

Meanwhile, the United States is pouring \$369 billion into the decarbonisation of its own economy via the Inflation Reduction Act. This legislation is partly protectionist in that it favours production at home and penalises manufacturing in China.

## Chinese FDI inflows have fallen off a cliff



Source: State Administration of Foreign Exchange | A. F. Alias | Breakingviews | Jan. 19, 2024

## WINNERS AND LOSERS

Some of the biggest winners from these trends are emerging economies that can attract investment from both China and Western countries, says Hung Tran of the Atlantic Council. Prime examples are Vietnam and Mexico, where FDI has been more or less stable in the past decade at 4.6% and 2.9% of GDP respectively – bucking the falling global trend.

But other developing economies haven't done so well. Many African countries have governance problems and are drowning in debt – factors that put off global investors. FDI flows to Africa as a whole were only \$48 billion last year, according to UNCTAD.

This could change as Africa is the home to critical minerals needed for the green transition. As Western countries and China compete to secure supplies, African states have a chance to play them off against one another and secure investment – not just to extract resources but also to process the raw materials at home, says Tim Figures of the Boston Consulting Group.

India is so far a mixed bag. It has attracted some eye-catching investments – notably from Foxconn, the Taiwanese company that assembles most of Apple's iPhones and is diversifying production



▲ A staff member wearing a face mask walks past United States and Chinese flags set up before a meeting between Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen and Chinese Vice Premier He Lifeng at the Diaoyutai State Guesthouse in Beijing, China.

last year, according to UNCTAD.

This could change as Africa is the home to critical minerals needed for the green transition. As Western countries and China compete to secure supplies, African states have a chance to play them off against one another and secure investment – not just to extract resources but also to process the raw materials at home, says Tim Figures of the Boston Consulting Group.

India is so far a mixed bag. It has attracted some eye-catching investments – notably from Foxconn, the Taiwanese company that assembles most of Apple's iPhones and is diversifying production

away from China. But FDI was only 1.5% of GDP in 2022. What's more, it fell 47% last year, says UNCTAD.

One of India's weaknesses is its high tariffs, which mean manufacturers have to pay more for their components, deterring foreign investors from using it as an export hub. Another is its hostility to Chinese investment following military clashes between the two Asian giants along their Himalayan border – though the Indian government says it may ease investment curbs if the border stays quiet.

Investment flows will keep shifting as both governments and companies continue to respond to the changing geopolitical landscape. But if Trump wins this year's U.S. presidential election, the process of change could go into overdrive.

After all, the former property developer is promising to impose 10% tariffs on all imports to the United States.

He has pledged a particularly tough line against goods from China by revoking the country's most-favoured-nation trading status.

It's still far from clear what Trump would actually do if he became president. But if he takes a wrecking ball to global trade, there will be a similarly dramatic impact on global investment. Even some of the winners from recent trends, such as Vietnam and Mexico, could get hurt if they fall foul of his protectionism.

Whatever happens in the U.S. elections, political considerations are increasingly driving investment decisions around the world. Insofar as that distorts commercial logic, it's another reason to be pessimistic about global growth.

(Reuters Breakingviews)

▲ Former US President Donald Trump.



# One-month Gaza truce focus of intensive talks, sources say

**D**OHA/CAIRO/JERUSALEM - Israel and Hamas broadly agree in principle that an exchange of Israeli hostages for Palestinian prisoners could take place during a month-long ceasefire, but the framework plan is being held up by the two sides' differences over how to bring a permanent end to the Gaza war, three sources said.

Intense mediation efforts led by Qatar, Washington and Egypt in recent weeks have focused on a phased approach to release different categories of Israeli hostages - starting with civilians and ending with soldiers - in return for a break in hostilities, the release of Palestinian prisoners and more aid to Gaza.

The latest round of shuttle diplomacy started on Dec. 28 and has narrowed disagreements about the length of an initial ceasefire to around 30 days, after Hamas had first proposed a pause of several months, said one of the sources, an official briefed on the negotiations.

However, Hamas has since refused to move forward with the plans until the future conditions of a permanent ceasefire are agreed, according to six sources. Most of the sources consulted for this story requested anonymity to speak freely about sensitive matters.

While Israel has sought to negotiate one stage at a time, Hamas is seeking "a package deal" that agrees on a permanent ceasefire before hostages are released during the initial phase, said one of the sources, a Palestinian official close to the mediation efforts. Israel and Hamas are speaking through the mediators, not talking directly.

A White House spokesman said on Tuesday that U.S. Middle East envoy Brett McGurk was in the region - for the second time in a week - for discussions about releasing hostages and that Washington would support a longer "humanitarian pause".

The U.S. State Department and White House, Qatar's foreign ministry and Egypt's State Information Service did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Two Egyptian security sources said that there was work underway to convince Hamas to accept a one-month truce to be followed by a permanent ceasefire. However, Hamas is requesting guarantees that the second phase of the deal would be carried out, to agree to the initial truce, the sources said.

The sources did not provide details of what such guarantees might consist of. Asked about the negotiations, senior Hamas official Sami Abu Zuhri told Reuters on Monday the organization was open to discussing ideas but that no deal was yet in place.

"We are open to all initiatives and proposals, but any agreement must be based on ending the aggression and the occupation's complete pullout from the Gaza Strip," said Abu Zuhri.

One offer by Israel is to end the war if Hamas removes six senior leaders from Gaza, said a seventh source, a senior Hamas official. However, Hamas "absolutely" rejected the proposal, he said.

The source said the list included the masterminds of Hamas' Oct. 7 attacks on Israel, Yahya Sinwar and Mohamed al-Deif, who are Israel's top targets to kill or capture in the war and are thought to be hiding deep within Hamas' extensive network of tunnels beneath Gaza.

Reuters was not immediately able to confirm this proposal with Israeli sources. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office declined a request for comment about the proposal or the broader negotiations. According to recordings leaked to Israel's N12 news network, Netanyahu said such a "surrender and exile" scenario was being discussed in early January.

## NETANYAHU UNDER PRESSURE

Almost four months after the Hamas attack on southern Israel that killed around 1,200 people, Israel's offensive in Gaza has yet to eliminate Hamas' senior leadership or its capacity to fight, despite razing much of the coastal enclave and killing more than 25,000 Palestinians.

Netanyahu reiterated this week that only "total victory" over Hamas would bring an end to the war, but he is under increasing pressure to reach a deal, including from members of his war cabinet and the families of around 130 hostages who remain in captivity since the Hamas incursion.

Israel's military on Monday suffered the highest daily death toll of its Gaza offensive with 24 fatalities, including 21 in a rocket-propelled grenade (RPG) attack in central Gaza and three elsewhere.

Five of the sources said Israel had refused to discuss any end to the war that did not include Hamas being dismantled. They did not specify if exiling the leadership would meet that bar.



▲ Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu



▲ Hamas is seeking guarantees that Israel will not restart the conflict, a U.S. source briefed on the matter.

Israeli government spokesperson Eylon Levy said at a press conference on Tuesday that efforts were ongoing to secure the hostages' release. He said Israel would not agree to a ceasefire deal that leaves Hamas in power in the enclave.

Qatar and Washington were instrumental in negotiating a week-long truce in November that led to the release of more than 100 hostages and around 240 Palestinian prisoners.

Starting on Dec. 28, Qatar's negotiators sent the framework of a new agreement to Hamas and Israel, asking both sides to indicate what they were prepared to agree to, the official briefed on the negotiations said.

When the two sides responded earlier this month, Hamas sought a truce that would last several months, while Israel wanted all the hostages freed in weeks, the official said.

Over the past few weeks, U.S. and Qatari mediators have drawn the two sides closer to agreeing on the 30-day process, which would include the release of all hostages, entry of more aid to Gaza and the release of Palestinian prisoners, the official said.

Despite the difficulty of bridging the gap in positions, one of the sources, briefed on the discussions, described the talks as intensive and said a deal could be agreed upon "at any minute."

## U.S. DIPLOMATIC EFFORTS

Washington is ratcheting up diplomatic pressure to end the violence. Earlier in January, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken shuttled between Arab states and Israel on a frenetic tour aimed at finding a way forward from the bloodshed.

However, Hamas is seeking guarantees that Israel will not restart the conflict, a U.S. source briefed on the matter and the Palestinian official said.

