



PARLIAMENT GRAND OPENING PREPARATIONS:

Speech from the Throne expected to set the pace for 2024



By Ncaba Ntshakala

PREPARATIONS are nearly complete for the highly anticipated opening of the 12th Parliament on Friday, February 9. At the final preparatory interministerial meeting on Wednesday, Clerk to Parliament Benedict Xaba announced that progress was at 95 per cent. The meeting was attended by key stakeholders including Prime Minister Russell Dlamini, Senate President Lindiwe Dlamini, and House of Assembly Speaker Jabulani Mabuza.

■ SEE FULL STORY ON PAGE 2

Eswatini among 32 nations gathered in Morocco to tackle development challenges

Page 3



**Purchase electricity worth
E200 using ePocket & stand
a chance to win E100.**

Visit or contact us:



www.sbs.co.sz

info@sbs.co.sz

2404 1313

WhatsApp 7808 9910

Valid until 31 March 2024.

Ts & Cs apply



PARLIAMENT GRAND OPENING PREPARATIONS: Speech from the Throne expected to set the pace for 2024

By Ncaba Ntshakala

PREPARATIONS are nearly complete for the highly anticipated opening of the 12th Parliament on Friday, February 9.

At the final preparatory interministerial meeting on Wednesday, Clerk to Parliament Benedict Xaba announced that progress was at 95 per cent.

The meeting was attended by key stakeholders including Prime Minister Russell Dlamini, Senate President Lindiwe Dlamini, and House of Assembly Speaker Jabulani Mabuza.

The Presiding officers stated that the stage was set, and all eyes were on His Majesty King Mswati III, who is set to deliver the much-awaited Speech from the Throne during the State Opening ceremony.

The King's speech is a policy guideline that sets the pace for government and highlights critical areas that need to be attended to. Speaker Mabuza emphasized the near completion of preparations, ensuring a smooth and dignified event. Mabuza further appealed for respect during the day.

Clerk Xaba also said that as Parliament, they have ensured that guest arrangements are attended to, and seats are allocated. He also applauded ministries for their active support during the preparations.

Ministry of Health Principal Secretary Khanyakwezwe Mabuza assured readiness for medical emergencies. First-aid services, secondary treatment options, and enhanced hygiene measures are in place. Three key areas – emergency services, primary healthcare, and environmental health – are covered, with nurses and paramedics stationed within Parliament during the King's address.

Traffic control and security measures

Royal Eswatini Police Services (REPS) emphasized traffic control and security measures. Road closures and security checkpoints for people and vehicles have been established. REPS appealed for public cooperation as they ensure order and security on the day.

ICT and accessibility

Principal Secretary Phesheya Dube outlined four key ICT teams: broadcasting, branding, public address systems, and accreditation. They have ensured smooth event operations with live streaming access for international viewers.

Display screens and simulation translation devices will assist diplomats and others requiring language assistance. Dube sought REPS' patrol assistance to protect crucial copper cables against theft as they had already set for Friday.

Power, water will be uninterrupted

Ministry of Natural Resources and Energy Principal Secretary Dorcas Dlamini and Eswatini Electricity Company Managing Director Ernest Mkhonta confirmed uninterrupted power and water supply. Backup generators are on standby for emergencies, ensuring a seamless event



▲ Prime Minister Russell Dlamini makes his remarks while Speaker in the House of Assembly Jabulani Mabuza and Senate President Lindiwe Dlamini look on during the 12th Parliament Preparatory Opening on Wednesday.

experience.

His Majesty's Speech from the Throne is a policy guideline that the King delivers before a joint house where in his capacity as Head of State of the Kingdom of Eswatini guides the legislators on areas that need to be attended to and how the governmental programs can stimulate economic, social stability and development.

Traditions surrounding the State Opening and delivery of a speech by the Monarch can be traced back to the British model of Westminster Government, which pre-dated from as early as the 16th century.

Eswatini, like most Commonwealth Countries, inherited this tradition from the British Colonial Masters when the Country was still under colonial rule. On Independence Day, the 6th of September 1968, His Majesty King Sobhuza II, delivered the first Speech from the Throne in Parliament (Official State Opening Address).

The State Opening marks the start of a parliamentary year, which is usually referred to as a Session. The Constitution provides that 'there shall be a Session of Parliament at least once in every year.

The Procedure of the State Opening Address is largely provided by the Standing Orders of both Houses of Parliament. House of Assembly Standing Order 14 provides for the announcement of the time of His Majesty's Address. Standing Order 15 provides for the reporting of the Opening Address.

The State Opening is when His Majesty reads the Speech from the Throne, which sets out the Government's agenda and key legislative plans. The Speech from the Throne could be considered one of the many factors which influence government policy which could be aligned with any national development strategy or plan bestowed upon the responsibility of Cabinet by the Constitution.

PM applauds preparations, calls for prayers

As a final rallying plea before the highly anticipated opening of the first session of the 12th Parliament on Friday, Prime Minister Russell Dlamini urged emaSwati to unite in prayer.

Speaking at the last preparatory interministerial meeting, Dlamini commended the tireless efforts of various departments working diligently to ensure a smooth and dignified State Opening ceremony.

"As we stand on the precipice of this momentous occasion, I call upon everyone to join hands and hearts in prayer for a successful day," Dlamini declared.

The Prime Minister expressed his deep appreciation for the dedication and collaboration displayed by all stakeholders involved in the preparations.

"I thank everyone for the tremendous progress achieved and the spirit of cooperation that has prevailed throughout this process," he stated.

Met Services forecasts clear skies for opening

Dress to Kill! Eswatini Meteorological Service has issued a cheerful forecast which is clear skies and sunshine on Friday, during the State opening.

"It will be sunny and hot during the day as it will be at 30 degrees Celsius at Lobamba," declared an official of the Meteorological Service.

This welcome weather update comes as Clerk to Parliament Benedict Xaba emphasizes the opportunity for "good dressing styles" on this auspicious day.

With the sunny skies setting the stage, Xaba encourages attendees to embrace the occasion with sartorial flair while adhering to the decorum expected for such a significant event.



▲ Minister of ICT Savannah Maziya claps her hands with Minister of Health Mduduzi Matsebula and Minister of Public Service Mabulala Maseko.

Stories by Ncaba Ntshakala

Eswatini among 32 nations in Morocco to tackle development challenges

THE Kingdom of Eswatini, Foreign Affairs Ministers and high-level representatives from 32 countries convened on Monday in Rabat, Morocco, for a two-day High-Level Ministerial Conference on Middle-Income Countries (MICs).

Representing the Kingdom of Eswatini was the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Pholile Shakantu. The conference, themed “Addressing Development Challenges in MICs in a Changing World,” aims to identify innovative approaches to boost cooperation and support for MICs.

Organized by Morocco’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs in collaboration with the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the conference builds on Morocco’s leadership as Chair of the Group of Friends of MICs within the UN since 2023.

The conference’s expert segment on Monday focused on key issues for MICs, including South-South and triangular cooperation, climate finance, innovative financing sources,



▲ Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Pholile Shakantu posing with other ministers and high profile figures.

and the middle-income trap.

The ministerial segment on Tuesday explored the challenges and opportunities facing

MICs, with high-level participation from UN regional economic commissions, including ESCWA Executive Secretary Rola Dashti, ECA

Deputy Executive Secretary Hanan Morsy, and UNCTAD Deputy Secretary-General Pedro Manuel Moreno.

Eswatini calls for holistic approach to MIC development at High-Level Conference

MINISTER of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Pholile Shakantu delivered powerful remarks at the High-Level Ministerial Conference on Middle-Income Countries (MICs) in Rabat, Morocco, urging a comprehensive reform of the current criteria used to categorize and support these nations. Highlighting the multifaceted challenges faced by MICs, including technological disparities, environmental concerns, and natural disasters, Minister Shakantu emphasized the need for solidarity and innovative solutions in tackling these complexities.

She said that the challenges facing middle-income countries (MICs) are multifaceted, encompassing technological disparities, environmental concerns, and the enduring impact of natural disasters.

“In the face of these challenges, it is imperative for us to unite in solidarity and seek innovative solutions that transcend the complexities of our current realities,” expressed the Minister.

Indicator

A key focus of the Minister’s address was the inadequacy of Gross National Income (GNI) per capita as the sole indicator of development. “One of the critical issues that demand our collective attention is the inadequate criterion used to categorize poverty,” stated Minister Shakantu.

The Minister expressed that the current model, often reliant on measures such as Gross National Income (GNI) per capita, fails to provide a comprehensive assessment of the multifaceted dimensions of poverty and development.

According to the Minister, the oversight contributes to an incomplete understanding of the developmental status of MICs, hindering their ability to allocate support effectively.

Minister Shakantu added that it is essential for the Nations to reevaluate and expand the set of indicators used to categorize MICs, ensuring that their approach is robust, nuanced, and inclusive. The minister was of the view that the criterion used to categorize MICs should be reformed to encompass a wider array of developmental factors.

“While economic indicators are undeniably



▲ Various Ministers and leaders at the High-Level Ministerial Conference on Middle-Income Countries (MICs) in Rabat, Morocco.

important, they should be complemented by social, environmental, and sustainable development metrics,” she explained.

“By adopting a holistic framework that accounts for the interconnected nature of development, we can cultivate a more accurate understanding of the developmental realities in MICs. This comprehensive approach will empower us to tailor support and assistance in a manner that genuinely reflects the diverse needs and aspirations of each MIC.”

The Minister of Foreign Affairs further advocated for a new model that recognizes not only economic dimensions but also qualitative aspects that shape the well-being and prospects of societies.

Minister Shakantu stated that the MICs must strive to develop a new model that not only acknowledges the economic dimensions of development but also captures qualitative aspects that shape the well-being and prospects of societies.

The Minister further elaborated, “The new model should provide a holistic picture of the challenges and opportunities inherent in the development trajectory of MICs. By doing so, we can craft strategies and interventions that are better aligned with the unique developmental contexts of each MIC, thus fostering sustainable progress and resilience.”

Calling for international collaboration, Minister Shakantu stressed the need for a reformed criterion that facilitates tailored

support and assistance for each MIC’s unique circumstances.

“It is incumbent upon the international community to collaborate in the pursuit of this reformed criterion,” the Minister declared.

“Together, we must advocate for a model that facilitates tailored support and assistance, ensuring that the developmental needs of each MIC are met comprehensively and equitably. By aligning our efforts and expertise, we can forge a more just, inclusive, and prosperous global landscape that empowers all MICs to realize their developmental potential in an ever-changing world.”

Concluding her remarks, Minister Shakantu reaffirmed Eswatini’s commitment to working with fellow MICs and global partners in advocating for this transformative change.

“I convey Eswatini’s unwavering commitment to working alongside fellow MICs and global partners as we advocate for the reformation of the categorization criterion for MICs. Let us harness our collective determination and expertise to recalibrate the developmental paradigm, fostering a world where the potential of MICs is truly recognized and supported,” she urged.

“Through diligent collaboration and innovative thinking, we can overcome the challenges before us and pave the way for sustainable development, prosperity, and equity across all middle-income countries.”

Conference an astounding success – Morocco Minister

FOLLOWING the successful conclusion of the High-Level Ministerial Conference on Middle-Income Countries (MICs), Moroccan Foreign Affairs Minister Nasser Bourita held a press briefing, highlighting the significance of this gathering and the newly adopted Rabat Declaration asserting that the Conference was an astounding success.

Echoing King Mohammed V’s Vision, Minister Bourita emphasized the conference’s alignment with the King’s commitment to supporting MICs.

Recalling the King’s message at COP28, he reiterated the importance of providing these nations with “continuous attention and adequate financing.”

The Minister likened MICs to the “middle class” of the global community, crucial for development’s success and achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. He stressed, “It is impossible to achieve economic and social development in their absence.”

The culmination of the conference, the Rabat Declaration, was described as a document “marked by strong signals.” Minister Bourita underlined the MICs’ commitment to “speak with one voice on the international stage and defend their common interests.” Collaboration at upcoming gatherings is also pledged.

The adopted Declaration seeks to redefine MICs as a distinct entity with unique needs and aspirations, moving beyond mere categorization. The high-level participation and the presence of Ms. Amina J. Mohammed, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, were cited as testaments to the international support for this Moroccan-led initiative.

Further, the Minister of Foreign Affairs Bourita, declared the conference a “success in every respect,” citing the impressive participation, insightful discussions, and the impactful Rabat Declaration. This outcome positions MICs to claim their rightful place on the global stage and pursue sustainable development with renewed international support.

Scabies outbreak

EmaSwati advised to be vigilant

By Ncaba Ntshakala

THE Ministry of Health, through the Neglected and Tropical Diseases Programme (NTDP), has raised concerns about a surge in scabies cases across the country.

This warning comes amid a rise in Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs) attributed to recent weather conditions.

NTDP officer Mbongiseni Mathobela said that the rise is seen in crowded settlements called “tikomu” and urged emaSwati to be on the lookout and prioritize health practices.

“We are witnessing a worrying increase in scabies, particularly in crowded settings,” said Mbongiseni Mathobela, representing the NTDP. “This trend reflects a broader rise in NTDs like bilharzia, worms, and scabies, coinciding with the current weather patterns.”

According to Ministry data, 5,725 scabies and 653 malaria cases were reported in April last year. These figures highlight the growing public health concern.

To combat this rise, Mathobela urged emaSwati to prioritize preventive measures. “Regular deworming and maintaining good hygiene practices are crucial in preventing the



▲ A person suffering from scabies which the Ministry has warned emaSwati about.

spread of these diseases,” he emphasized.