Hamas wants the United States, Egypt and Qatar to guarantee the implementation, and is concerned that Netanyahu's government would resume fighting once Hamas frees civilian hostages, even if Israeli soldiers remain captive, the Palestinian official said.

During this round, Hamas had sought the release of all Palestinian prisoners from Israel's prisons, including those that participated in the Oct. 7 attacks, the U.S. source said. The official briefed on the talks said Hamas had since softened that demand, which would likely be vehemently opposed by Israel.

Hamas believes that before seriously talking about a long-term ceasefire, Israel wants to conclude its operations in Khan Younis, the southern city in Gaza that has seen the most intense offensive and fighting in recent weeks, the Palestinian official said.

Reuters could not immediately establish the status of discussions about whether Israel's troops and armour would remain in Gaza during any prolonged ceasefire. (Reuters)



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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 26<sup>th</sup> 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



# Lifestyle

**GIRLS JUST  
WANT TO  
HAVE FUN!**



*inside*



**Music and Mental  
Health issues**



**Influence of AI on  
the Entertainment  
Industry**

SOLAN



# The girls just want to have fun: The rise of women representation



**Eswatini Sunday Reporter**  
**B**REAKING into the cut-throat world of the music industry can be very difficult for any aspiring artist, and has proven to be even tougher for women.

In a saturated industry like ours in the Kingdom, where the bigger part of activity is between the Mbabane – Manzini corridor, I've been quite impressed with the number of artists, mainly women deejays who have emerged over the past year or so.

One may argue that it is a gender imbalance in the sense that women are subjected to harsh expectations, lack of credit for their contributions, lack of respect and the 'Sitake sibone utokwenta tona' mindset.

One has to give credit to the new generation of DJs who have set the scene alight. In 2023, we saw the rise of Thubelihle, also known as DJ Expo in the music industry.

This young deep house deejay proved to everyone that if you set your mind on something and believe, then you are surely halfway there. I call her the 'Poster Girl' because she featured in every deep house event last year and her consistency made her lead the pack.

It seems like it has become quite easy for women to find their feet in the music scene, and credit must go to the people who have given these ladies the platform to showcase their skills behind the decks.

Any artist needs to surround themselves with decent people, who have decent morals, the right intentions and people you can trust. This is more important, especially when it comes to our sisters.

To the event organisers and promoters who are creating solid and safe foundations for future generations of women music, we applaud the work that you are doing and may we see more of such this year. The achievements these ladies are making prove that women can thrive in every aspect of music.

In neighbouring South Africa, the music scene has become so welcoming to women artists, that we have seen a surge in numbers, with one of our own, Uncle Waffles, excelling, and collecting some

accolades along the way.

Several establishments have introduced the 'Thursday Ladies Night', where women artists and DJs have a chance to showcase their talent, and for me, this has become a day where women and the industry are celebrated.

Solani's recently introduced the 'City Girls R Up' concept, where local deejays Ash, Chantel, Tikalavi, Lady Zee and The Prefect, to mention a few have turned into home-grown, entertaining revellers without fail, week in and week out.

'City Girls R Up' hosted South African vocalist and Amapiano sensation Mawhoo last weekend. Without taking anything away from the guest on the night, the locals brought their A-game. It was refreshing to see a post from DJ Matamza complimenting the DJs for their performances on the night.

One has to commend Solani's for this great concept and give credit to the young, ambitious Entertainment Manager Locco for such a great initiative. This will surely give more opportunities to young, aspiring female DJs.

## Inspiring The Next Generation

The impact of women DJs extends beyond just their performances, they are inspiring the next generation of artists. For example, Uncle Waffles has been an inspiration to several young people who are into music but never really knew how to break into the scene.

She has become a role model to aspiring musicians locally and worldwide, proving that anything is possible. The likes of DJ Zoe, who is now based in Mbombela (Nelspruit), paved the way and it is now up to the current generation to take over the baton and run with it.

Women DJs and artists as a whole are making their mark in the music scene, bringing fresh perspectives, electrifying performances, breaking down barriers and in the process, reshaping the industry.

I would love to see our sisters getting more involved in the different roles in the industry. As we continue to celebrate their achievements, let us support them and ensure that 'lomsebenti lumuhle labawentako uyachubeka'.





# Music and Mental Health issues faced by artists

Eswatini Sunday Reporter

MENTAL health is a topic that is often stigmatised and swept under the rug in many industries. However, the music industry has gained a reputation for failing to confront mental health challenges faced by many artists as they grapple with fame and fortune.

**The Prevalence of Mental Health Issues in the Music Industry**

Mental health issues are not uncommon in the music industry. Studies have shown that musicians are more likely to experience depression, anxiety, and other mental health issues than the general population. Some factors that contribute to this include the pressure to constantly produce and perform, the unpredictable nature of the industry, and the lifestyle that often comes with being a musician.

Long hours, late nights, and unhealthy coping mechanisms can all take a toll on mental health. It's not just established musicians who are at risk, either. Up-and-coming artists are also at risk for mental health issues as they try to make a name for themselves in a highly competitive industry.

The pressure to succeed can be overwhelming and can lead to feelings of anxiety, depression, and self-doubt.

**The Impact of Mental Health on Musicians and Their Careers**

Mental health issues can have a significant impact on musicians and their careers. In addition to the personal toll these issues can take, they can also affect the ability of musicians to produce and perform.

Depression, for example, can make it challenging to find the motivation to write and record music or to get on stage and perform. Anxiety can make it difficult to handle the stress of touring, leading to missed shows and

cancelled performances. In addition to the impact on their careers, mental health issues can also take a toll on musicians' personal lives.

Substance abuse is not uncommon in the industry and can be a way for musicians to cope with the pressures they face. However, this can lead to addiction and further exacerbate mental health issues.

**Coping Mechanisms and Resources for Musicians Dealing with Mental Health**

Fortunately, there are resources available to help musicians who are struggling with mental health issues. Many musicians find that therapy or counselling can help manage their symptoms and give them the support they need.

Meditation and mindfulness practices can also help manage stress and anxiety. Getting access to organisations dedicated to supporting the mental health of musicians is crucial for artists.

**The Role of Music in Mental Health Treatment and Recovery**

Music can also play a role in mental health treatment and recovery. Music therapy is a form of therapy that uses music to help individuals manage their emotions, improve their mood, and reduce stress and anxiety.

This can be particularly helpful for musicians who may have a strong connection to music and find it easier to express themselves through music than traditional talk therapy.

In addition to music therapy, many musicians find that creating music can be a form of self-expression and can be therapeutic in itself. Writing and recording music can be a way for musicians to process their emotions and work through their struggles.

**Musicians Have Spoken Out About Mental Health**

Many musicians have spoken out about their struggles with mental health to reduce the stigma surrounding these issues and to

encourage others to seek help.

**The Responsibility of the Music Industry to Address Mental Health Issues**

The music industry has a responsibility to address the mental health issues faced by its artists. This includes providing resources and support to musicians who are struggling, as well as working to create a culture that is more open and supportive of those who are dealing with mental health issues.

Record labels, managers, and others in the industry can play a role in this by prioritizing the mental health of their artists and providing resources and support when needed. They can also work to create an environment where mental health issues are not stigmatized and where artists feel comfortable seeking help.

**Moving Towards a More Open and Supportive Industry Culture**

The music industry has a long way to go when it comes to addressing the mental health issues faced by its artists. In an entertainment scene like we have in the kingdom where artists do not make much in terms of revenue, many artists find it hard to make ends meet.

The entertainment industry does need more platforms that will cater for the mental health of artists. Musicians act as a gate away for the general public because of their unique talents. It is up to us to ensure that they are well taken care of.

However, by bringing attention to the prevalence of these issues, providing resources and support, and working to create a more open and supportive culture, progress can be made. Musicians who are struggling with mental health issues should know that they are not alone and that help is available.

By working together, we can create an industry that prioritizes the mental health and well-being of its artists.

*\*Additional information sourced from trppn.com*



# Influence of AI on the Entertainment Industry

Siphesihle Dlamini

WE are living in an age where anyone can be anything. What happens to a singer who can sing but cannot jot lyrics? What happens to a poet who has the right rhythm but cannot rhyme well?

With every passing day, technology continues to reshape our daily lives and the entertainment industry has since tapped into the digital revolution.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has emerged as a transformative force, revolutionising the way we consume and create content. From personalised recommendations to content creation, AI is not only reshaping the entertainment landscape but also presenting unparalleled financial opportunities.

AI can enhance the entertainment industry, it can create content for artists. Back in the day, some artists used ghostwriters as their personal content creators. Nowadays, with the ability to analyse patterns and predict audience preferences, AI is assisting filmmakers, writers, and musicians in crafting captivating stories and melodies.

AI algorithms can analyse successful movies or hit songs, identify common elements, and generate new content that resonates with audiences. Take for instance a rapper, AI can create a verse and suggest a rhythm the rapper can rap following. This innovative approach not only saves time and resources but also opens new avenues for creativity and experimentation.

AI-powered content creation has the potential to unlock new revenue streams. As AI-generated content becomes more sophisticated, it can be licensed, sold, and distributed across various platforms, expanding the market, and reaching new audiences. This opens opportunities for independent artists and creators to monetise their work on a global scale, levelling the playing field and democratising the industry.

The financial potential of AI in the entertainment industry is vast and promising. According to a report by PwC, AI technologies are estimated to contribute over E22 trillion (\$1.2 trillion) to the global economy by 2030, with the entertainment sector playing a significant role. AI's ability to optimise production processes, reduce costs, and enhance audience engagement is a game-changer for studios and production companies.

We have passed the days of aimlessly scrolling through an endless library of movies and TV shows. We are long past the age of cassettes and disc collection. AI-powered recommendation systems have become the guiding light for viewers seeking their next binge-worthy experience.

These algorithms analyse vast amounts of data, including viewing habits, preferences, and even social media interactions, to curate personalised suggestions tailored to individual tastes. By harnessing the power of AI, streaming platforms like Netflix and Amazon Prime Video have witnessed a surge in viewer engagement, leading to increased subscriptions and revenue.

**Problems**

One of the primary concerns surrounding AI in content creation is the potential loss of artistic authenticity. Art has always been a deeply personal and expressive form of communication, reflecting the unique perspectives and emotions of the artist.

By relying heavily on AI algorithms, artists risk diluting their individuality and originality, as the technology can often produce generic or formulaic results. This can lead to a homogenization of artistic expression, where works lose their distinctiveness and become indistinguishable from one another.

Furthermore, the overreliance on AI can limit an artist's growth and creative development. The process of creating art is not solely about the final product but also about the journey of exploration, experimentation, and self-discovery.

By outsourcing creative decisions to AI algorithms, artists may miss out on the invaluable experience of making mistakes, learning from them, and pushing the boundaries of their abilities. This can hinder their artistic growth and potentially stifle innovation within the field.

Another significant disadvantage of AI in content creation is the potential ethical implications. AI algorithms are trained on vast amounts of data, often collected from various sources, including the Internet.

This raises concerns regarding copyright infringement and intellectual property rights. Artists using AI tools may unintentionally incorporate copyrighted material into their work, leading to legal disputes and damage to their professional reputation.

Additionally, the lack of transparency in AI algorithms can make it challenging to discern whether the generated content is truly original or a derivative work. Moreover, the use of AI in content creation can perpetuate existing biases and inequalities.

AI algorithms learn from historical data, which can be biased and reflect societal prejudices. When artists rely on AI for creative decisions, they risk perpetuating these biases, inadvertently reinforcing stereotypes and exclusionary narratives.

This not only limits the diversity and inclusivity of artistic expression but also reinforces systemic inequalities within society. Lastly, the reliance on AI technology



for content creation can lead to a devaluation of human creativity.

Art has always been a testament to the human imagination, emotions, and intellect. By allowing AI to take over creative tasks, there is a risk of diminishing the value placed on human artistic endeavours. This could have far-reaching consequences, not only for artists but for society, as it may undermine the importance of human creativity and innovation.



By Siphesihle Dlamini  
siphesihled@rubiconmedia.group

ON a scorching Sunday morning, when you find yourself yearning for an escape, look no further than the enchanting places around you.

These hidden gems promise to brighten up your day and leave you with unforgettable memories. Whether you're looking for a romantic couples retreat or a gathering with family and friends, these places offer something truly special.

The Pink Lotus, a delightful oasis

Share whispers and laughter over frothy lattes and decadent desserts. Let the café's intimate atmosphere be your haven for heartfelt moments. This intimate café is like a secret garden, offering cosy corners, warm brews and treats that blossom on your taste buds.

The café, located at The Mall, in Mbabane, serves homemade, fresh, and delicious treats that will satisfy your taste buds. From breakfast, salads, wraps, light meals, and gourmet burgers to a variety of beverages.

The Pink Lotus has it all. For people with dietary restrictions, the eatery has an extensive vegan menu. Sometimes it can be challenging to find a place that accommodates everyone's needs but here all tastes are catered.

At The Pink Lotus, you can enjoy a variety of treats without worrying about compromising your diet. One can also enjoy nutritious breakfast options that will keep one energised throughout the day.

For bold coffee lovers, the café takes pride in its perfectionist approach when it comes to coffee. The Pink Lotus uses high-quality beans and prepares each cup with care to ensure that it's just perfect. The café also offers an extensive tea menu for tea lovers.

The Pink Lotus has a beautiful seating area that's perfect for enjoying the warm weather. The outdoor area is surrounded by plants and flowers, creating a serene ambience that is perfect for relaxation on any day. The café has a cosy atmosphere - the perfect spot to snuggle up with a book or catch up with friends on a chilly day.

Velvet Monkey: a culinary and cocktail haven

For those seeking a sophisticated dining experience, Velvet Monkey is the place to be. Velvet Monkey is a vibrant haven for discerning palates and cocktail enthusiasts. Stepping into the restaurant, one is immediately captivated by the warm ambience.

The dimly lit interior, adorned with plush velvet seating and rustic wooden accents, exudes an air of sophistication and intimacy. The soft buzz of conversations and the gentle clinking of glasses add to the charm of the space.

From the pan-seared filet mignon with a creamy mushroom sauce, it is pure culinary bliss. The succulent steak, cooked to a perfect medium-rare, has a melt-in mouth and the rich mushroom sauce complements the meat beautifully. For a taste of local flavours, one can try the lamb shank simmered in a traditional Swati stew, bursting with fragrant spices and fall-off-the-bone tenderness.

May we not forget the signature 'Velvet Kiss', a mesmerizing concoction of gin, elderflower liqueur, fresh raspberries, and a touch of lime, served in a stunning coupe glass. Each sip is a symphony of flavours, perfectly balanced and refreshingly vibrant.

The service at Velvet Monkey is equally impeccable. The staff is attentive and knowledgeable, offering recommendations with a genuine smile. They are passionate about the food and drinks, making the dining experience even more enjoyable. It is more than just a restaurant but an experience that tantalizes the taste buds ignites the senses and leaves you with memories that linger long after the final sip.



# Satiate your taste buds in Eswatini's charming eateries

Dwaleni Farm Lodge: A tranquil retreat

Dwaleni Farm Lodge offers a haven of peace and serenity for travellers seeking a relaxing escape or a convenient base for exploring the Kingdom's natural wonders. With its charming atmosphere, comfortable accommodations and warm hospitality, the lodge promises an unforgettable experience.

For all your romantic getaways, a family vacation, or a solo adventure, Dwaleni Farm Lodge offers a perfect blend of relaxation, adventure, and cultural immersion. The friendly staff, comfortable accommodations, and stunning natural surroundings ensure a memorable and rewarding experience in the heart of Eswatini.

Goggas Nest: what a charming place to be!

Located on the Tubungu Dam which is surrounded by lush green hills, Goggas Nest is an ideal intimate and serene spot to enjoy with family or friends. This leisure spot serves traditional, African and seafood cuisine that is an adventure to the palate and offers scenic views. If you need some shuteye, Goggas Nest has bed and breakfast lodging options available for you. This unique leisure haven offers something truly special just for you.