Scabies is a highly contagious skin condition caused by tiny mites that burrow under the skin, causing intense itching. It thrives in close-knit communities and unsanitary conditions, making public awareness and preventative measures all the more critical. Neglected and Tropical Diseases (NTDs) are a group of chronic, debilitating conditions that primarily plague impoverished communities in tropical and subtropical regions, disproportionately affecting Africa. These diseases, often dismissed due to their limited economic impact on developed nations, exact a devastating toll on individuals, families, and

entire healthcare systems.

The World Health Organization (WHO) recognizes the severity of NTDs, designating 20 neglected tropical diseases for focused control and elimination efforts. WHO says that over one billion people globally require interventions for NTDs, with Africa shouldering the heaviest burden. The organisation states that the NTDs cause immense suffering, disability, and even death, hindering development and perpetuating poverty cycles. Despite their neglected status, NTDs impose significant economic losses on affected countries, impacting national productivity and livelihoods.

Most African nations battling NTDs

ON onchocerciasis (river blindness), this parasitic infection, prevalent in 19 African countries, causes debilitating vision loss and affects over 37 million people. (e.g., Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Niger).

NTD officer Mbongiseni Mathobela also mentioned lymphatic filariasis (elephantiasis) which is another NTD that has been discovered by the Kingdom of Eswatini. According to WHO, this is a mosquito-borne disease that causes grotesque swelling of limbs and affects over 40 million people in 20 African countries including Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, and Nigeria.

Bilharzia also known as schistosomiasis is another NTD that Mathobela said is on the rise in the Kingdom of Eswatini. This parasitic infection, transmitted through contaminated water, affects over 200 million people in Africa, causing organ damage and stunting children’s growth. Countries like Angola, Egypt, Mozambique, and Tanzania have the highest rates.

Further, soil-transmitted helminths also known as worms are another NTD that has been discovered in the country accord-



▲ Neglected and Tropical Diseases Programme (NTDP)’s Mbongiseni Mathobela

ing to Mathobela. He said that such is mostly caused by heavy rains.

Mathobela highlighted that climate change has an impact on the rise of the NTDs. Worms are intestinal parasites that infect over 400 million Africans, impacting child development, cognitive abilities, and nutritional status. It is mostly affecting countries like Malawi, Rwanda, and Zambia.

WHO, in collaboration with governments, NGOs, and research institutions, implements various strategies to combat NTDs in Africa, including mass drug administration campaigns, improved water and sanitation, and vector control programs.



Suppliers in: Copiers, Printers, Computers, Laptops & Consumables

For the best service delivery, supply and maintainance in copier solutions in the Kingdom, visit **Sharp Eswatini (PTY) LTD**

SHARP brother hp TOSHIBA Duplo



Celebrating 10 years as a Copier Service Provider
Proudly Distributor of SHARP



FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT US AT:

www.sharpeswatini.com

Lot No.600 Situated at Ext.No.3 Mkhiwa Street, Mbabane

Sambulo Zubuko
7808 9913
sales1@sharpeswatini.com

Nelsiwe Nhleko
7808 9914
sales@sharpeswatini.com

Sydney V Ndzabandzaba
7602 5760/7902 5760
sydney@copiercorp.co.sz

12th Parliament Preparatory meeting in pictures



▲ Her Majesty Indlovukazi representative Tsiteni Magongo during the singing of the national anthem.



▲ Mathokoza Dlamini who was in place for His Majesty King Mswati III board the car.



▲ The gallery was full to capacity.



▲ Eswatini Electricity Company Managing Director (MD) Ernest Mkhonta (r) and PS in the Ministry of Natural Resources and Energy Dorcas Dlamini also attended the preparatory of Parliament opening Cabinet PS Betram Stewart.



▲ Clerk to Parliament Benedict Xaba making his remarks.



▲ Minister of Natural Resources and Energy Prince Lonkhekhela with Senate Lindiwe Dlamini clap their hands in appreciation on the preparations of the 12th Parliament opening.



▲ His Excellency the Prime Minister Russell Dlamini making his remarks during the meeting.



▲ Some of the security officers inside Parliament.



▲ The army rehearsing during the Parliament opening.

11 women reported for child maintenance in 2 months

Stories By Nokunceda Magagula
bahleg@rubiconmedia.group

IN the month of January and February 2024, a total of 11 women have been reported for child maintenance at the Mbabane Magistrate's Court.

This information was obtained from the court's register, which lists the names of the applicants seeking garnishment against the respondents, who could be either the fathers or mothers of the children in question.

Upon closer examination of the register for the month of February, it is evident that these 11 women have been ordered to make payments for the upkeep of their children.

It is worth mentioning that the Deputy Prime Minister, Thuli Dladla, recently emphasized the crucial role that parents play in raising their children. Dladla warned that women should also be held accountable if they fail to fulfill their financial obligations towards their children.

During a speech at the Hlatikhu-lu Social Welfare Department last week, the Deputy Prime Minister stressed that the practice of garnishing wages for child support should not solely target men. She argued that women who neglect their parental responsibilities should also face consequences, as there have been cases of women abandoning their infants.

Dladla pointed out that these women carry on with their lives,



▲ Deputy Prime Minister Thuli Dladla recently warned that women should also be held accountable if they fail to fulfill their financial obligations towards their children.

leaving the burden of childcare on grandparents. She highlighted that there are women who are gainfully employed but neglect their children, placing the entire responsibility on the fathers. The Deputy Prime Minister expressed the need for the law to address the actions of these women, who not only disregard their children's welfare but also create difficulties for the elderly by leaving the children in their care.

Dladla further criticized the fact that the majority of women only pursue welfare cases against men, neglecting their own responsibilities as mothers. She condemned the heartless behavior of some women who abandon their babies and fail to provide for their well-being and upbringing. Some even leave the children with their grandmothers or, in

some cases, with the fathers, while they continue their lives without any regard for their parental duties.

For a long time, men have been accused of shirking their maintenance obligations, while women have taken advantage of this situation without facing any consequences. The Deputy Prime Minister called attention to the existence of such malicious women who evade their responsibilities as mothers and leave the fathers to shoulder the burden of caring for the children.

In light of these developments, it is evident that the issue of child maintenance encompasses both men and women. The government is urged to address this matter and ensure that parents are held accountable for their obligations towards their children.

Man allegedly steals Bucopho's cellphone, assaulted by mob

A 24-year-old man accused of stealing a cellphone was assaulted by a mob before his arrest by the Royal Eswatini Police Services.

The suspect, Mgcineni Mnguni from Nkhamba, allegedly stole Bucopho, Mandla Malaza's cellphone resulting to the assault. According to reports, last week Mnguni was attacked by a mob and subjected to a gruesome assault.

It is alleged that Mnguni had previously worked as Malaza's seasonal groundsman. On the day of the incident, Mnguni went to Malaza's residence to inquire about any available work. Unfortunately, Malaza was not present at the time.

Mnguni then made the decision to break into Malaza's house and stole a black Samsung cellphone and an E50 note. However, Malaza returned and discovered Mnguni near the gate. Sensing something suspicious, Malaza decided to follow Mnguni and search him, leading to the discovery of the stolen phone.

Injuries

Subsequently, Malaza's neighbors began attacking Mnguni, resulting in severe injuries. Mnguni sustained bruises all over his body and a swollen face. The community eventually contacted the police, who apprehended the accused and took him to the hospital. Mnguni was admitted to the Mbabane Government Hospital and was released on Tuesday.

On Wednesday, Mnguni appeared before Magistrate Sifiso Vilakati at the Mbabane Magistrate Court. In court, Mnguni exhibited difficulty walking and



▲ Mgcineni Mnguni who is charged with stealing Bucopho's phone.

taking a seat. The prosecution read out the charges, which included housebreaking with intent to steal and theft. The charge sheet indicated that on January 31, 2024, at Nkhamba, the accused unlawfully broke into the complainant's house and stole items valued at E3,050.

Mnguni pleaded guilty to the charges. In his mitigation statement, he informed the court that he had already suffered greatly due to the assault by community members. He assured the court that he would never commit such an offense again. Mnguni pleaded for leniency in sentencing.

Magistrate Vilakati sentenced Mnguni to two years of imprisonment or a fine of E2,000, with half of the sentence suspended for a year.

44-year-old ordered to vacate his mother's house

The court has issued an order for 44-year-old Bheki Thwala of Siphocisini to vacate his mother's house, where he has been residing with his wife.

Christina Thwala, Bheki's mother, brought the matter before the Mbabane Magistrate's Court, seeking an order for her son and his wife to leave the house.

Christina expressed her exhaustion at sharing her home with her adult son and his wife.

"Your Worship, he is 44 years old and still living in my house with his wife. I am tired of this situation. Bheki is now old enough to find his own place," Christina explained. She further revealed that for the past 44 years, she has been providing for Bheki and his wife and children without any contribution from them.

In response, Bheki informed the court that he had been living with his mother due to circum-

stances beyond his control. He explained that he is currently unemployed and relies on odd jobs for income. Bheki stated that he is in the process of building a house in a neighboring area, but it is not yet complete. He expressed his intention to move out of his mother's house but cited financial constraints as the reason for the delay.

Magistrate Innonce Motsa, presiding over the case, admonished Bheki for still residing in his mother's house at his age. "It is inappropriate for you to continue living in your mother's house at your age. We are working towards building a nation," Magistrate Motsa emphasized.

The court subsequently issued an order for Bheki and his wife to vacate Christina Thwala's house within a specified timeframe. The ruling was made to ensure that each individual takes responsibility for their own living arrangements and contributes to their own household.

Robbery suspect charged with rape

AN inmate currently remanded in custody at the Sidvashini Correctional Facility, after being charged with robbery, has been arrested on additional charges of rape.

The inmate, identified as Nandos Paulos Mashaba from Mozambique, who previously resided in Msunduzi, Mbabane, was apprehended last week in connection with the theft of stolen metal valued at E40,000 from Dalrich in Mbabane.

During his previous court appearance, Mashaba was granted bail set at E5,000, which he failed to pay, resulting in his continued detention at the correctional facility.

Charge Sheet

On Wednesday, the accused appeared before Magistrate Innocent Motsa at the Mbabane Magistrate's Court to face the new charge of rape.

According to the charge sheet, it is alleged that Mashaba engaged in unlawful sexual intercourse with a 25-year-old woman near the Mbabane Bridge. "On January 19, 2024, near the Mbabane Bridge, Mashaba allegedly engaged in sexual activity with the victim, thereby contravening Section 3(1) of the Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence Act of 2018," the charge sheet states.

The charge sheet further notes



▲ Nandos Paulos, who is currently in custody for robbery and is now charged with rape.

that the accused's charge is accompanied by aggravating factors, as outlined in Section 185 of the Criminal Procedure and Evidence Act 67/1938. This includes the allegation that the accused did not use a condom during the commission of the

offense, thereby exposing the victim to sexually transmitted diseases.

In court, the accused represented himself, while the prosecution applied for the accused to be remanded in custody pending committal to the High Court on February 16, 2024.

BUSINESS NEWS

BUSINESS BRIEFS

Oil up on lower-than-expected rise in U.S. crude stockpiles

LONDON — Oil prices rose for a third day on Wednesday after U.S. crude inventories grew less than expected and a cut in the forecast for output growth in the U.S., the world's biggest producer, eased concerns about potential oversupply. Brent crude futures rose 56 cents to \$79.15 a barrel as of 1159 GMT, while U.S. West Texas Intermediate crude climbed 59 cents to \$73.90. U.S. crude stocks fell well short of analysts' forecasts, American Petroleum Institute figures showed. U.S. government weekly data on inventories will be released later on Wednesday.

Stocks hit two-year highs, dollar eases

LONDON/SYDNEY — Global shares traded at their highest in over two years on Wednesday, supported by relatively robust earnings and a retreat in the dollar, although trouble among U.S. regional banks and scepticism over China's efforts to support its markets made for cautious trading. Bonds came under modest pressure, following comments from Federal Reserve officials that did little to shift expectations for the outlook for monetary policy.

Rand flat in early trade

JOHANNESBURG — South Africa's rand was flat early on Wednesday, while the U.S. dollar remained under pressure following its retreat in the previous session. At 0721 GMT, the rand traded at 18.8450 against the dollar, 0.03 per cent weaker than its previous close. The dollar index was last down 0.1 per cent against a basket of major currencies.

Capital investment anticipated to average E2.24 billion in 3 years

By Bahle Gama

silindzelwen@rubiconmedia.group

THE forecast for capital investment appears modest in the medium term as it is anticipated to average E2.244 billion for the next three years.

According to the 2023 Company Survey report annually prepared by the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development in collaboration with the Central Bank of Eswatini (CBE), the bulk of the investment is forecast to be expensed in the utility, manufacturing, and mining sectors.

In the short-to-medium term, the 'utility' sector is planning to continue spending an average of E566.8 million for the next three years on machinery and equipment, specifically projects aimed at improving water supply.

Furthermore, scheduled capital investment in the manufacturing sector, averaging E876.9 million for the next three years, will come from the 'food and beverage sub-sector, specifically towards 'machinery and equipment'.

A further E450 million will be invested in the short-to-medium term towards capacity expansion and efficiency. Other projected investments are envisaged to be undertaken in the 'other manufacturing' sub-sector.

On the other hand, the financial services sector anticipates expenditure in capital investment in the short-to-medium term, averaging E222.5 million, mainly expected to come from the banking sub-sector, for software procurement as part of the digitization of banking products.

In terms of credit provision, three creditors participated in the 2023 survey. These included both development financiers and micro money lenders.

All surveyed credit providers reported good performance in 2022, as SMME's and the general populace gradually recovered from the Covid-19 pandemic.