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

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

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

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

## WHY DOES ETHIOPIA WANT A PORT?

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

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

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

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

## WHY IS SOMALIA SO ANGRY?

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

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

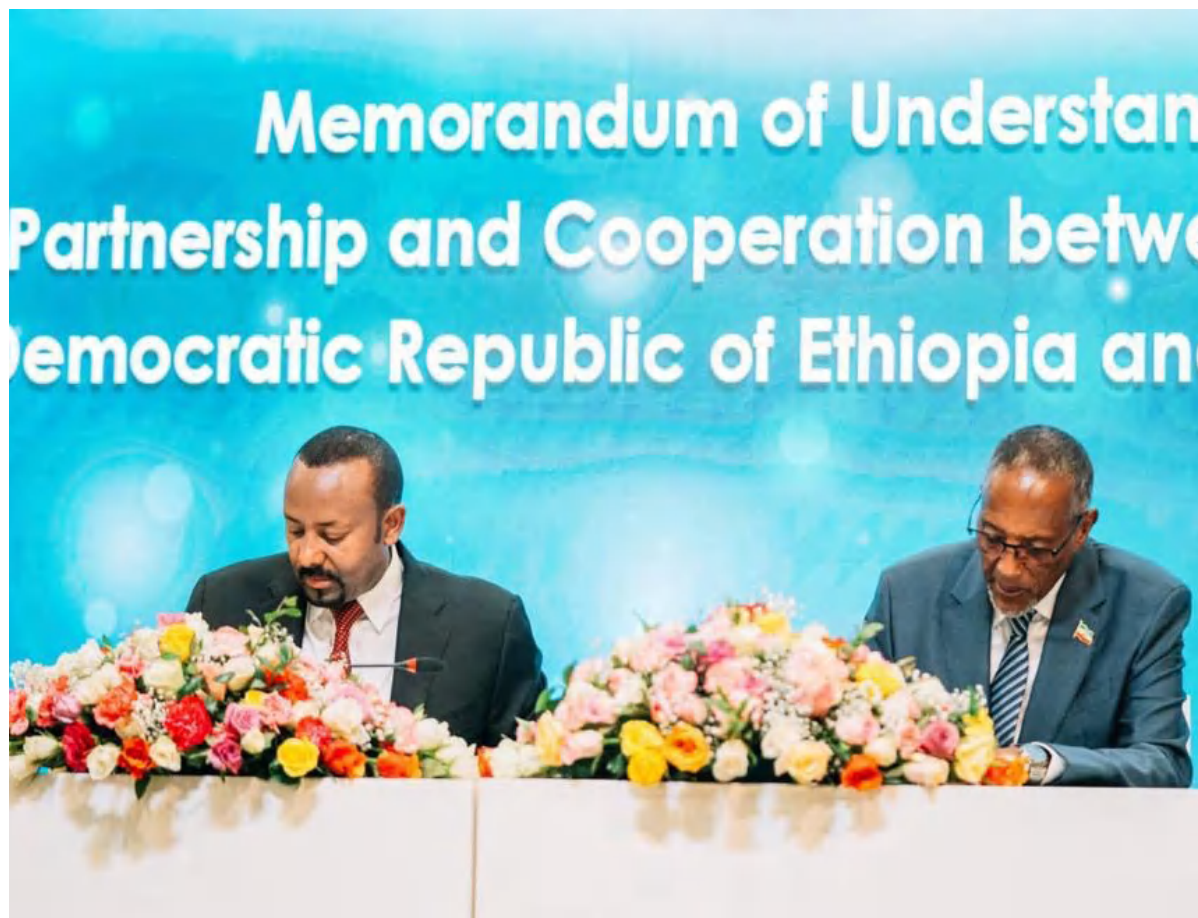
Somalia's President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud signed a law that claimed to nullify the deal, and his government rejected an African Union proposal for dialogue with Ethiopia, saying it would not negotiate over its sovereignty.

## WHAT ARE REGIONAL COUNTRIES SAYING?

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

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

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



▲ Ethiopia and Somaliland have signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) that grants Ethiopia access to the Red Sea port and a military base in exchange for recognition of Somaliland's independence.



▲ Somalia's President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud addresses the parliament regarding the Ethiopia-Somaliland port deal, in Mogadishu, Somalia.

President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi of Egypt, which has a frosty relationship with Ethiopia related to a dispute about a dam Ethiopia has built on a tributary of the Nile River, said on Sunday he would not allow anyone to threaten Somalia.

Eritrea has not commented on the deal but its President Isaias Afwerki invited Somalia's Mohamud to Asmara shortly after it was announced.

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

(Reuters)

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



▲ A staff member wearing a face mask walks past United States and Chinese flags set up before a meeting between Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen and Chinese Vice Premier He Lifeng at the Diaoyutai State Guesthouse in Beijing, China.

## How a hashtag became a rallying cry against sexual violence

Allegations of rape, pimping and sexual exploitation have kept Cameroonian netizens on tenterhooks. A hashtag on Twitter has gathered over 100,000 posts on what has become a scandal.

Was a man given a blank to abduct, threaten, rape, and sometimes confine illegally women and men without ever being questioned by the police during decades?

Anonymous testimonies of women and men have emerged on social media in Cameroon after activist @N'ZUI MANTO shared the testimony of an alleged victim who accused the heir of a rich and influential business conglomerate of violence.

After the initial claim posted on January 19, dozens of testimonies were published under the hashtag #StopBopda. Influencers were accused of acting as pimps and some members of the security forces were accused covering up depositions for years.

Social media users have called the public prosecutor to launch an investigation and a petition has garnered over 13,000 signatures. Some netizens are however sceptical about the capacity and the willingness of the central African nation's judicial system to properly handle accusations in cases of violence against women.

### Social issue

In Cameroon, 39% of women aged 15-49 have been physically abused since the age of 15, usually by someone close to them.

The law of silence has prevailed for years

Speaking in 2022 to UN Women, Cameroon's Minister for the Promotion of Women and the Family was optimistic about change.

Marie-Thérèse Abena On-doa said that "despite the law of silence, the percentage of reported cases is increasingly high with a prevalence of over 40%. One woman in three has been a victim of physical, sexual, or psychological violence in her lifetime".

Organisation Women in Entrepreneurship (WE-



TECH) created AlertGBV in 2023. The app is aimed to help gender-based violence survivors.

According to RFI, at least one complaint was launched against the alleged serial rapist.

The man has reportedly launched a case in defamation.

Following the latest scandal, calls are growing for the Cameroonian youth to mobilise on Feb. 11th, which marks the national day of the youth as well as on International Women's Day (Mar. 8).

(Africa News)



▲ A hashtag on Twitter has gathered over 100,000 posts on what has become a scandal.

## Italian PM reveals "Mattei Plan" for African development ahead of Italy-Africa Summit

Over 50 delegations, mainly from African countries, as well as EU leaders and representatives of international organizations, will arrive in the Italian capital for the occasion.

The purpose of the conference is to present Italy's strategic plan that aims to review the country's approach to the African continent.

Italian premiere, Giorgia Meloni, unveiled a "non-predatory" approach aimed at fostering cooperation. Though critics argue that the plan, dubbed "Mattei Plan", after Enrico Mattei, an Italian public administrator who, in the 1950s, advocated for Italy to support North African governments to grow their economies and develop their natural resources. Seventy years on, Meloni is showcasing the Mattei plan as the crown jewel of her foreign policy, aiming to once again renew Italy's approach to the African continent. As things stand, however, the plan is far from comprehensive.

### Energy cooperation

The plan is due to cost around 3 million euros a year and has a four-year duration. The goal is to enhance energy cooperation with African countries and help them in different areas including health, education, and other several other sectors, but its main purpose is to address the root economic causes of mass migration from Africa. Some critics have argued it lacks a clear strategy.

"We have all been waiting to find out more about the content of the plan. But as clarified by a government's decree, the strategy will be outlined starting from this conference and in the weeks to come. We'd like the action plan to mainly focus on Africa's needs and the needs of the states and the countries' civil societies. We'd also like to see the use of a "bottom up approach" meaning that nothing is being imposed from above. One positive aspect of the "Mattei pla" is its long-term vision - in other words we are not dealing with the single emergency like in the case of migrant arrivals but rather we are talking about a long term strategy," shared Giampaolo Silvestri, Secretary General of the Fondazione AVSI.

A "non-predatory" plan

Meloni, who assumed office in 2022 with an anti-migrant platform, seeks to position Italy as a crucial link between Africa and Europe.

"If we want to work on a strategy that brings African and European interests together, one example is energy, because Africa is potentially a huge energy producer and Europe has an energy supply problem," said the Italian prime minister.