In terms of revenues, all three companies reportedly experienced growth, which was driven by upward adjustments in credit limits, an increase in the number of customers both new and recently whitelisted ones, as well as the recapitalization of non-performing loans and unpaid interest.

The report further stated that though elevated, revenues were below budget for the year due to the slower-than-anticipated post-Covid-19 recovery by SMMEs, which resulted in them exercising caution when it came to new investments.

In addition, growth in personal loans was muted as their clients had overextended themselves during the pandemic and had not fully recovered, whilst also facing stagnant incomes and rising cost of living.

As a result, the profit levels of two of the companies fell below 2021 levels, with only one company gaining higher profit margins. Profitability was also affected by an increase in expenditures associated with once-off capital expenditures.

"Furthermore, an increase in non-performing loans was observed as rising interest rates



▲A fertiliser manufacturing factory.

increased clients' loan burdens and inflation eroded their purchasing power. The outlook for the subsector is positive as all surveyed entities project improved performance," it reads.

The companies have reportedly embarked on various strategies to increase the loan book and diversify their products.

These include the revamping of products

subsector, four companies participated in the 2023 survey. However, performance was mixed, as three companies reported good performance whilst one had a tough year.

In terms of financial performance, three companies recorded an increase in revenues benefitting from several factors including a rise in assets under management, good performance of the different portfolio investments, high-interest rates, refinancing, the acquisition of new clients, as well as the gradual post-Covid-19 recovery.

As a result, two companies recorded an increase in profits, whilst one company underperformed in 2022 recording declines in revenue, and pre-tax losses. The company is reportedly faced with internal challenges that are expected to filter into the medium term. The report states that though its outlook remains bleak, the loss position is gradually improving, mainly supported by cost containment initiatives.

Meanwhile, two asset managers anticipate a positive outlook into the medium-term, on the backdrop of continued post-Covid-19 recovery.

On the other hand, money market funds are expected to perform better in the short term due to the ongoing global high-interest rates cycle.

"In addition, asset managers linked to infrastructure bonds and related developments will benefit from the improvement in the government's financial position. However, all surveyed asset managers noted risks to the short-to-medium-term outlook," states the report.

This arises from the elevated geopolitical tensions, the tightening financial conditions, the energy crisis in South Africa that is threatening investors, and the implications of the neighbouring country's greylisting, which remains Eswatini's key investment hub.

and services offered, further adjustments in credit limits, and the vigorous promotion of microloans via mobile platforms. In addition, the subsector expects to benefit from the continuous post-Covid-19 recovery by SMMEs.

Manufacturing most challenged sector

The manufacturing sector was the most challenged during the period under review.

This is concerning input costs, as the sector was impacted by the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

According to the 2023 Company Survey report, company-specific challenges were also prevalent in this sector, with specific issues of cash flow.

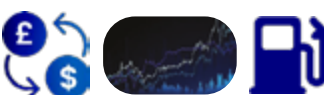
Other challenges were amongst the top five categories including those that pertain to utilities, the regulatory framework, and government service delivery.

On another note, from the asset management



FX RATES

Notes/Cash		
	Buy	Sell
U.S. Dollar	18.4482	18.9137
G.B. Pound	23.2428	23.9268
EURO	19.8499	20.4572
Bank Rate	(July 2023)	7.50%
Prime Rate	(July 2023)	11%
Inflation	(July 2023)	4.5%
Petrol	E20.50/Litre	
Diesel	E21.80/Litre	
Paraffin	E16.75/Litre	





"Creating Wealth For You"



Tap or Swipe E500 or more and stand a chance to WIN weekly shopping vouchers.

Valid until 31 March 2024.

Ts & Cs apply.

Oil up on lower-than-expected rise in U.S. crude stockpiles

LONDON — Oil prices rose for a third day on Wednesday after U.S. crude inventories grew less than expected and a cut in the forecast for output growth in the U.S., the world's biggest producer, eased concerns about potential oversupply.

Brent crude futures rose 56 cents to \$79.15 a barrel as of 1159 GMT, while U.S. West Texas Intermediate crude climbed 59 cents to \$73.90.

U.S. crude stocks fell well short of analysts' forecasts, American Petroleum Institute figures showed. U.S. government weekly data on inventories will be released later on Wednesday.

The U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) also cut on Tuesday its 2024 outlook for domestic oil output growth, putting it far lower than last year's increase and predicting it would not reach December 2023's record levels until February 2025.

This all strengthened the case that the oil

market will be balanced in 2024, analysts at Haitong Futures said in a note, adding that oil prices should remain in a \$10 range around current levels. Meanwhile, U.S., Qatari and Egyptian mediators prepared a diplomatic push to bridge differences between Israel and Hamas on a ceasefire plan for Gaza after the Palestinian group responded to a proposal for an extended pause in fighting and hostage releases.

Hamas has proposed a ceasefire plan that would quiet the guns in Gaza for four-and-a-half months, during which all hostages would go free, Israel would withdraw its troops from the Gaza Strip and an agreement would be reached on an end to the war, Reuters reported on Wednesday.

Traders are following the situation in the Middle East, especially Iranian-backed Houthi rebels' attacks on shipping in the crucial Red Sea that have disrupted traffic through the Suez Canal, the fastest sea route between Asia and Europe and one that carries nearly 12 per cent of global trade.



▲ The sun sets behind the chimneys of the Total Grandpuits oil refinery, southeast of Paris, France.

"While we are seeing disruptions to trade flows as a result of Red Sea developments, oil production remains unchanged as a result," ING analysts Warren Patterson and Ewa Manthey said in a note, commenting on oil's current lack of a risk premium.

In the longer term, the International Energy Agency (IEA) said on Wednesday that India is expected to be the largest driver of global oil demand growth between 2023

and 2030, narrowly taking the lead from top importer China.

That comes as struggling large economies, including China's, dent confidence in the global oil demand outlook.

In Germany, industrial production fell more than expected in December, the federal statistics office said, highlighting weakness in the backbone of Europe's largest economy. (Reuters)

Stocks hit two-year highs, dollar eases

By Amanda Cooper and Wayne Cole

LONDON/SYDNEY — Global shares traded at their highest in over two years on Wednesday, supported by relatively robust earnings and a retreat in the dollar, although trouble among U.S. regional banks and scepticism over China's efforts to support its markets made for cautious trading.

Bonds came under modest pressure, following comments from Federal Reserve officials that did little to shift expectations for the outlook for monetary policy. The MSCI All-World index rose 0.1 per cent to reach its highest since mid-January 2022, led in part by a rally in Chinese blue-chips which have gained almost 5 per cent in the last two trading days.

In recent days, China's regulators have announced further curbs on short selling and state investors said they were expanding their stock buying plans.

Bloomberg News also reported President Xi Jinping would discuss the stock market with financial regulators, though there was no confirmation this had happened or what was discussed.

On Wednesday, the head of China's securities regulator had been replaced, the official Xinhua news agency said, as policymakers struggle to stabilise the country's main stock indexes after a plunge to five-year lows.

"We're looking at more than \$5 trillion being wiped out from the equity markets. Clearly, they want to stem those losses, they want to introduce and change and they're trying to be a lot more forceful about it," Aneeka Gupta, equity strategist at wisdomtree, said.

In Europe, stocks fell in an earnings-heavy day, while S&P 500 futures and Nasdaq futures were down 0.1 per cent. Companies reporting earnings on Wednesday include Uber Walt Disney and PayPal.

The banking sector remained a concern as



▲ A man walks through the lobby of the London Stock Exchange in London, Britain.

Moody's downgraded New York Community Bancorp to junk citing pressure on its funding and liquidity. The stock lost 22 per cent on Tuesday, to be down 60 per cent since it reported surprise losses last week.

More Fed speakers

The timing of U.S. rate cuts was no clearer after Federal Reserve regional presidents Loretta Mester and Neel Kashkari welcomed the progress on inflation but signalled there was more work to do before policy could be eased.

Fed Governors Adriana Kugler and Michelle Bowman, along with regional presidents Thomas Barkin and Susan Collins also speak on Wednesday.

"The events of the last few days (have) seen markets try and absorb the fact that rate cuts might have to wait until much later in the year, and what any delay means for asset prices and valuations," CMC Markets chief market strategist Michael Hewson said.

"While Powell's candour in ruling out a rate cut in March caught markets by surprise this week also offers an opportunity to see

if other members of the FOMC share his mindset.

In an interview at the weekend, Fed Chair Jerome Powell said the central bank could be "prudent" on the timing of rate cuts.

The probability of a U.S. rate cut as early as May now stands at just 39 per cent, when it was considered a done deal only a week ago.

Futures imply around 122 basis points of easing for all of 2024, down from 145 basis points last week.

Treasuries came under pressure, leaving 10-year note yields up 4 basis points at 4.13 per cent. The dollar rose 0.1 per cent to 148.13 yen, just shy of its recent 10-week peak at 148.90. The euro edged up 0.1 per cent to \$1.077, while gold eased 0.1 per cent to \$2,033 an ounce, having fallen to \$2,013.70 early in the week.

Oil prices found support from a U.S. Energy Department assessment that U.S. output would grow by 170,000 barrels per day (bpd) in 2024, instead of a previous estimate of 290,000 bpd.

Brent rose 0.7 per cent to \$79.14 a barrel, as did U.S. crude, at \$73.85. (Reuters)



▲ South African Rand coins are seen in this illustration picture.

South African rand flat in early trade

JOHANNESBURG — South Africa's rand was flat early on Wednesday, while the U.S. dollar remained under pressure following its retreat in the previous session.

At 0721 GMT, the rand traded at 18.8450 against the dollar, 0.03 per cent weaker than its previous close.

The dollar index was last down 0.1 per cent against a basket of major currencies.

On Thursday, investors will be looking toward President Cyril Ramaphosa's State of the Nation Address (SONA) to see what solutions are proposed to fix South Africa's power crisis and rail and port problems, which have strangled growth in Africa's most industrialised economy.

South Africa's benchmark 2030 government bond slipped in early deals, with the yield up 2.5 basis points to 9.830 per cent. (Reuters)

THE almost two decade-long legal drama between Vodacom Group and its former employee, Nkosana Makate, the “inventor” of the “please call me” service, is still not over.

The supreme court of appeal has dismissed an application for leave to appeal, brought by Vodacom against an earlier high court judgment, and ordered the telecommunications operator’s CEO, Shameel Joosub, to make a new offer to Makate based on the assumption that Makate had an 18-year contract with the company.

Unless Vodacom appeals the matter to the constitutional court (which it has said it will), it now appears likely that it will have to cough up significantly more to Makate than the R47-million it had previously offered him. That offer was rejected by Makate.

In February 2022, the high court in Pretoria found that Vodacom had not offered Makate sufficient compensation in settlement for his “invention” of the “please call me” offering, and ordered that a higher settlement amount be offered. That prompted Vodacom to appeal the case to the supreme court of appeal.

Although just who invented the “please call me” idea is strongly disputed, the constitutional court found that Makate had in fact done so and was entitled to be paid for the invention. The apex court left it up to Joosub to determine a fair payout amount.

High court justice Wendy Hughes had ruled that Makate was entitled to 5% of the total voice revenue generated from “please call me” over a 20-year period, according to a media report at the time. Makate had previously claimed he was owed at least R10-billion in compensation from Vodacom.

Court blow to Vodacom in ‘please call me’ saga

Vodacom launched an application for leave to appeal on 25 February 2022 against the high court judgment and order. The supreme court, finding against Vodacom in that appeal, has now given detailed instructions as to how Vodacom and Joosub should determine fair compensation to its former employee.

The figure must take into account the time value of money, calculated at an average inflation rate of 5%, from 1 March 2001 to 28 February 2019, and has to be made within 30 calendar days of the date of the new order.

The supreme court has now set aside the Hughes judgment, but not in the way Vodacom had hoped. The appeals court has ordered the following:

- The decision of Vodacom on 9 January 2019, determining the compensation to be paid to Makate, be set aside;
- Makate is entitled to be paid 5-7.5% of the total revenue of the “please call me” product for an 18-year period from 2001 to 2019, plus interest; and
- Vodacom must bear the costs of the negotiations referred to in the earlier constitutional court judgment.

In a statement in reaction to the supreme court judgment, Vodacom said it will seek leave to appeal the judgment at the constitutional court.

(Techcentral)



▲ Vodacom CEO, Shameel Joosub.



Immersive gaming and fitness apps key to Vision Pro’s consumer appeal

THE foundational vocabulary of any new medium is inherited from that of its predecessor.

Take, for instance, the early days of television, when so many shows were effectively radio programs caught on film.

The new medium’s success is dependent on the development of its own vocabulary, distinguishing itself from earlier paradigms.

In the case of Vision Pro, the connection to a predecessor couldn’t be more apparent.

A major piece of Apple’s content strategy is the ability to run iPadOS apps on the headset. When searching the visionOS App Store, users choose between content developed specifically for the platform and that created for the tablet. It’s similar to the approach the company has taken to building out the Mac App Store, which draws from both iOS and iPadOS apps.

While 600 is a good number of “optimized”

apps for the launch of a first-gen product, the availability of iPadOS content really bolsters the essentials and gives developers some extra time to build something custom while bigger names like YouTube waffle on their objectives. As far as what constitutes “optimized,” we’re talking about a wide spectrum. That could mean something as simple as a change to the UX to reflect the Vision Pro’s hand tracking. It could also mean something far more immersive.

I understand if you didn’t make it all the way through last week’s 6,000-word review, so here’s a bit of the TL;DR: the Vision Pro will live or die on the backs of developers. As I noted previously, the first iPhone was undoubtedly a revolutionary piece of hardware, but it was the iPhone 3G’s App Store that really blew the industry wide open.

(TechCrunch)

Ex-Tesla exec leading Ford project to develop low-cost EV

EX-TESLA and Ford Advanced EV development boss Alan Clarke is leading a Ford skunkworks project to develop a low-cost electric vehicle, TechCrunch has learned.

Ford CEO Jim Farley made a brief reference Tuesday during the company’s fourth-quarter earnings call that a “skunkworks” team had been created to create a “low-cost” EV platform. TechCrunch has since confirmed that Clarke is leading the skunkworks project, which is about two years old and based in Irvine, California. It includes engineers from Auto Motive Power, or AMP, the EV power startup that the automaker acquired in November 2023. AMP founder Anil Paryani, who coincidentally overlapped with Clarke for about five years at Tesla, is also part of the skunkworks project.

The skunkworks project is working on a third-generation EV. A Ford spokesperson declined to provide more details around

the project or its timeline. However, based on Farley’s comments Tuesday — and a year ago — it’s likely that the skunkworks project is focused on cost, smaller EVs and efficiency, including the battery.

“We’re also adjusting our capital, switching and more focused onto smaller EV products,” Farley said during the company’s earnings call. “Now this is important because we made a bet in silence two years ago and we developed a super-talented skunkworks team to create a low-cost EV platform. It was a small group, a small team — some of the best EV engineers in the world — and it was separate from the Ford mothership. It was a startup and they’ve developed a flexible platform that will not only deploy to several types of vehicles, there will be a large install base for software and services that we’re now seeing at Pro (the company’s commercial unit).”

(TechCrunch)



▲ The Ford sign.

A South African court on Tuesday upheld a ban on opposition party leaders from attending President Cyril Ramaphosa's speech this week to mark the opening of the new parliamentary session, after were sanctioned for disrupting the event a year ago.

The leader, deputy leader and four other representatives of the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), the third largest party in Parliament, will not be allowed to attend the State of the Nation address on Thursday.

The six MPs were suspended from Parliament from February 1 to 29. They were among a group of EFF members who were ordered out of the room by the speaker for interrupting Mr Ramaphosa's 2023 speech. But instead of leaving, the group, led by EFF president Julius Malema, jumped on stage and held up signs calling on Mr Ramaphosa to step down before security forced them out.

EFF MPs disrupted parliamentary sessions and fought with security officers on several occasions.

Mr Malema, EFF deputy president Floyd Shivambu and the other MPs took legal action to appeal their suspension. After being rejected, they filed another appeal asking that the new parliamentary rules under which they were suspended be declared invalid. The Western Cape High Court dismissed the appeal on Tuesday.

Mr Malema, who was expelled from the ruling party in 2012, is known for his controversial policies and has previously been accused by South African-born billionaire Elon Musk of being anti-white and stoking racial tensions. The left-wing EFF claims to represent South Africa's poor, black major-

Malema banned from attending State of the Nation speech

ity, which it says has been disillusioned by the African National Congress (ANC)-led government and remains poor due to legacy of the apartheid system of racial segregation, which ended 30 years ago. Their policies are sometimes described as anti-white by their detractors.

EFF MPs often attend Parliament dressed in red industrial work clothes, rubber boots and hard hats like those worn by miners or construction workers, as a sign of solidarity with the southern working class. African. Female members of the EFF wear the uniform of cleaners and domestic workers.

Mr Ramaphosa could use his State of the Nation address to announce a date for this year's national elections, which are expected to be held between May and August.

The ANC has been in power since the end of apartheid in 1994, but this year's vote could mark a turning point for South Africa. Polls suggest the ANC could fall below 50% of the vote for the first time. This would require him to form a coalition to remain in government and keep Mr Ramaphosa as president for a second and final term.

(Africa news)



▲ Julius Malema is deported as Cyril Ramaphosa attempts to deliver his State



▲ South African President Cyril Ramaphosa will announce the date of this year's general election later this month.

Ramaphosa to announce election date this month

JOHANNESBURG - South African President Cyril Ramaphosa will announce the date of this year's general election later this month, his spokesman said on Wednesday.

"If you count from tomorrow, the president will announce the election date within 15 days," Ramaphosa's spokesperson Vincent Magwenya told reporters.

Political analysts say record power cuts, poor service delivery and high levels of unemployment are likely to hurt the governing African National Con-

gress (ANC) party that Ramaphosa, 71, leads, threatening the loss of its parliamentary majority for the first time since the end of apartheid in 1994.

Ramaphosa, who has struggled to rekindle economic growth since taking over from his scandal-plagued predecessor Jacob Zuma in 2018, will seek a second term as president.

Voters will elect a new National Assembly as well as the provincial legislature in each of the country's nine provinces.

The National Assembly elects the president after the vote. (Reuters)



▲ President of Zimbabwe Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa addresses the 78th Session of the U.N. General Assembly in New York City, U.S.

Zimbabwe's ruling party secures supermajority in Parliament

ZIMBABWE'S ruling Zanu-PF emerged winner of Saturday's (Feb.03) by-elections held in Mashonaland East province.

The party secured significant victories in several key constituencies, including Seke and Goromonzi South, and even achieved a clean sweep in the Marondera district.

When general elections were last held ZANU-PF was 10 seats short of the two-thirds majority in parliament, now after a series of disputed by-elections it has attained that goal.

Zanu PF now holds 190 seats in the National Assembly.

Securing this supermajority in the 280-member parliament, the party moves closer to changing the constitution if it wishes.

The election came amid a political crisis in the country which has been growing since the group of MPs with the main opposition Citizens Coalition for Change (CCC) had their seats declared vacant in October.

Just over two years at the helm of the Citizens Coalition for Change, opposition leader Nelson Chamisa announced on January 25 he was leaving the opposition party saying it has been "hijacked" by the ruling party. (Africa News)

Election delay setback for Senegal's democracy

RESIDENTS and analysts reacted on Tuesday to the postponement of elections in Senegal.

In the streets of Dakar, many are wondering about the future of the country and its stability.

The postponement has revealed a period of uncertainty, with many Senegalese wondering about the repercussions of the decision and its legitimacy.

"It's a whole population that is devastated (by this decision). We even want to change our nationality. How long will this postponement last?" said Pape Alioune Dieme, resident of Dakar.

"In any case, we're very worried about the situation in this country", he added.

President Macky Sall postponed the Feb. 25 vote, citing an electoral dispute between the parliament and the judiciary regarding some candidacies.

Opposition leaders and candidates rejected the decision, calling it a "coup."

Analyst Mucahid Durmaz said that while news of election postponement will not lead to "destructive" unrest compared to the 2021 protests in the country, it represents a warning.

Senegal is "seen as a beacon of democratic stability" in the West African region, he added, and the postponement of elections will "accelerate the democratic decline" of neighbouring countries, he said.

Several opposition lawmakers were blocked from voting on Monday as parliament rescheduled the election for December, prompting outrage and condemnation.

Sall's time in office had been set to end on April 2. (Reuters)

Hamas responds to Gaza truce deal, Blinken says agreement ‘possible’

DOHA/GAZA - The Palestinian militant group Hamas said on Tuesday it had delivered its response to a proposed ceasefire deal for Gaza that would also involve the release of hostages, and the United States said it still believed an agreement was possible. Details of the response were not immediately available.

In a statement Hamas said it responded “in a positive spirit, ensuring a comprehensive and complete ceasefire, ending the aggression against our people, ensuring relief, shelter, and reconstruction, lifting the siege on the Gaza Strip, and achieving a prisoner swap.” Senior Hamas official Ghazi Hamad told Reuters in a text message that Hamas aims for the release of the largest possible number of Palestinian prisoners in Israel.

The Israeli prime minister’s office said late on Tuesday that the details of the Hamas response were being “thoroughly evaluated by the officials involved in the negotiations”.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, on a lightning tour of the Middle East, said he would discuss the Hamas response with Israeli officials when he visits the country on Wednesday.

However U.S. President Joe Biden, while acknowledging “some movement” on a deal, described the Hamas response as “a little over the top”, without elaborating. “We’re not sure where it is. There’s continuing negotiations right now,” he said in Washington.

In Doha, Blinken said, “There’s still a lot of work to do be done, but we continue to believe that an agreement is possible, and indeed essential.” He spoke at a news conference with Qatari Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani after Hamas delivered its response.

Sheikh Mohammed described the Hamas response as “positive” overall but also declined to give any details.

A Hamas official who asked not to be identified reiterated to Reuters earlier on Tuesday that the Palestinian Islamist movement



▲Manzini-Mbadlane Blue Highway constructed by Inyatsi

would not allow any hostage releases without guarantees that the war would end and Israeli forces leave Gaza.

The proposed deal, drawn up more than a week ago by U.S. and Israeli spy chiefs at a meeting with the Egyptians and Qataris, would secure the release of remaining hostages held by militants in Gaza in return for a long pause to fighting.

Sources close to the talks have said the truce would last at least 40 days, during which militants would free civilians among the remaining hostages they hold. Further phases would follow, to hand over soldiers and dead bodies of hostages, in exchange for releases of Palestinians imprisoned in Israel.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu says Israel will fight on until Hamas is wiped out. But there is also a growing Israeli movement demanding more effort to bring the hostages home, even if that means a deal with Hamas.

A poll released by a nonpartisan think-tank, the Israel Democracy Institute, found 51% of respondents believe recovering the hostages should be the main goal of the war, while 36% said it should be toppling Hamas.

Israel’s chief military spokesperson Rear Admiral Daniel Hagari said on Tuesday that 31 of the remaining hostages held in Gaza had been pronounced dead. Israel previously said 136 hostages were still being held in Gaza after 110 were released under the only truce agreed so far, in November when Israel also released 240 Palestinians it was holding.

Citing an Israeli assessment shared with U.S. and Egyptian officials, the Wall Street Journal reported that as many as 50 hostages could be dead, meaning about 80 hostages held by Hamas are still alive.

Israel began its military offensive in Gaza after militants from Hamas-ruled Gaza killed 1,200 people and took 253 hostages in southern Israel on Oct. 7.

Gaza’s Health Ministry says at least 27,585 Palestinians have been confirmed killed in Israel’s military campaign, with thousands more feared buried under rubble.

Israel, which is pressing on with its offensive deep into parts of the Gaza Strip now sheltering hundreds of thousands of people displaced from earlier fighting, said its forces had killed dozens of Palestinian gunmen in the past 24 hours.

Palestinians hope Blinken’s diplomatic push will nail down a ceasefire before Israeli forces storm the southern town of Rafah, where more than half of Gaza’s 2.3 million people are now sheltering, mainly in public buildings and tents made from sheets of plastic, hard against the border with Egypt.

RELENTLESS PRESSURE

Israeli forces on Tuesday kept up pressure on Khan Younis, the main southern city they have been trying to capture for weeks. Aerial and tank bombardment thundered through the city overnight, with at least 14 people killed by air strikes since the pre-dawn hours, Palestinian residents and medics said.

Rafah, just south of it, was also hit by air strikes and tank shelling. Two people were killed in a strike on a house in Rafah while six policemen died after their car was hit, Gaza health officials said.

Israeli leaders say Rafah is now a bastion of Hamas combat units and vowed last week to push into the town next, alarming international aid agencies who say a million displaced civilians would be in harm’s way, pinned against the border fence.

Mahmoud Amer and his family had pitched their tent in a cemetery in Rafah, hoping they would be safer living among the dead, including the war’s victims in freshly dug graves.

“It’s better than living in residential areas where the houses could collapse on our heads,” said Amer. “There is no water, no proper aid coming in. The situation is so bad. The dead are in comfort, while we, the living, are in pain.”

(Reuters)

Australia to allow workers to ignore after-hours calls from bosses

SYDNEY - Australia will introduce laws giving workers the right to ignore unreasonable calls and messages from their bosses outside of work hours without penalty, with potential fines for employers that breach the rule.

The “right to disconnect” is part of a raft of changes to industrial relations laws proposed by the federal government under a parliamentary bill, which it says would protect workers’ rights and help restore work-life balance.

Similar laws giving employees a right to switch off their devices are already in place in France, Spain and other countries in the European Union.

A majority of senators have now declared support for the legislation, Employment Minister Tony Burke from the ruling centre-left Labor party said in a statement on Wednesday.

The provision stops employees from working unpaid overtime through a right to disconnect from unreasonable contact out of hours, Burke said.

“What we are simply saying is that someone who isn’t being paid 24 hours a day

shouldn’t be penalised if they’re not online and available 24 hours a day,” Prime Minister Anthony Albanese told reporters earlier on Wednesday.

The bill is expected to be introduced in parliament later this week.

The bill also includes other provisions like a clearer pathway from temporary to permanent work and minimum standards for temporary workers and truck driver.

Some politicians, employer groups and corporate leaders warned the right to disconnect provision was an overreach and would undermine the move towards flexible working and impact competitiveness.

The left-wing Greens, which supports the rule and was the first to propose it last year, said it was a big win for the party. A deal had been reached between Labor, smaller parties and independents to support this bill, Greens leader Adam Bandt said on Twitter.

“Australians work an average of six weeks unpaid overtime each year,” Bandt said.

That equated to more than A\$92 billion (\$60.13 billion) in unpaid wages across the economy, he added.

“That time is yours. Not your boss’.”
(Reuters)



▲ Australia will introduce laws giving workers the right to ignore unreasonable calls and messages from their bosses outside of work hours without penalty, with potential fines for employers that breach the rule.

Aymos to ignite Mega Lounge stage

Stories by Siphesihle Dlamini
siphesihled@rubiconmedia.group

FUN lovers should prepare themselves for an unforgettable night of Amapiano magic as South African sensation Aymos takes centre stage at Mega Lounge for the highly anticipated ‘Ezam’zukwana’ Vintage Party.