### Vague

Looking at the year ahead, Italy cannot afford to be vague on its Africa policy: around 40 per cent of its gas comes from African producers, and this number is only set to rise; its involvement in the Sahel and North Africa to mitigate rising instability and foreign interference has been at times careless; and despite 80 per cent of irregular arrivals into Italy coming from northern African ports, Rome's attempts at cooperation on migration have largely failed.

As part of its G7 presidency this year, Italy aims to make African development a central theme to enhance its influence on a continent where global powers like China, Russia and India have been expanding their political sway.

Enrico Mattei viewed Africa as the emerging battleground between the East and West. To some extent, this perception still holds true: from Sudan to Mali, Russia has increased its involvement in Africa, and China's Belt and Road Initiative has enhanced its influence on the continent. Historically, Italy and the West have pursued containment strategies rather than fostering mutual interest or equitable collaboration - a legacy that many Africans view with disdain. Italy's failure to adequately address its colonial past and fulfill moral responsibilities in former colonies exacerbates this sentiment.

The widespread lack of awareness further provides an opportunity for Meloni to portray the Mattei plan as non-exploitative toward African nations, despite the absence of concrete evidence.

(Africa News)





▲ Aryna Sabalenka celebrating after she retained her Australian Open crown.

# Super Sab

ARYNA SABALENKA defended her Australian Open women's singles title with a brutal demolition of Qinwen Zheng in Melbourne despite protesters interrupting play. The Belarussian – whose nationality is not permitted to be displayed on the trophy – cruised to a 6-3 6-2 victory in 76 minutes on the Rod Laver Arena.

That was despite the one-sided clash being interrupted by pro-Palestine protestors. Zheng, 21, was trailing her rival by a set as she prepared to serve in the third game of the second set when there was shouting from a number of people in the crowd. The individuals waved Palestinian flags before security quickly hauled them out.

Aside from that brief disruption, it was an awesome display of brutal force and power by Sabalenka as she became the first person since fellow countrywoman Victoria Azarenka in 2013 to retain the Daphne Akhurst Memorial Cup. Yet like 12 months ago, the abbreviation BLR for Belarus cannot be shown anywhere as



▲ The clash was interrupted by pro-Palestine protestors.

she is operating under a neutral flag due to her country's military assistance for Russia in the ongoing illegal invasion of Ukraine. Sabalenka – who annoyingly and distractingly screeches during every single point – came into this final without dropping a set from six matches. Physically, she was the fresher of the two women, having spent four-and-a-half hours less time on court over the past fortnight. Zheng's passage may have taken longer but the draw had really opened up – the highest-ranked tennis player she had faced until now had been Britain's Katie Boulter, at 54 in the world, in the second round. As befits the world No.2, Sabalenka, 25, was aggressive from the outset, bulldozing her way through the opening game without dropping a point and blasting down a 111mph ace.

The standard was set from those early moments and despite squandering a few set points in the first set, she moved 1-0 ahead on 33 minutes. Powerful, strong and authoritative, Sabalenka broke the Zheng serve in the opening game of the second set and never looked back, annihilating any wayward second serves that came in her direction. What helped her cause was Zheng's lack of consistency – six double faults in a final, even if it is your first one, is unacceptable. There was a time, only a few years ago, when Sabalenka would struggle with her service motion and would choke in the big moments. Those days are long gone and the tiger tattoo on her left forearm typifies the fighting qualities she possesses and demonstrates, particularly when she had to remain patient

after wasting four Championship points. Stretching back to the start of 2023, Sabalenka has won 14 matches in a row on Melbourne Park, winning 28 out of 29 successive sets. With two titles on her CV, she will no doubt head to Wimbledon later this summer with strong belief that she can make in-roads on Centre Court grass. Zheng had been trying to become just the second Chinese person to lift a Grand Slam singles title in the sport's history. The first, Li Na, was in the stands but her presence did not have an inspirational impact and she will remain her country's flagbearer for now. The last time someone lost fewer than five games in a women's final was Maria Sharapova when she was crushed 6-3 6-0 by Azarenka 12 years ago. (The Sun)

Bouchra Karboubi “It was an honour to represent women referees in Africa”

A photograph of Bouchra Karboubi, a female referee, officiating a football match. She is wearing a black referee's uniform and is surrounded by players from Guinea-Bissau (in white) and Nigeria (in red).

▲ After brilliantly taking charge of the TotalEnergies CAF Africa Cup of Nations Cote d'Ivoire 2023 final Group A match between Guinea-Bissau and Nigeria, Bouchra Karboubi made history by joining Rwanda's Salima Mukansanga who was the woman to officiate a TotalEnergies CAF AFCON match in Cameroon three years ago.

## Hendrikse miss hands Bulls dramatic win

EMIRATES Lions flyhalf Jordan Hendrikse missed a 55-metre penalty at the death as the Vodacom Bulls pulled off a dramatic 30-28 victory over their neighbours in their Vodacom United Rugby Championship Jukskei derby at Loftus Versfeld on Saturday. The dramatic end to a pulsating game saw the Bulls move into fourth place on the URC log and put themselves into the top tier as teams take a two-week break at the start of the Six Nations.

Hendrikse's miss came a minute after Johan Goosen stroked a 50-metre penalty between the uprights to give the Bulls a narrow lead with 90 seconds to go, and after Hendrikse had put the Lions into the lead with a similar big kick some four minutes earlier.

In a way, it was harsh for there to be a loser, and on the evidence of the exciting game, few would have begrudged the Lions a win if they got it, especially as they were so close after JC Pretorius made a miraculous steal to set up the final kick. The Lions losing bonus point moved them above Munster into 10th position, but they could have been fourth if the kick went over, so congested is the log at the moment.

It was a worthwhile dramatic ending to a game where neither side gave an inch and the battle was reminiscent of the arm wrestle derbies between these sides over the years.

And the game itself was high quality. The amount of personal battles ensured that there wasn't one side that got away from the other, or any true dominance as the game went on.

The Lions got away to a flying start, going 12-3 up early before the Bulls hauled them in just before the break and the opposite happened in the second half, with the Bulls pulling out to a lead before the Lions hauled them in.

As always, the names of Marius Louw and Sanele Nohamba were central to the Lions play, but the likes of Francke Horne, Emmanuel Tshituka and Reinhard Nothnagel were always putting in the hits.

Speaking of hits, Asenathi Ntlabakanye's giant tackle on Sergeal Petersen is likely to grace highlights reels for months to come and the big tighthead took his opposite number Simphiwe Matanzima to school in the scrum in a lesson that will long not be forgotten.

Nohamba, though, was something else, and he almost repeated his man-of-the-match performance from last season, sparking the first try by cutting up Harold Vorster to put Louw away for the first try. His audacious drop goal in the second half and the ability to be everywhere all at once make him a prime candidate for national honours later this year.

The Bulls though, didn't stand back either – Akker van der Merwe in particular had another barnstorming game while Ruan Nortje was everywhere as well. Celimpilo Gumede keeps on growing in the new role at eight while El-

Leeds star Jaidon Anthony pays perfect tribute to mum after scoring

A photograph of Jaidon Anthony, a Leeds United player, celebrating with his teammates after scoring a goal. They are all wearing white Leeds United kits. One player is holding up a white t-shirt that says 'REST IN PERFECT PEACE MUM'.

▲ Jaidon Anthony has paid tribute to his late mother Donna with a t-shirt.

JAIDON ANTHONY has paid tribute to his late mum after netting a goal in the FA Cup. The Bournemouth loanee lost his mother Donna last week and has returned to the starting line-up at Leeds for the first time since her passing.

Anthony put Leeds 1-0 against Plymouth in their FA Cup fourth round tie with a goal in the 31st minute.

And after getting the better of Plymouth keeper Conor Hazard, Anthony removed his jersey to reveal a t-shirt that paid tribute to his mother.

The shirt read: “Rest in perfect peace mum.” The touching moment saw fans and teammates of Anthony brought together to support the winger.

Although referee Lewis Smith ensured that the rules were followed strictly despite the circumstances and dished out a yellow card to Anthony.

Fans were furious at the decision and took to social media to voice their opinions.

One wrote: “Beautiful moment, well played Jaidon Anthony. Shocking to see that he got booked for taking his shirt off in his situation.”

While another added: “Jaidon Anthony absolutely on fire with that goal. Referee should forgo the rules too and not book him for that.” A third wrote: “Jaidon Anthony has me literally crying, that was so perfect (and worth a dumb yellow card)”

Anthony's Bournemouth teammate Dominic Solanke also paid tribute to the 24-year-old's mum with a t-shirt when he scored for the Cherries against Swansea on Thursday night.

The Premier League star was also shown a yellow card for his tribute.

(The Sun)





▲Mbabane Swallows and Green Mamba players battle for the ball during the goalless draw played at Mavuso Sports Centre in the MTN Premier League.



▲Mbabane Swallows Leon Manyisa passes the ball away from Green Mamba's Innocent Dlamini.



▲Manzini Wanderers Banele Mdluli and Moneni Pirates Xolani Ngwenya attempt to win the ball in the air.



▲Mbabane Swallows Siyabonga Zwane and Green Mamba Banele Dlamini in fight for the ball during the MTN Premier League game.



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



▲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.



▲Mbabane Swallows goalkeeper Sandanezwe Mathabela was the man of the match in the goalless draw against Green Mamba on Saturday at Mavuso Sports Centre during the MTN Premier League game.



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



▲Some Mbabane Swallows fans watch the game against Green Mamba.



▲Some of the fans who watched the MTN Premier League game between Manzini Wanderers and Moneni Pirates.



NSINGIZINI HOTSPURS | NSINGIZINI HOTSPURS | NSINGIZINI HOTSPURS | NSINGIZINI HOTSPURS

By Karabo Ngoepe  
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THERE is a new trend in the world of business, collaborative competition. Gone are the days when the world believed in a winner-takes-all mentality while annihilating the competition in the process.

Instead, the business world is moving in the direction of collaborating to ensure an industry thrives and all participants can reap the fruits of that.

But what exactly does collaborative competition mean and what does it entail?

Collaborative competition, in essence, is a strategy where businesses cooperate with their rivals to achieve mutual benefits, rather than striving to eliminate each other. It's a refreshing departure from the cutthroat mentality of traditional competition, and it has proven to be highly effective for those who embrace it.

In the past, businesses typically viewed their competitors as adversaries in a zero-sum game. The goal was to gain a larger slice of the market by outperforming, outmanoeuvring, or even eliminating the competition.

In contrast, collaborative competition acknowledges that businesses can often achieve more by working together, even if they are technically competitors. This approach encourages companies to find common ground and identify areas where collaboration can benefit both parties, such as joint research and development, shared distribution networks, or co-branded marketing campaigns.

The trendsetters of Eswatini football, Nsingizini Hotspurs have grasped this concept and are running with it. It is new in the world of football where you had Ajax in the Netherlands and Ajax Cape Town in South Africa. You also have Brighton Hove Albion in England and Royale Union Saint-Gilloise in Belgium.

The examples at the top have similarities, either shared names or ownership. However, 'Nsingizini Yezulu' is approaching the system completely differently.

With ambitions of competing in Africa and not just to add numbers, the Hluti-based side has joined forces with South Africa's Premier League side, Amazulu Football Club.

Nsingizini Hotspurs Chief Executive Officer, Banele Ngobe said the partnership with 'Usuthu' is aimed at helping them to develop their young talent through a proper development structure which would then take them to the next level.

"This is key for us because we understand we need to build very strong partnerships with clubs that are already doing it. This is why we already have a partnership with an established brand, Amazulu FC, which has a similar vision when it comes to development," he said.

"They are helping us set up by sharing, programmes, knowledge, and ideas which is a critical element for Nsingizini. We want to ensure that our development is proper and up to standard," he said.

Unearthing future stars and raw talent is at the centre of the club's vision for the future. Ngobe added that they are working on an extensive programme with schools to spot talent early and then work towards nurturing it.

He said this too, requires collaboration between the club and the school teachers.

"You need to identify sports teachers and socialize, orient, and capacitate them so that they can spot and develop the talent. You also need partners outside the country who are also doing it with the right exposure and mechanism to attach this talent to the right camp. For instance, our head of development has been attached to Amazulu FC for a whole week to be part of their youth camp, not just in the boardroom."

"We are not taking people to be in class, but we need them to be on the field, to get the practical sense and upgrade coaching courses. That is the direction we are taking. The basic part of it is to get the partnership because it is expensive to set up an academy, so you want people who are already in school, by doing so the whole system will work," he said.

Ngobe said the foundation they are currently laying and the hard work in the background should start to yield results in the next three years.

"We should be able to compete consistently at the highest level, in terms of winning leagues locally and in Africa. Also, producing talent for the club because that will help us maintain the identity, culture, and playing style of the country," he said.

The charismatic CEO added that the raw talent being scouted will not be limited to the Kingdom of Eswatini. He said their scouting network will spread globally.



## Nsingizini Hotspurs Part II:

# Partnering with other teams to become formidable

... With ambitions of competing in Africa and not just to add numbers, the Hluti-based side has joined forces with South Africa's Premier League side, Amazulu Football Club.



► Nsingizini Hotspurs Chief Executive Officer, Banele Ngobe.

"Of course, we will continue to scout and have networks here and there because when you bring any foreign player into the local leagues, you bring the highest level not just average. We must have a very strong scouting network. The commitment from our leadership in terms of that is on another level in terms of using the different networks to have a presence in the different countries to search for that talent," he said.

"The brand itself, at some point in time, in the next three years, must attract quality youngsters from anywhere in Africa or the world should aspire to play for Nsingizini. We have seen big clubs achieve that. That is why it is important to build the club from all angles".

To attain its goal, the team is willing to invest heavily. Ngobe said they are building a football village in their community which will in turn have an economic spill-off for the locals. He said they are building training grounds and phase one is complete.

"The team is already training, and we are looking at improving it and hosting games there. We are also looking at having proper offices next to the sports ground which will include high-performance training centres and all the resources required in modern football. We will have the whole setup under one roof," Ngobe said.

With excitement on his face, Ngobe added that the investments will allow them "to attract the calibre of people and young global talent into the team and in turn, we will be able to sell



players in the global markets, not just in Africa alone."

"We would like to see our products compete in the big leagues internationally," he said. Look out for next week's edition of the Eswatini Sunday for part 3 of the Nsingizini Hotspurs series of articles.







By Sibusiso Masitela  
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WITH the country expected to take part in the 2023 African Games in March in Ghana, we give you the current team Eswatini updates for the upcoming continental games under the watchful eye of the Eswatini Olympic and Commonwealth Games Association (EOCGA).

The country's chief de mission Zakhele Zulu is currently in Accra, Ghana to attend the chief mission seminar which is a planning session for logistics of the continental spectacle.

The local Olympic movement has already shortlisted seven possible disciplines the country will partake in during the games such as Boxing, Volleyball, Athletics, Taekwondo, Swimming, Karate and Chess.

The organisation has already tabled E1.2 million for the games. EOCGA Chief Executive Officer Maxwell Jele stated that preparations for the games were proceeding smoothly.

"We are still in the [planning stage with the relevant bodies and we hope to have the final updates in February," he said.

Here are some of the current updates from the various disciplines.

Athletics

The country's elite sprinter Sibusiso 'Swazi Bolt' Matsenjwa is currently training at the Tshwane High Performance Centre together with his female compatriot Bongive Mahlalela. The two athletes have also qualified for the continental games.

Swimming

Top two swimmers Harley Hoy and Simanga Dlamini are currently both training at the Tshwane High Performance Centre. The Eswatini Swimming Association is also conducting a domestic gala competition in a bid to assemble the African games-bound team.

Taekwondo

Mozambique-based star Saneliso Masuku could miss out in the African Games Taekwondo team. This follows his loss to Wandile Maziya during the recent Eswatini Taekwondo Federation Olympic Games qualifiers. Some of the possible participants for the Games include Maziya, Mfanewakhaya Dube and Carlotta Munave.

Volleyball

The Eswatini National Volleyball Association (ENVA) has sent a four-member team to the African Games beach volleyball qualifiers



▲ EOCGA CEO Maxwell Jele.



# Focus on Eswatini's African Games preparations

... On your mark, set, go

in Botswana.

The squad comprises Correctional star Nduku Masangane. Masangane recently won the best attacker award during the 2023 Zone VI club championships with his club (Correctional) in Lesotho.