With an impressive lineup of talented artists, this event promises to be a celebration of music, style, and nostalgia. Joining Aymos on stage will be a stellar lineup of performers, including Selector, Tap Tap, Virus, Yeka DK, and the Mega Lounge All-Stars.

The MC for the evening will be the charismatic Buhle, ensuring that the party atmosphere remains electric throughout the night. To add to the excitement, the dress code for the event is vintage clothing, allowing attendees to showcase their unique style and pay homage to the timeless fashion of the past.

General admission tickets for this extraordinary event scheduled for February 24, 2024, are priced at E150, offering music enthusiasts an opportunity to witness Aymos’ performance at an affordable price. For those seeking an enhanced experience, VIP tickets are available for E250.

Babili Amos Shili, known by his stage name Aymos, has made a significant impact on the South African music scene with his soulful Amapiano sound. Renowned



▲ South African artist Aymos.

for his hit single ‘Emcimbini,’ produced by the dynamic duo Kabza De Small and DJ Maphorisa, Aymos has garnered a dedicated fan base and critical acclaim.

Passion

Aymos’ musical journey began in the church, where his powerful vocals were first discovered. In high school, he formed his choir, showcasing his natural talent and passion for music.

In 2020, he released a collaborative album with Mas Musiq titled ‘Shonamalanga,’ which earned him nominations at the 27th South African Music Awards for Best Amapiano Album

and Best Duo/Group of the Year.

In September 2021, Aymos released his debut solo album, ‘Yimi Lo,’ featuring collaborations with industry heavyweights such as Kabza De Small, Major League DJz, Josiah De Disciple, and DBN Gogo. Continuing his musical journey, Aymos collaborated on the album ‘African Lullabies Part 2’ by Platoon in May 2022, further expanding his reach and influence.

His single ‘Fatela’ with Ami Faku, released in October 2022, achieved multi-platinum status in South Africa, further cementing Aymos’ status as a force to be reckoned with in the industry.



▲ Bassie.

Bassie slated for Lawu Le Ngwenya

“UMUNTU ok’thandayo umbona ng zenzo!”

That tune will reverberate at Lawu Le Ngwenya, which will be the playground of South African Amapiano sensation, Bassie, who is prepared to grace its stage with an electrifying performance.

Set to take place on February 24, 2024, the show dubbed ‘Izenzo ka Bassie’ promises to be an unforgettable experience for fans and music enthusiasts alike.

Bassie, whose fame skyrocketed with her hit song ‘Izenzo’ featuring Aymos, has captivated millions of listeners worldwide. With over 13 million views garnered by the song on YouTube, her music has become an anthem.

The anticipation for the event is palpable, with fans eagerly securing their tickets in advance.

Magic

Presale tickets are priced at E80, offering an affordable opportunity for music lovers to experience the musician’s magic. For those who prefer spontaneity, tickets will also be available at the gate for E100 and those seeking a VIP experience, a limited number of VIP tickets are available for E150, granting exclusive access to a premium viewing area and additional perks.

Basetsana Maluleka, popularly known as Bassie, is not just a talented vocalist, singer, songwriter, and dancer; she is also a passionate advocate for women’s empowerment. Through her music, she promotes gender equality and emphasises the abilities and qualities of women. Bassie’s dedication to empowering women has resonated deeply with her fans, making her a role model for aspiring artists and individuals striving for equality.

Bassie’s impact on the South African entertainment industry is undeniable. Her debut song, ‘Ngithande,’ released in 2022, has garnered over five million streams. Collaborating with both local and international artists, such as Soa Matrixx, Happy Jazzman, T-man SA, MFR Souls, Visca, Laud, and Tyler ICU, Bassie has proven her versatility and ability to create music that transcends borders.

One of the highlights of Bassie’s career was her exceptional performance on the renowned ‘Channel O Lockdown House Party - Season 1.’

OPK, Chie added to War Words 4 line-up

HAVE you ever snapped your fingers until they hurt or nod your head until you have torticollis?

Well, that will be the conditions of the attendees at War Words 4, which has added talented poets, OPK and Chie to the lineup of the anticipated event.

OPK, a talented local poet, is known for his ability to connect with his audience on a deep level. His words have the power to transport listeners to a different world, making them feel seen, understood, and inspired. His performances are a masterclass in the art of ‘spoken word’, leaving the crowd snapping their fingers in appreciation and nodding their heads in awe.

Chie, on the other hand, brings a unique blend of vulnerability and strength to her poetry. Her words carry a raw honesty that resonates with listeners, inviting them to reflect on their experiences and emotions. Her craft gives ‘Jackie Hill Perry’ vibes and this vibrant young lady believes in pen and paper being the perfect escape in this crazy life. Her poetry is personal and whatever piece he writes and recites is meaningful and inspirational.

Scheduled for March 23, 2024 the stage is set for an epic clash of words at Bethel Court and doors will open at 1:30 pm. The ticket price of E130 is a small investment for what promises to be an unforgettable



▲ Chie and OPK have been added to War Words 4.

afternoon of poetic brilliance. Notably, the event has already confirmed the mighty Poetic General as the headliner.

War Words 4 is not just any poetry event; it is an immersive experience that transports the audience into a world of emotions, thoughts, and perspectives. To set the tone for the event, attendees are encouraged to dress in casual black and camouflage attire or opt for an all-black



ensemble.

The director of War Words 4, Anthonimass, assured fun lovers that this year’s event will surpass all expectations. With each passing year, War Words has grown in popularity, attracting poetry lovers from far and wide. It has become a staple in the local events calendar and has since become one of the best poetry shows in the country.

Thinah Zungu for VOC's 29th Celebration



▲ Thinah Zungu.

Stories by Siphesihle Dlamini
siphesihled@rubiconmedia.group

GOSPEL fanatics will be uplifted by the heavenly sounds of gospel music as the Voice of the Church (VOC) celebrates its 29th birthday with a spectacular fundraising event that will feature renowned South African gospel musician, Thinah Zungu.

Joining Zungu on stage will be another South African gospel sensation, Sipho Makhabane. The event will also showcase a stellar line-up of local gospel stars, including Linda Dlamini, Thabile Myeni, Nduduzo Matse, Sphiwo Indoni, Nothando Dlamini, and Phetsile Masilela, among others.

In addition to the impressive lineup of solo artists, the event will feature soul-soothing performances by gospel groups such as Ndawonye Christ Worshippers, Shiba and the Travellers, Shongwe & Khuphuka, and Police Gospel Messengers.

The celebratory event will take place at Mavuso Trade Centre on March 1, 2024. The festivities will begin at 6 pm

and continue until the early hours of the next morning, offering a night of spiritual rejuvenation and celebration. Tickets for this unforgettable experience are priced at E50.

Thinah Zungu, a multi-award-winning gospel artist from South Africa, has been uplifting audiences with his soul-stirring music since 2006. His debut album, 'Enkazimulweni,' released and promoted in 2007, received an overwhelming response from listeners, confirming that Zungu was indeed in the right spiritual space.

In 2009, Zungu released his second album, titled 'Kuthe Bekwazi,' solidifying his place in the gospel music industry. His 2011 album, 'Kwanqab'umusa,' not only won him the prestigious titles of 'Best Gospel Song' and 'Best Songwriter' at the SABC Crown Gospel Awards 2012 but also sold over 25,000 copies.

The VOC's 29th birthday celebration promises to be a night of divine inspiration, soulful melodies, and heartfelt worship. Attendees can expect to be moved by the powerful performances of numerous acts, which will create an atmosphere of praise and worship.

Valentine's Edition for Swazi Plaza Nights

FUN will be the order of the day and romance will be in the air for the audience at Swazi Plaza during the Valentine's Edition of Nights.

This exciting event, scheduled to take place on February 14, 2024, from 6:30 pm, promises to be a night filled with joy, laughter, and unforgettable experiences for attendees. This Valentine's Edition of Swazi Plaza Nights is set to take romance to new heights, as event organisers have gone above and beyond to create an enchanting atmosphere, with soft lighting, romantic decorations, and live music that will set hearts aflutter.

Couples can expect to be serenaded by local musicians, who will be performing romantic ballads and love songs throughout the evening. The talented artists will create an intimate and magical ambiance, perfect for stealing a dance or sharing a special moment with a loved one.

In addition to the captivating music, Swazi Plaza Nights will also feature a variety of activities and surprises to keep attendees entertained. From couples' games and quizzes to photo booths and surprise performances, there will be no shortage of excitement and laughter.

The highlight of the evening will be the giveaway of 14 dinner vouchers worth E1 000 each. Lucky winners will have the opportunity to indulge in a romantic dinner at one of Swazi Plaza's finest restaurants, creating memories that will last a lifetime.

Swazi Plaza Nights has always been a celebration of community, and this Valentine's Edition is no exception. It is an event that brings people together,



▲ Comedian Mdura performing at a previous Swazi Plaza Night.

fostering a sense of love, connection, and togetherness. Whether attendees are celebrating with a partner, friends, or family, they are guaranteed a night of joy and celebration.



▲ Kids pictured during a previous Kiddies Carnival at Swazi Plaza.

... Kiddies Carnival to entice kids

COMETH a day filled with laughter, games, and endless fun, kids' biggest day of the year, the day of the Kiddies Carnival.

Scheduled for Saturday, February 24, 2024, from 10 a.m onwards, this will be the first Kiddies Carnival of the year. The event will take place at the Swazi Plaza Corporate Place Parking Roof Top. The attendance fee is E10 per child.

The event organisers, Swazi Plaza will provide an unforgettable experience for children while emphasising the importance of play in their development. Swazi Plaza believes that play is not just a way to pass the time; it is an essential part of a child's learning and growth. Through interactive games and engaging activities, the Kiddies Carnival aims to create an environment where children can have a blast while developing crucial skills. Parents can take advantage of this opportunity to indulge in some guilt-free shopping, knowing that

their little ones are in safe hands. The event will provide professional facilitators, childminders, and onsite security to ensure the safety and well-being of all attendees.

The Kiddies Carnival promises a day in the sun, with an array of exciting games and activities. From face painting to a range of kids' games and food, there will be something for every child to enjoy.

To make the experience even more comfortable, attendees are advised to bring their chairs, as sitting space will be limited. This will allow families to relax and enjoy the festivities without worrying about finding a place to sit.

Swazi Plaza also encouraged parents and guardians to bring their children to the Kiddies Carnival and let them explore their imagination, make new friends, and create lasting memories. With the perfect blend of entertainment and education, this event promises to be an unforgettable day for everyone involved.

‘American Fiction’ stars hope film’s success is ‘a lesson for Hollywood’

LONDON - “American Fiction” actors Jeffrey Wright and Sterling K. Brown and director Cord Jefferson hope the film’s five Oscar nominations and its enthusiastic reception will help shift attitudes in Hollywood.

Written by Jefferson, the comedy drama is based on Percival Everett’s 2001 book “Erasure”. It centres on Thelonious “Monk” Ellison, a professor and writer who is having no luck in publishing a new literary novel. But then he jokingly writes an outrageously stereotypical “Black” book out of spite - and it becomes an instant success.

Debut

The film also had a successful launch, winning the People’s Choice Award last September at the Toronto International Film Festival, where it made its debut. It is up for best film and best adapted screenplay Academy Awards, and Wright and Brown are nominated for best actor and best supporting

actor Oscars. Composer Laura Karpman’s score also received an Oscar nod.

But getting the project off the ground was a challenge, said Jefferson, who makes his directorial debut with the movie.

“A lot of people didn’t want to finance it. We fortunately found wonderful partners who were able to make the movie with us, but most people we sent the movie to did not want anything to do with it,” said Jefferson, whose writing credits include TV’s “Watchmen” and “The Good Place.” “Hopefully this will be a lesson, this will serve as sort of an example for Hollywood in the future when they’re nervous about funding something that’s a little bit different,” Jefferson, 42, said.

The movie uses humour to tackle

themes of race, family trauma, loss and acceptance. Thelonious Ellison and his family battle their own issues while reckoning with the expectations placed on them as a Black family in America.

Ellison’s experiences resonated with Wright. But while the actor said he didn’t find what the character goes through rare, seeing his journey portrayed on screen was less common.

“That’s what the film is partly about, is that there’s a whole range of experiences, Black experiences that are outside of the narrow confines of what we’re often fed,” he said.

“Let’s recognise the breadth of the range of the Black experience, and we may find that, you know, it’s just like any other experience.

(Reuters)



▲ Sterling K. Brown attends the Academy Museum of Motion Pictures Gala in Los Angeles, California.

Tony Forbes speaks on AKA’s relationships

IT’S almost a year since rapper Kiernan “AKA” Forbes’s murder and as the day approaches, a few events have been held in his honour.

AKA was shot dead at close range as he left the Wish restaurant on the popular Florida Road in Durban on February 10, 2023.

His father Tony Forbes has been openly honouring his son’s memory ahead of his birthday and even opened up about AKA’s murder, childhood memories and also his love life.

Speaking to ‘Within With Hazel’, Forbes during the two hour interview, got candid about his past relationships, even revealing that actress and fashion designer Enhle Mbali, Black Coffee’s ex-wife, was AKA’s first girlfriend. “I always thought Mbali was gonna be my daughter-in-law, I loved Mbali, I still love Mbali. She’s talented and beautiful as I love Nadia, that’s my nature, I accept and embrace.”

View

Forbes also shared his personal view on AKA’s relationship with the late Anele Tembe that ended tragically when she died in Cape Town while on holiday with AKA.