Other members of the squad include Mlamuli Simelane (Royal Eswatini Volleyball Club) and the Correctional female pair of Nokulunga Kunene and Nonhlanhla Khoza.

They are under the tutelage of Royal Eswatini Sugar coach Vusi Dlamini.

The male pair have been drawn against South African opponents while the Ladies duo will take on Botswana.

The team has received financial support worth E40 000 from the Eswatini Sport and Recreation Council and the Eswatini Olympic and Commonwealth Games Association (EOCGA).

Boxing

The Eswatini Boxing Association (EBA) has named a seven-member tentative national team for the African Games.

The boxers excelled during the recent qualifying tournament held at the Olymp Africa Centre ahead of the continental games in March. The squad includes two top boxers Thabiso Dlamini, and Zweli Dlamini and the veteran Sifiso 'Ommo' Ngwenya.

EBA Secretary Nkosinathi Dlamini confirmed the list. "We would like to congratulate the seven boxers for making it to the tentative national team. We will prepare a special training program for the team while we are working on the budget for the trip with the Eswatini Olympic and Commonwealth Games Association (EOCGA). We are confident that the team will perform well during the continental qualifiers".

EBA has previously sent boxers to various international tournaments such as the 2023 World Championships and the African Games which were staged in Uzbekistan and Senegal respectively.

- THE FULL BOXING TENTATIVE SQUAD:
- ▶ Mphile Dlamini - Under 54kg
  - ▶ Khaya Shongwe - Under 57kg
  - ▶ Zweli Dlamini - Under 60kg
  - ▶ Sibongiseni Shongwe - Under 60kg
  - ▶ Khaya Mkhabela - Under 63.5kg
  - ▶ Thabiso Dlamini - Under 67kg
  - ▶ Sifiso Ngwenya - Under 71kg



▲ Taekwondo.



▲ Swimming.



▲ Athletics.



▲ Boxing.



▲ Volleyball.



▲ Lando Norris signed a contract extension with F1's McLaren.

## Lando Norris signs contract extension with F1's McLaren

MCLAREN Racing signed Formula One driver Lando Norris to a multiyear contract, the team announced Friday.

His previous four-year deal was set to expire at the end of 2025, but McLaren wanted to ensure he stayed part of the team for the long term.

McLaren did not announce the specific length or financial terms for Norris, who has been with the team for six years.

"McLaren's felt like home since day one," Norris, 24, said in a video posted to the team's social media. "I'm just happy to be staying with the people that I've grown up with, who have helped me develop as a driver, who made me into the person I am today. The team's as strong as it's ever been."

"They are who I believe I can win my championships with. I've prepared more than I have ever before and I'm in a good position. I feel confident, I think, as a team with the people I have around me with everyone here at McLaren. We've got what it takes. Everything's in place."

Relationship

The British driver had his best season in 2023, finishing sixth in the FIA Formula 1 Drivers' Championship with 205 points. He had six second-place finishes, including at the British Grand Prix.

"I'm delighted that we're continuing our relationship with Lando for multiple years to come. It's been a fantastic journey over the last six years, and he has shown fantastic commitment and desire to push the team forward and get McLaren back to the front of the grid," said Zak Brown, CEO of McLaren Racing.

"Last season we saw the fundamental role Lando played with the impressive turnaround in results, and I'm looking forward to continuing this push forward together with lots more podiums."

McLaren signed its other F1 driver, Oscar Piastri, to a contract extension in September. The F1 season is scheduled to begin March 2 with the Bahrain Grand Prix. (Field Level Media)



▲ Zimbabwe Cricket national team Wesley Madhevere.

## Zimbabwe ban duo third player charged, over drug use

ZIMBABWE Cricket (ZC) has banned national team players Wesley Madhevere and Brandon Mavuta from playing for four months after they were found guilty of recreational drug use, with a third player now facing a similar charge.

The ban is effectively a slap on the wrist for all-rounders Madhevere and Mavuta, as the Zimbabwe national team has no fixtures scheduled for the period of their suspension. They have also been fined the equivalent of half of their ZC salaries for three months.

"As they undergo rehabilitation overseen by ZC medical personnel, they have also been ordered to train under ZC's High-Performance programme," a ZC statement said on Thursday.

"The (Disciplinary) Committee also considered some mitigating factors, with both players showing remorse and having already started working on withdrawing from the habit and getting their systems clean."

The two players were found guilty of breaching the ZC Employment Code of Conduct following an in-house doping test in December. Batter Kevin Kasuza, who has been suspended pending a hearing after he too tested positive for a banned recreational drug last week, could face a similar ruling. (Reuters)





## RIP: Leeds star pays tribute to late mum

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# Eswatini Sunday Sport

28 January, 2024

## Get set: Eswatini's African Games preparation

Page 23



## Nigeria defeat Cameroon to advance in AFCON

NIGERIA have secured a berth in the quarterfinals of the 2023 Africa Cup of Nations after they defeated Cameroon 2-0 at the Felix Houphouët Boigny Stadium in Abidjan on Saturday night.

This round of 16 clash was decided by a brace of goals from Ademola Lookman, who struck on 36 and 90 minutes to see the Super Eagles triumph over the Indomitable Lions and continue their quest to win a fourth continental crown.

Nigeria created all the early pressure and had the ball in the back of the net via Semi Ajayi in the ninth minute, but the goal was scrapped – after a VAR review – due to an offside in the build up.

Cameroon stabilised their defence and were able to find more of a rhythm, though the Super Eagles remained the more potent attacking force.

And the team in dark green were rewarded with a goal in the 36th minute, as Victor Osimhen stole the ball off defender Oumar Gonzalez and teed up Ademola Lookman, whose low shot was half saved by Fabrice Ondoa, but the ball trickled over the goal line for 1-0.

The Indomitable Lions looked for a quick reply, but were unable to muster any clear chances, as the teams went to the interval with Nigeria a goal to the good.

And the Super Eagles almost doubled their advantage 10 minutes after the restart when Lookman whipped a shot just over the crossbar direct from a free kick.

### Pressure

Cameroon looked to up their attacking pressure and called on veteran striker Vincent Aboubakar, who suffered an injury in the build-up to the Afcon and made his 2023 tournament debut by replacing Gonzalez in the 78th minute.

Nigeria also needed to replace goalkeeper Stanley Nwabali – who suffered a heavy collision with Georges-Kevin N'Koudou – with Francis Uzoho.

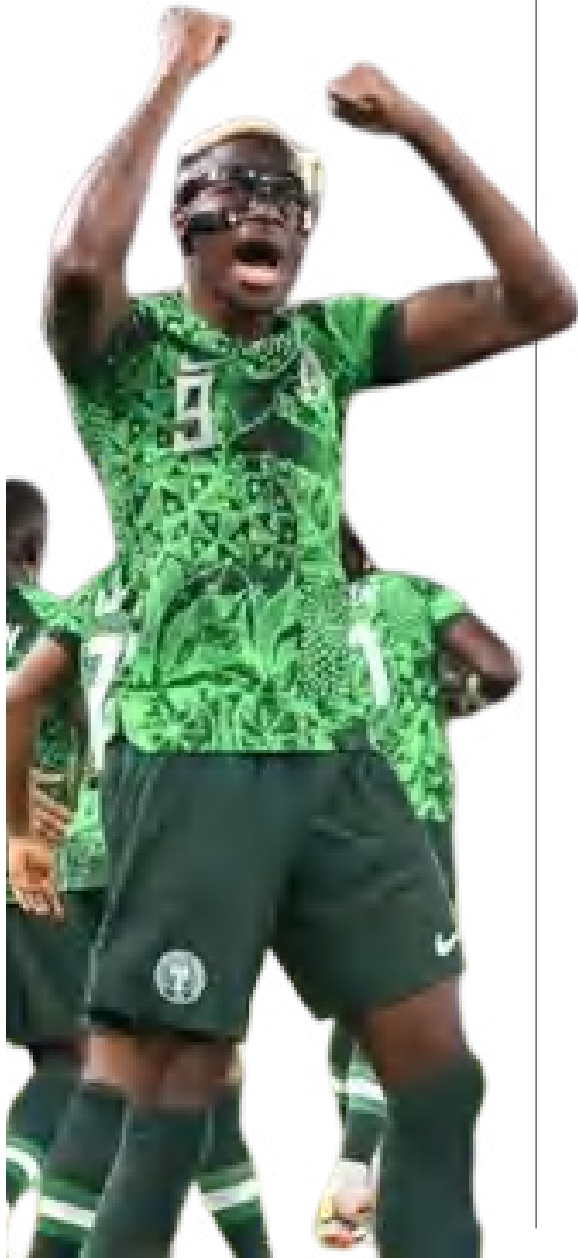
The Super Eagles looked set to kill off the game on 85 minutes when Ola Aina had a glaring chance in front of goal, but his effort was heroically blocked by Tolo Nhouhou.