“AKA and Anele’s relationship shouldn’t have happened,” he told Hazel. “They were at different stages of their lives,” he explained also admitting there was an aggressive side to AKA, and that he also had a heart of gold.

Forbes didn’t go into details about Tembe’s death due to the



▲ Tony Forbes, father to late rapper AKA.

fact that the inquest into her death is yet to begin, but shared that there is a one-sided view to things but the other side will be told during the inquest.

He also acknowledged DJ Zinhle, the mother of AKA’s daughter Kairo as being family.

(IOL)



▲ Popular DJ, whose real name is Simpiwe Sihawu, visited Naluxolo Primary School in Samora Machel, to donate R30,000 worth of essential school supplies, including school shoes, as part of the Hollywood Foundation’s Back to School campaign.

Mr Thela gives back to his Samora Machel community

CAPE Town DJ and producer, Mr Thela, recently teamed up with the Hollywood Foundation to give back to the children of the impoverished Samora Machel township, a community which he hails from.

The popular DJ, whose real name is Simpiwe Sihawu, visited Naluxolo Primary School in Samora Machel, to donate R30,000 worth of essential school supplies, including school shoes, as part of the Hollywood Foundation’s Back to School campaign.

“Giving back to the community has always been my dream,” he said.

“Last year when I got a new team I shared with them that I would like to make this happen,” he said.

Sihawu said the Hollywood Foundation reached out to him and their visions aligned in giving back to the community

With a remarkable R8 million pledge, the campaign by the Hollywood Foundation aims to support parents and empower learners from diverse communities across South Africa, at the beginning of the new school year by providing them with essential school supplies. “I chose Naluxolo Primary School because my mother used to teach here. I am aware of the circumstances of parents and learners from this school.

“I grew up in Samora and so the reality

is lived. I am thankful to the Hollywood Foundation team for this wonderful initiative and I hope it will be the start of many and we can reach more school,” said Sihawu.

This year’s Hollywood Foundation’s Back to School campaign launch holds significance as it features collaborations with influential personalities and organisations that share the Hollywood Foundation’s vision.

“Our Back-to-School Campaign is a crucial initiative aimed at ensuring that every child has the opportunity to learn and grow without the burden of unmet basic needs,” said Vuyisile Ngobese, Public Relations Manager at Hollywood Foundation.

“Partnering with Mr Thela has allowed us to extend our reach and amplify the impact of our campaign. Together, we are working towards a future where every child has access to quality education and a brighter future.”

(IOL)

“Our Back-to-School Campaign is a crucial initiative aimed at ensuring that every child has the opportunity to learn and grow without the burden of unmet basic needs.”

”

▲ AKA and Anele Tembe were also in a relationship.



YOU may be able to increase your serotonin levels without medication by spending time outdoors, adjusting your diet, and more.

Serotonin is a neurotransmitter (chemical messenger) involved in many processes throughout your body, from regulating your mood to promoting smooth digestion.

It's also known for:

- promoting quality sleep by helping regulate circadian rhythms
- helping regulate appetite
- helping with learning and memory
- helping promote positive feelings and prosocial behavior

Researchers haven't reached a consensus on a link between serotonin levels and mental health conditions like depression.

Past research believed that low serotonin levels could be the cause, but more recent research hasn't found this to be the case. It seems most likely that your brain chemicals, environment, and genetic factors all play a role in their development, but more research in this area is still needed.

Read on to learn about different ways to relieve symptoms of mood disorders like depression and potentially increase serotonin naturally.

1. Adjust your diet

You can't directly get serotonin from food, but you can get tryptophan, an amino acid converted to serotonin in your brain. Tryptophan is found primarily in high protein foods, including turkey, salmon, and tofu.

But it's not as simple as eating tryptophan-rich foods, thanks to something called the blood-brain barrier. This protective sheath around your brain controls what goes in and out of your brain.

In a nutshell, tryptophan-rich foods are usually higher in other types of amino acids. Because they're more abundant, these other amino acids are more likely to cross the blood-brain barrier than tryptophan.

Research suggests that eating insulin-raising carbs and foods high in tryptophan may help more tryptophan make it into your brain.

Try consuming tryptophan-rich food with 25 to 30 grams of carbohydrates.

2. Get more exercise

Exercising triggers the release of tryptophan into your blood. It can also decrease the number of other amino acids. This creates an ideal environment for more tryptophan to reach your brain.

Aerobic exercise at a level you're comfortable with, seems to have a beneficial effect, so dig out your old roller skates or try a dance class. The goal is to get your heart rate up.

Other good aerobic exercises include:

- swimming
- bicycling
- brisk walking
- jogging
- light hiking

10 ways to boost serotonin naturally



3. Bring in the bright light

Research suggests that serotonin tends to be lower after winter and higher in summer and fall. Serotonin's impact on mood supports a link between this finding and the occurrence of seasonal affective disorder and mental health concerns linked to the seasons.

Spending time in the sunshine appears to help increase serotonin levels, and research exploring this idea suggests your skin may be able to synthesize serotonin.

To maximize these potential benefits, aim to:

- Spend at least 10 to 15 minutes outside each day.
- Take your physical activity outside to help increase the serotonin boost brought on by exercise.
- Remember to wear sunscreen if you'll be out for longer than 15 minutes.
- If you live in a rainy climate, have a hard time getting outside, or have a high risk for skin cancer, you can still increase serotonin with bright light exposure from a light therapy box.
- If you have bipolar disorder, talk with a mental health professional before trying a light therapy box. Using one incorrectly or for too long has triggered mania in some people.
- Spending time in nature has also been shown to increase serotonin. One small study of 53 subjects looked at the effects of forest therapy on middle-aged women and found

that serotonin levels increased significantly after partaking in forest therapy.

4. Take certain supplements

Some dietary supplements may help the production and release of serotonin by increasing tryptophan.

Before trying a new supplement, it's best to check with a healthcare professional because some supplements may interact negatively with other medications and remedies.

Keep in mind that supplements are not regulated by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). It may be best to choose supplements that undergo quality control through third-party agencies to ensure they contain the ingredients listed on the label in the correct amounts. Always read the label and take the recommended dosage.

Research suggests the following supplements may help increase serotonin and reduce symptoms of depression.

► Pure tryptophan

Tryptophan supplements contain more tryptophan than food, making them more likely to reach your brain. A 2021 review suggests tryptophan supplements can improve mood and decrease anxiety, though more research is needed.

► SAME(S-adenosyl-L-methionine)

SAME appears to help increase serotonin

and may improve depression symptoms. Consider speaking with a healthcare professional before taking it with any other supplements or medications that increase serotonin, including certain antidepressants and antipsychotics.

► 5-HTP

This supplement can easily enter your brain and produce serotonin. A 2021 review suggests it may benefit those with depression, anxiety, and panic attacks. Other research on 5-HTP suggests longer treatment duration studies are needed.

► St. John's wort

While this supplement seems to improve symptoms of depression for some people, research hasn't shown consistent results. It also may not be ideal for long-term use.

Note that St. John's wort can make certain medications, including some cancer drugs and hormonal birth control, less effective.

People on blood clotting medication should not take St. John's wort as it interferes with the drug's effectiveness. You also shouldn't take it with medications, particularly antidepressants, that increase serotonin.

► Probiotics

Research suggests getting more probiotics in your diet may increase tryptophan in your blood, helping more of it reach your brain.

You can take probiotic supplements or eat probiotic-rich foods, such as yogurt, and fermented foods, such as kimchi or sauerkraut.

5. Try massage therapy

Massage therapy may increase your levels of serotonin and dopamine, another mood-related neurotransmitter. It can also help to decrease cortisol, a hormone your body produces when stressed.

One 2018 review of studies suggests massage therapy can benefit varying conditions, including anxiety, insomnia, and prenatal depression.

While you can see a licensed massage therapist, this might not be necessary. Try swapping 20 minutes of massage with a partner, family member, or friend.

6. Try mood induction

Too little serotonin can negatively affect your mood, but could a good mood help increase serotonin levels? Older 2007 research suggests that yes.

Thinking about something that makes you feel good can help increase serotonin in your brain, which can help promote an improved mood in general.

Try:

- visualizing a happy memory
- thinking about a positive experience with loved ones
- looking at photos of things that make you happy, such as your pet, a favorite place,



or close friends

Keep in mind that moods are complex, and it's not always that easy to change your mood. But sometimes engaging in the process of trying to direct your thoughts toward a positive place can help.

7. Manage emotions and stress levels

Research suggests that chronic stress can lead to low serotonin levels and other health issues. Reducing stress may not only benefit your mood but also your overall health.

- Some ways to reduce stress can include:
- ▶ practicing yoga
 - ▶ journaling
 - ▶ going to therapy
 - ▶ practicing deep breathing exercises
 - ▶ listening to calming music

8. Socialise with loved ones

Socialising is imperative for many aspects of wellness. Older research from 2017 has found spending time with loved ones can even increase serotonin levels.

Spending time with animals also has its benefits. Cuddle your pet or try volunteering at an animal shelter for an extra boost of serotonin.

9. Help others

Helping others feels good for a reason: Research has shown that kindness can increase serotonin as well as oxytocin and dopamine. One study found that giving support (over being on the receiving end) is an underrated way to boost mood.

10. Laugh more

It's been said that laughing is the best medicine. A 2021 review looked into the therapeutic benefits of laughter on mental health and found that laughing can lower stress hormones like cortisol, which, in turn, decreases the stress response.

▶ When to get help

If you're looking to increase serotonin to improve mood-related symptoms, including those of depression, these methods may not be enough.

Some people may have lower serotonin levels due to their brain chemistry, and there isn't much you can do about this on your own. In addition, mood disorders involve a complex mix of brain chemistry, environment, genetics, and other factors.

If you find that your symptoms are starting to affect your day-to-day life, consider reaching out for support from a mental health professional. If you're concerned about the cost, our guide to affordable therapy can help.

Depending on your symptoms, you may be prescribed a selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor (SSRI) or another type of antidepressant. SSRIs help keep your brain from reabsorbing the serotonin that's released. This leaves more available for use in your brain.

Keep in mind that you may only need to take SSRIs for a few months. For many people, SSRIs can help them get to a place where they can make the most out of treatment and learn how to effectively manage their condition.

Healthline

Stomach cancer symptoms, risk factors to know

STOMACH cancer, also called gastric cancer, is a cancer that starts in the cells lining the stomach, the organ located on the left side of the upper abdomen that digests food, the National Cancer Institute explains.

In the United States, stomach cancer accounts for about 1.5% of all new cancers diagnosed each year, according to the American Cancer Society. For 2024, the organisation estimates the U.S. will see about 26,890 new cases of stomach cancer and about 10,880 deaths from the disease.

"Stomach cancer is different from other cancers that can occur in the abdomen, like cancer of the colon or rectum (large intestine), liver, pancreas, or small intestine," the organisation notes. "These cancers can have different symptoms, different outlooks and different treatments."

Stomach cancer symptoms

According to the Mayo Clinic, signs and symptoms of stomach cancer may include:

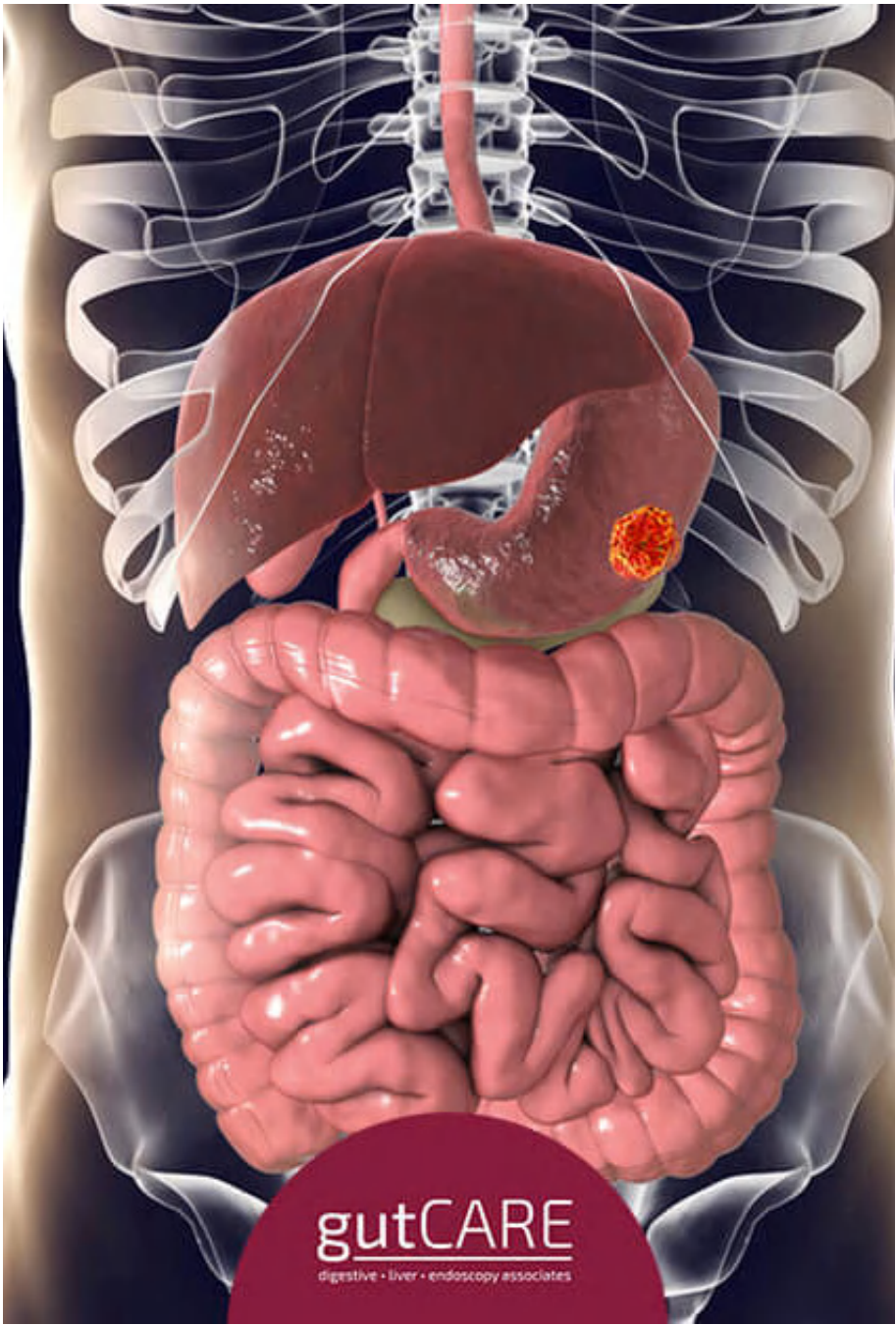
- ▶ Trouble swallowing
- ▶ Belly pain, indigestion and bloating after eating
- ▶ Heartburn
- ▶ Feeling full after small amounts of food or not feeling hungry when you'd expect to
- ▶ Nausea and vomiting
- ▶ Unexpected weight loss
- ▶ Fatigue
- ▶ Black stools

"Stomach cancer doesn't always cause symptoms in its early stages. When they happen, symptoms might include indigestion and pain in the upper part of the belly," the Mayo Clinic says. "Symptoms might not happen until the cancer is advanced."

Stomach cancer risk factors

While the exact cause of stomach cancer is unknown, there are risk factors to be aware of, including:

- ▶ Smoking and alcohol use
- ▶ A diet high in salty, smoked and processed foods or low in fruits and vegetables
- ▶ Being overweight or obese
- ▶ Genetics and family history
- ▶ Infections in the stomach, particularly of *Helicobacter pylori* (H pylori) bacteria
- ▶ Problems with stomach acid and other medical conditions
- ▶ Stomach polyps
- ▶ Environmental and occupational exposures



While stomach cancer can occur in younger people, risk goes up as a person gets older, with most cases diagnosed in people in their 60s or above. It is also more common in men than women.

"Having a risk factor, or even several risk factors, does not mean that you will get the disease," the American Cancer Society notes. "Many people with one or more risk factors never get cancer, while others who get cancer may have had few or no known risk factors."

Stomach cancer treatment

Treatment options will depend on an individual's stage of cancer and other

personal factors, but may include surgery, chemotherapy, radiation, immunotherapy or targeted drug therapy. In June 2022, Keith announced he'd been undergoing treatment for stomach cancer since the previous fall. The multi-platinum-selling singer-songwriter tweeted at the time that he'd had surgery and chemotherapy and radiation in the prior six months.

The National Cancer Institute says there is currently no routine screening test to detect stomach cancer in people at average risk, but people at higher risk may benefit from screening with upper endoscopy, a process in which a thin tube is inserted through the mouth to check for abnormal tissue in the digestive tract. **CBS Health**

AROUND THE WORLD IN PICS



▲ Britain's King Charles and Queen Camilla leave Clarence House, the day after it was announced he has been diagnosed with cancer, in London.



▲ People push a car stuck on a highway following heavy snowfall in the region, during the Spring Festival travel rush ahead of the Chinese Lunar New Year, in Wuhan, Hubei province, China.



▲ Farmers use their tractors to block the A2 highway as they drive to Barcelona during a protest over price pressures, taxes and green regulation, grievances shared by farmers across Europe, near Barcelona, Spain.



▲ Visitors experiment an illusion at the World Of Mind WOM museum, dedicated to the five senses, the human perceptions and the illusions in Brussels, Belgium.



▲ A demonstrator holds up a machete while standing next to a burning barricade during a protest to demand the resignation of Haiti's Prime Minister Ariel Henry, in Port-au-Prince, Haiti.



▲ Local residents react as they stand near their residential building damaged during a Russian missile strike in Kyiv, Ukraine.



▲ Models present creations by Namilia during Berlin Fashion Week in Berlin, Germany.

LIVERPOOL made contact with Xabi Alonso over taking over as the club's manager next season in November, according to a report in France.

Alonso is the overwhelming favourite to become the Reds' new boss next term on the back of Jurgen Klopp revealing he will be stepping down from his role after eight-and-a-half years in May.

Klopp told supporters in an emotional video message last month that he is 'running out of energy' and will be stepping down from his role as manager at the end of the current season.

While the Reds have been somewhat mourning the German's imminent exit, they are faced with the task of finding someone to replace the man who has helped the club once again become one of the giants of world football.

And, according to Foot Mercato, that process began months ago, with the first contact reportedly already made with the leading candidate after Klopp told the club his bombshell news in secret in November.

According to the report, Alonso, who played for Liverpool between 2004 and 2009 and was part of the Champions League winning team of 2005, is top of the club's list of potential new managers.

While the first contact is likely to be to understand if there is a possibility of the 42-year-old taking over his former side, the matter is more complicated because he is currently manager of Bayer Leverkusen.

After taking over last season in what is his first senior managerial role, Alonso has taken the club to the top of the Bundesliga table, two points ahead of Bayern Munich after 20 games, having won 16 of them and remaining unbeaten.

The former midfielder is understood to be happy at his current club and fully focused on trying to win the league title, though that's not to say a deal couldn't still be done.

According to Sky Germany's Florian Plettenberg, the Bundesliga leaders are aware

Reds 'contacted Xabi Alonso in November

...about taking over from Klopp at the end of the season

that Alonso is on Liverpool's shortlist of potential successors for Klopp.

Leverkusen reportedly remain optimistic and assume Alonso will stay at the club this summer, with the Spaniard already involved in their squad planning for next season.

Alonso, who made 210 appearances for Liverpool as a player, has already made a huge impact at Leverkusen despite being in his first full season of senior management.

After taking over the club when they were second-bottom in the Bundesliga in October 2022, he guided them to a sixth-placed finish last season, and the team have become one of Europe's stand-out clubs this term.

Other candidates for the job include Brighton's Roberto De Zerbi, Sporting's Ruben Amorim and Germany's Julian Nagelsmann.

Liverpool's owners FSG have, meanwhile, appointed an experienced sporting executive as the group prepares to begin the hunt for Klopp's successor.

Theo Epstein will join FSG as 'senior advisor' and is set to oversee sporting matters for Liverpool, baseball franchise the Boston Red Sox, and the Pittsburgh Penguins of the NHL among others.

The 50-year-old spent nearly a decade as the Red Sox's CEO, overseeing two World Series wins before enjoying further success at president of the Chicago Cubs between 2011 and 2020.

(Daily mail)



▲ Liverpool made contact with Xabi Alonso over taking over as the club's manager next season in November, according to a report in France.

New arrival explains why he opted for Sundowns over Europe

TASHREEQ Matthews, the newest addition to Mamelodi Sundowns, has discussed why he chose to return home to South Africa rather than compete in Europe's top leagues.

The gifted 23-year-old midfielder was plying his trade overseas when he unexpectedly signed with the Brazilians during the January transfer window, shocking everyone.

After graduating from the Ajax Cape Town Academy, Matthews signed with Borussia Dortmund in 2018 to begin his European career.

Since then, he has had considerable success, especially in Sweden, where he played well for Verberg FC and, most recently, IK Sirius, where he distinguished himself by contributing 10 assists and 11 goals in 33 games during the previous campaign.

After only a few days at the defending DStv Premiership champions, Matthews is thrilled with what he has observed.

Excellent training facilities

"I have seen lots of pictures and social media posts about the club's training base, and I feel so happy to be here in person," Matthews told the club's magazine.

"A club as successful as Sundowns is expected to have access to such excellent training facilities. The level of professionalism and the ambition

of Sundowns align with my aspirations as a player."

The Brazilians prevailed in the competition to sign him despite his remarkable performances from the previous season, drawing interest from Major League Soccer and Europe.

The attacking midfielder, who departed for Europe as a teenager, feels prepared to establish himself in South African football, and his family has supported his choice.

"I shared the details with my family, and, ultimately, they respect my decisions," he said.

"Also, I reached out to a few ex-players and current players like Rushine De Reuck to inquire about the club, and their insights played a crucial role in shaping my decision.

"Their positive feedback encouraged me to choose this path, and I am excited about the journey ahead with Sundowns."

The style of play suits me

Known for his skilful and pacy wing play, Matthews aims to bring an extra spark to the Sundowns' attack as the team prepares to compete on three fronts during the second half of the season: the DStv Premiership, the Nedbank Cup, and the CAF Champions League.

He explained: "The style of play at the club suits me. It's a team that loves to play with the ball and retain possession.



▲ Tashreeq Matthews, the newest addition to Mamelodi Sundowns.

"I have spoken to the coach, and we share the same thought processes. I am eager to play my part in helping the team achieve its objectives for the season."

As Bafana Ba Style gears up for the second half of the season, the arrival of Matthews will certainly add a dynamic edge to head coach Rulani Mokwena's attacking options.

(Sunday World)

Halep doping ban appeal begins in top sports court

LAUSANNE, Switzerland - The top court in global sport began hearing former Wimbledon and French Open champion Simona Halep's appeal against a doping suspension that could end her career.

The 32-year-old Romanian arrived on Wednesday at the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) in Lausanne for three-day proceedings that she hopes will see her provisional suspension lifted.

Halep has been provisionally suspended since October 2022 after testing positive for roxadustat, a banned drug that stimulates the production of red blood cells, at the U.S. Open that year.

Tennis anti-doping authorities also charged Halep with another doping offence last year due to irregularities in her athlete biological passport (ABP), a method designed to monitor different blood parameters over time to reveal potential doping.

Halep has vigorously denied the charges.

The former world number one has blamed contaminated licensed supplements for her positive test at the U.S. Open. She



▲ former Wimbledon and French Open champion Simona Halep.

has accused the International Tennis Integrity Agency (ITIA) of charging her with an ABP violation after the group of experts who assessed her profile learned her identity.

An independent tribunal accepted Halep's argument that she had taken a contaminated supplement but determined the volume she ingested could not have resulted in the concentration of roxadustat found in her positive sample.

(Reuters)



Tyson Fury reveals five-fight plan

TYSON Fury has set out an ambitious five-fight plan, including a long-awaited bout against fellow British boxer Anthony Joshua, as the world heavyweight champion dismissed talk of retirement.

WBC champion Fury's unification bout with Oleksandr Usyk, the holder of the WBO, WBA and IBF belts, had been due to take place in Riyadh later this month. But the eagerly anticipated contest was postponed until May

18 in Saudi Arabia after the British fighter suffered a deep cut above his eye in training. Fury expects to have a rematch with Ukraine's Usyk regardless of the outcome of their first fight, before facing former world

heavyweight champion Joshua in one or two bouts and then Francis Ngannou, whom he beat in October. "I keep hearing talk of people saying I should retire or I'm going to retire soon or whatever,"

Fury said on his Instagram feed on Wednesday, showing stitches above his eye. "I ain't retiring - I've got two fights with Usyk for the undisputed, twice." Fury, yet to face Joshua, added: "Then I'm going to fight AJ (Joshua) at least once, maybe twice, if there's a rematch - if he wants one after the first battering I give him. "Then I'm going to fight Ngannou again. "That's just the start. There's five fights for you to whet your appetite. I ain't going nowhere. I'm 35 years old and in the prime of my life." Fury has won 34 fights with one draw since turning professional in 2008. His most recent fight was a controversial victory over former UFC mixed martial arts world champion Ngannou, making his professional boxing debut. Fury was knocked down but won on a split points decision. Two-time former world champion Joshua is set for a non-title fight with Ngannou, also in Saudi Arabia, on March 8. The last undisputed heavyweight boxing champion was Lennox Lewis, when he beat Evander Holyfield in 1999. (Supersport)



▲Lionel Messi getting ready to take to the field in the game against Vissel Kobe.