However, the decisive blow finally arrived in the 90th minute when Lookman provided a beautiful finish from Calvin Bassey's cross to make it 2-0 and secure the Super Eagles' path to the last eight of the Afcon.

Nigeria will go on to face Angola in the first quarterfinal, set for the Felix Houphouët Boigny Stadium on Friday 2 February.

**Nigeria:** Nwabali (Uzoho 80'), Ajayi, Troost-Ekong, Bassey, Aina, Onyekia, Iwobi, Zaidu (Omeruo 80'), Simon (Osayi-Samuel 90+10'), Lookman, Osimhen (Onuachu 90+10')

**Cameroon:** Ondoa, Castelletto, Wooh, Gonzalez (Aboubakar 78'), Ngamaleu (Tohato 87'), Ntoham, Anguissa, Nhouhou, Toko Ekambi (Moumbagna 90+6'), N'Koudou, Magri.



▲ Mbabane Swallows Njabulo Magagula challenges Mbabane Swallows Siphosethu Mabilisa during the MTN Premier League game at Mavuso Sports Centre on Saturday. The game ended goalless.

## Sandanezwe's heroics as... 'Birds', Mamba share spoils

... Former national team, Sihlangu goalkeeper Sandanezwe Mathabela pulls off three crucial saves to earn Mbabane Swallows a point in a pulsating 1-all draw with log leaders, Green Mamba in front of an impressive crowd at Mavuso Sports Centre

By Lwazi Dlamini

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(At Mavuso Sports Centre)

Green Mamba..... 0, 0,  
Mbabane Swallows..... 0, 0,

**F**ORMER national team, Sihlangu Semnikati first-choice goalkeeper Sandanezwe Mathabela was an instant hero after pulling off three daring saves to help Mbabane Swallows secure a point in a nil-all draw with league defending champions Green Mamba in a pulsating clash here on Saturday.

An impressive crowd of over 2,000 fans who had cascaded to the modest venue watched in awe as Mathabela first denied Njabulo Tfwala - with his first touch of the ball after coming in for Mbongeni Magagula - in the 81st minute when he bravely flicked the ball over the bar for a fruitless corner.

Then two minutes later, Njabulo sent fast-paced winger Mthunzi 'Xavi' Mkhonto, with a lacerating through ball that was so inch-perfect, it could defy all the rules of geometry, but the former Midas City winger saw his point-blank shot blocked bravely by the ever-alert Mathabela.

Then deep in referee Theminkosi Dlamini's three minutes added time, Swallows defender Kwakhe Thwala, making his return to the starting lineup after his failed transfer move to South Africa's DStv Premiership side Chippa United, headed a back pass which looked headed for the back of the net only for Mathabela to spring up like a tiger to clear the ball before it crossed the goal line. What a save!

Mathabela's heroics forced the former club President Archbishop Bheki Lukhele, who made a surprise appearance surrounded by a bevy of bodyguards, to crack a wry smile as the 'Birds' ended a two-match losing streak to the 'Correctional Services' side.



▲ Some Mbabane Swallows fans watch the game against Green Mamba.

The game was evenly balanced but the 'Birds' created better chances in the opening match in which they also had the second player sustaining a serious injury when striker Sandile Hlatshwako was stretchered off after picking a knee injury.

He had to be whisked away to Raleigh Fitkin Memorial Hospital by an ambulance as had happened last weekend in Big Bend when lanky striker Felix Badenhorst dislocated his shoulder. The injury has ruled him out of action for three weeks.

Green Mamba was first to get a good opportunity six minutes into the game when top striker Sabelo 'Sikhali' Ndzinisa saw his rasping shot ricochet off the bar. Then defender Kingsley Kwakyi had a

chance to put Swallows ahead in the 21st minute but his glancing header went inches wide. Then in the 74th minute, Green Mamba goalkeeper Xolani Gama did well to block a point-blank shot from Sizolwethu 'Nunu' Shabalala who came face-to-face with the Sihlangu goalkeeper after being set up by Orion Samba.

### Goal

Then the last 10 minutes belonged to the former Sihlangu goalkeeper Sandanezwe Mathabela who pulled not only one or two brilliant saves but three including a potential own goal from defender Kwakhe Tfwala to ensure the two title-chasing teams took home a point each.

After the round of 'Week 15' matches,

defending league champions, Green Mamba remain on top of the log on a better goal difference as Royal Leopard's 1-0 victory over Madlenya FC at the Prince of Wales meant the police side is also now on 28 points with 15 games played.

### MTN LEAGUE FULL RESULTS:

#### Played on Saturday:

Green Mamba	0-0 Mbabane Swallows
Manzini Sea Birds	2-1 Denver Sundowns
Moneni Pirates	2-2 Manzini Wanderers
Young Buffaloes	3-0 Illovo FC
Nsingizini	1-1 Ezulwini United
Mb. Highlanders	1-0 Rangers FC
Royal Leopard	1-0 Madlenya FC

## AFCON 2023:



▲ Angola celebrate after their win against Namibia during the AFCON 2023 last 16.

## Dala brace helps Angola end quarter- final drought

A brace from striker Jacinto Dala helped Angola reach the TotalEnergies CAF Africa Cup of Nations quarter-finals for the first time in 14 years with an emphatic 3-0 victory over Namibia on Saturday.

Playing in front of a vociferous crowd in Bouake, Palancas Negras controlled the round of 16 tie from the outset against the tournament underdogs.

The Brave Warriors were handed a major advantage when Angola goalkeeper Neblu was sent off for handling outside his area in just the 14th minute.

The tone was set by Bethuel Muzeu, crafting the first clear-cut chance. Exploiting a loose pass near Angola's 18-yard box, Muzeu executed a lob, initiating a one-on-one with goalkeeper Neblu.

Neblu's attempt to save, extending beyond the 18-yard box, resulted in his expulsion from the game.

Despite being down to 10 men, Angola continued to dictate play and opened the scoring through Gelson Dala following good work from Gilberto and Fredy.

Namibia's task was made even more difficult shortly after when defender Lubeni Haukongo received a second booking for a foul on Mbululu.

Angola pounced on the resulting free-kick as Jacinto Dala powered home a header to double the lead before the break.

With Namibia chasing the game in the second half, gaps started to appear and Jacinto Dala turned provider to set up substitute Mbululu for Angola's third.

Mbululu maintained his composure to slot home from the edge of the box and cap off an excellent attacking performance from the Palancas Negras.

The result means Angola have reached the last eight of the tournament for the first time since their run to the semi-finals in 2008. They will face the winner of Nigeria vs Cameroon in the next round as they look to emulate the achievements of their golden generation 15 years ago.

### COACHES REACTION

#### ► Collin Benjamin - Namibia head coach

"We started very good. You could see the intention of this team, I think the turnaround was the send of the Angolan goalkeeper. In my experience in football, this is a situation you wouldn't want to be in because after the red card the opponent will come in stronger thinking they are a man down, it is basically a soccer lesson. And obviously within the situation, you get a 1-0, you get 2-0, 3-0 so in the end I think it's a well-deserved win to Angola. Congratulations to them but I think as a Namibian, it's a bitter pill to swallow but we have to keep our heads up. We have to look forward if you just think about it tomorrow morning, you will realize it took us 26 years to record our first victory in the TotalEnergies CAF AFCON, we came here in 1998, and in 26 years, we past the group stage to coming to the knockout, so we have to take it step by step".

#### ► Pedro Gonçalves - Angola head coach

"I would like to thank the team for securing this qualification. All the matches we have played are different and it comes with different dynamics and we saw that today. It was a difficult game and fantastic at the same time. It's important to keep being resilient and focus on each match as we try to make efforts in each game. I would like to congratulate the team, the staff and everyone in Angola. **Cafonline**