Messi wows Tokyo fans in friendly defeat by Kobe

INTER Miami's Lionel Messi pleased Tokyo fans on Wednesday in a friendly match that ended in a 4-3 penalty shootout loss to Vissel Kobe after the game ended goalless. It came days after his absence on the pitch in a recent Hong Kong friendly had angered fans there. He started on the bench in Inter Miami's pre-season game against J-League side Kobe, worrying 28 614 spectators at Tokyo's National Stadium, who chanted "Messi, Messi" in sporadic attempts to bring out the star. They however began to sense their good fortune early in the second half, when the eight-time Ballon d'Or winner and other substitutes began warming up, pleasing hundreds of fans who were seated just behind the Inter Miami bench. The moment came around 15 minutes into the second half, when the World Cup-winning Argentine replaced David Ruiz, sending the ecstatic crowd into a moment of roaring frenzy that was followed by passionate cheers at his every touch. In the 79th minute, he dribbled solo into the Kobe box and fired in a close-range shot

that was saved by goalkeeper Shota Arai. Vissel had also showed promise especially early in the match with former Japan international striker Yuya Osako hitting the post 15 minutes into the game. A minute later, Osako struck the woodwork again. Kobe won the penalty shootout, with Messi no taking part. The game drew a sharp comparison from Sunday when Messi and the team's co-owner David Beckham were booed by tens of thousands of fans in Hong Kong after the star did not play in a friendly. During a press event in Tokyo on Tuesday, Messi said his leg injury was improving but refused to say whether he would play in the Tokyo game. Tickets for the Japan leg of the US Major League Soccer (MLS) club's globe-trotting pre-season tour cost between 10 000 yen (\$68) and 200 000 yen (\$1 346) with "special experience" packages priced even higher. On Sunday in Hong Kong, a crowd of nearly 40 000 who paid for similarly expensive tickets were involved in angry scenes after Messi stayed rooted to the bench during his side's 4-1 win against a Hong Kong select XI. (Supersport)

Woods to make season debut at Riviera Club

TIGER Woods will make his first PGA Tour appearance of the year at the Genesis Invitational at Riviera Country Club in Los Angeles, the golfer confirmed on Wednesday. "Excited to be host next week," Woods posted on social media. The 48-year-old last competed in an official PGA Tour event at the 2023 Masters tournament in April but played in two events in December. Woods played with his son Charlie at the PNC Championship in Orlando on December 18 after playing in the Hero World Challenge in the Bahamas earlier in the month. The 15-times major champion, has struggled since suffering severe leg injuries in a 2021 car crash and he underwent ankle surgery after the Masters in April. The Genesis Invitational is held from February 15-18 and Woods is the host of the event. Last month Woods said he was ending

his long-standing partnership with sportswear company Nike and it will be interesting to see what equipment and clothing he features in at Riviera. After playing at the PNC Championship, Woods said he felt in shape to carry out his plan of monthly competitive action this year. "I'll be able to walk and play," Woods said after the final round of the Orlando event. "We've been working out hard, been able to recover. We've been training every day, which is great. It's been nice to knock off a lot of the rust and some of the doubt that I've had because quite frankly I haven't hit a shot that counted in a long time," he said. The Masters will be held at Augusta National the week of April 8. The 2024 schedule sees the PGA Championship in May, the US Open in June and the British Open in July. (Supersport)



▲Golfer Tiger Woods.

‘Sluga’, Mark Hoare for Botswana National Champs

By Ntokozo Magongo
ntokozom@rubiconmedia.group

THE country’s swimming official’s duo of Meluleki ‘Sluga’ Simelane and Mark Hoare will be officiating in the Botswana Swimming National Championships to be held between February 22 and 25 in Gaborone.

The duo got the invitation last week. They are part of the officials that are recognised by the World Aquatics Federation. The competitions will also be used by Botswana to select the 2024 Paris Olympic Games squad.

“On behalf of the Botswana Swimming Federation, I am writing to extend a formal invitation to the esteemed referees associated with the Eswatini Swimming Federation to officiate at the Botswana National Championships.

The event is scheduled to take place from

DETAILS OF THE INVITATION:

- Event: Botswana National Championship
- Date: February 22 to 25, 2024
- Venue: University of Botswana Long Course Pool

February 22 to 25, 2024 at the University of Botswana Long Course pool. The Botswana National Championships hold significant importance as they have been officially recognized by World Aquatics as a Paris Olympic Qualifying event,” reads part of the statement from the Botswana Swimming Association (BSA).

Competition

The association added that given the prestigious nature of this competition, they are keen on ensuring that the event maintains the highest level of integrity. To achieve this, they believe that the expertise and experience of the World Aquatics listed referees from the Eswatini Swimming Federation, Mark Hoare and Meluleki would be invaluable.



▲Swimming officials Mark Hoare (l) and Meluleki ‘Sluga’ Simelane (r) with swimmer Luca Fraser.

Ntsiki happy with ABSA Cape epic tour invite

By Sibusiso Masilela
sibusisom@rubiconmedia.group

TOP female cyclist Nontsikelelo Mdlovu says she is happy to take part in the 2024 ABSA Cape Epic tour in March.

The Newcomm rider stated that the race will improve her career.

“I am grateful for this opportunity which will be a perfect platform to showcase my career at international level. I am adamant that everything will go according to plan,” she said.

Meanwhile, Newcomm Wheels Principal Mbusi Motsa said they were still working on the logistics of the trip.

“The rider is expected to take part in the

ABSA Cape epic tour and the expenses will be covered by the sponsor (ABSA),” Motsa said.

Mdlovu will take part in the 600km three days competitions following her heroics in several local events.

She recently won the elite female categories during three major races such as the 2Fast and 2Furious, MTN Khemani and the Lowveld challenge, among others.

Oldest

Newcomm Wheels are the current oldest local cycling in the country which has produced several cyclists in the country such Muzi Shabangu, Mduduzi Zwane and Kwanele Jele among others.

The team also organizes the Dups Mafutseni classic which was last staged before the Covid-19 outbreak.



▲The taekwondo team that left the country on Wednesday for Senegal.

Taekwondo national team off to Senegal

By Sibusiso Masilela
sibusisom@rubiconmedia.group

THE taekwondo national team is off to Senegal to compete in the 2024 Olympic qualifiers between Friday and Sunday in Dakar.

The four-member squad left the country on Wednesday by road for Johannesburg where they will connect a flight to Senegal at OR Tambo international airport.

The squad comprises of Wandile Maziya, Mfanewekhaya Dube, Nonhle Maduma and Carlota Munave and they are under guidance of international recognized coach Mancoba Motsa.

The quartet will be eyeing to book slots in the global spectacle in July at Paris, France.

Eswatini Taekwondo Federation (ETF) President Zakhele Dlamini wished the team the best of luck during the assignment.

“We are confident that the team will perform well in the qualifiers and eventually

qualify for the Olympic Games. We are grateful for the support that we have received from EOCGA and Eswatini Sport and Recreation Council (ESRC) during the trip,” he said.

The national team has been funded to the tune of E140 000 by the local Olympic movement (EOCGA) to the West African nation.

The national side is also expected to be part of team Eswatini in the 2024 African Games at Ghana in March.

Other upcoming international upcoming assignments include the World Junior championships and the world senior championships which are scheduled to take place before the end of the year.

The full squad

Coach: Mancoba Motsa

The squad:

Wandile Maziya
Mfanewekhaya Dube
Carlota Munave



▲Newcomm Wheel Rider Ntsiki Mdlovu.

‘Samora’ for AFCON finals on Sunday

Stories by **Sibusiso Masilela**
sibusisom@rubiconmedia.group

ESWATINI Football Association President Peter ‘Samora’ Simelane is off to Ivory Coast to witness 2023 AFCON finals on Sunday in Abidjan.

Simelane left the country on Wednesday to witness the crowning of the new African champion between the four semi-finalists South Africa/ Nigeria, and Ivory Coast /DR Congo.

The semi-finals took place on Wednesday and the results could not be ascertained at the time of compiling this report.

EFA Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Frederick Mngomezulu confirmed Simelane trip.

“The President is currently out of the

country in Abidjan where he has been invited to watch the AFCON finals by the CAF President Dr Patrice Motsepe,” he said.

Simelane recently announced technical changes at Sihlangu technical bench.

The changes further saw the redeployment of assistant coach Anthony Mdluli to the goalkeeper coach position replacing the legendary Sipho ‘Shilton’ Dube who has been relieved from his duties.

Another change saw the roping in of Royal Leopard and Ladies National under-17 trainer Dennis Fakudze in the position of Mbuso Gina.

The senior national team is expected to take part in the 2025 AFCON qualifiers in March and further continue with the 2026 FIFA World Cup qualifiers in June.

Mavuso once worked as National under-20 head coach while Ntibane is currently in charge of the National under-23.



▲Eswatini Football Association (EFA) President Peter ‘Samora’ Simelane will be attending the AFCON 2023 finals.

Manzini Wanderers set to reshuffle technical bench



▲Nyanga ‘Crooks’ Hlophe is now assistant coach at Manzini Wanderers.

MANZINI Wanderers is on the verge of reshuffling its technical bench.

The changes are set to see head coach Nyanga ‘Crooks’ Hlophe being demoted to the assistant coach position.

The veteran mentor will be replaced by his current co-coach Ikabort Masocha in the hot seat.

Masocha joined the ‘Weslians’ this season from neighbours Moneni Pirates together with physical trainer Percy Shongwe.

The decision was taken during the management committee meeting held on Tuesday.

A source close to the matter revealed that the MC is now in the process of implementing the resolutions of the recent meeting.

“The MC is expected to communicate the changes to the coaches before the end of the week and the changes will be

implemented before the next league match against Madlenya,” the source said.

Wanderers Management Committee (MC) Chairman Berger Nxumalo preferred to play his cards closer to his chest when contacted.

“We did meet on Tuesday night, and we haven’t taken any decision from the recent meeting,” he said.

The crowd pullers are currently lying at position 12 with the same number after 16 matches.

The maroon and white ensemble recently beefed up its squad several players such as Sidumo Dlamini, Sibusiso Mkhonta, Hasan Balogun, Simanga Shongwe, Majaha Nhlabatsi, among others in the current transfer window.

This was after the club lost the services of their international trio of Thabiso Mokenkoane (South Africa), Fabrice Mopina and Djo Etwe both from DR Congo.



▲Jwaneng Galaxy Mxolisi Mkhonto in action no Wednesday during the goalless draw against Gaborone United.

Mxolisi’s Jwaneng Galaxy in a goalless draw

By **Ntokoze Magongo**
ntokozom@rubiconmedia.group

MXOLISI Mkhonta’s Jwaneng Galaxy settles for a goalless draw against Gaborone United on Wednesday during the Botswana Premier League.

This was his third match since he joined the Botswana last month. The former Green Mamba Captain started the match on the bench and he got in the second half of the match. In his debut, Mkhonta started on the bench. He was in the first 11 in his second match.

Galaxy are second on the log with 29 points

after 12 matches while Gaborone United is third with 28 points after the goalless draw on Wednesday. Galaxy has played two games less over Gaborone United. Leading is Township Rollers having played two games more over Galaxy.

Galaxy will take a two-week break from the league and they will be back in action on February 21.

Meanwhile, Banele ‘Stiga’ Ndzabandzaba’s Police XI will be in action on Sunday against Moropule Wanderers, kick-off at 4pm. Ndzabandzaba’s side are battling to avoid relegation as they are fifth from the bottom of the 16 teams log, only four points away from the bottom placed team, Nico United.

Nigeria pip Bafana to AFCON final

NIGERIA advanced to the final of the Africa Cup of Nations after defeating Bafana Bafana on penalties on Wednesday night.

Bafana coach Hugo Broos withdrew Thapelo Morena for Siyanda Xulu, while the Super Eagles were able to call on Victor Osimhen, who recovered from a stomach issue. The promising signs in the early stages showed from the Super Eagles, but it was Bafana with the first shot when Sphephelo Sithole forced Stanley Nwabali to a save with a first-time from the area.

It continued to go the way of the South Africans before the half-hour mark, as Percy Tau got a good chance to make the deadlock from unmarked position in the box but failed to trouble Nwabali.

The Super Eagles came alive a little past the water-break and had goalkeeper Ronwen Williams go down to parry Alex Iwobi's curling shot from way out of the box.

At the other end, Bafana could have gone ahead through a telling strike outside the box by Evidence Makgopa following Tau's lay-off but Nwabali made a fine outstretched save.

Osimhen's first sight on goal came a few minutes into the second stanza where he snapped a floated cross in the box over target after attempting applying a header.

The star forward came good midway through the second half as he was brought down by Mothobi Mvala's challenge to win a penalty, allowing William Troost-Ekong to step up and beat Williams.

Bafana showed a double alteration with Mhlali Mayambela in for Xulu before Zakhele Lepasa made way for Themba Zwane.

Drama unfolded late on when Osimhen tapped in a gaping net at one end, only



▲ Evidence Makgopa of South Africa and William Paul Ekong (Captain) of Nigeria during the TotalEnergies CAF Africa Cup of Nations, Semi Final match between Nigeria and South Africa at Stade de la Paix in Bouake, Ivory Coast. (Gallo Images)

for the pitch-side to overturn and signal a penalty for Bafana as a certain Troost-Ekong upended Tau in the lead-up.

It was left to Teboho Mokoena to come forward in added time and the Mamelodi Sundowns man made no mistake by sending Nwabali in the opposite direction.

Clinched

Bafana could've clinched it in added time with a first-time finish by Khuliso Mudau following Nwabali's rebound, but he blazed over – guiding the match to extra-time.

The Super Eagles were desperate to go ahead earlier on through a succession of chances from Ademola Lookman and

Osimhen, but had Williams on high alert.

It got pretty difficult for Bafana inside 115 minutes where Grant Kekana received a straight red for a poor foul outside the area after the referee had consulted the pitch-side team.

The match was settled on penalties, and Nigeria looked on course for victory after converting the opening two whilst Bafana missed through Mokoena and Makgopa.

In the end, the Super Eagles advanced as Kelechi Iheanacho dispatched the winning kick to send them into the final and Bafana in the third/fourth place playoff.

KickOff



▲ Green Mamba's Njabulo 'Magwegwe' Magagula.

'Magwegwe' doubtful for Nsingizini clash

By Sibusiso Masilela
sibusisom@rubiconmedia.group

SMVAF Ingwenyama Cup defending champions Green Mamba could suffer a huge blow during their match against Nsingizini Hotspurs on Saturday at Mayaluka Stadium.

Silky Sihlangu playmaker Njabulo 'Magwegwe' Magagula is currently suffering from a knee knock he sustained during the recent 2-0 loss to Illovo at the same venue.

Green Mamba head coach Ernest Mavuso confirmed the news when contacted by the Eswatini Daily news.

"The player is having a minor knock and he might miss our next match if he fails to recover before the match," he said.

Match

The soft spoken further stated their preparations for the crunch match were going smoothly.

"We are geared up for the match and the entire team is looking forward to the match," Mavuso said.

The green and white ensemble is set to welcome the trio of Njabulo 'D4D' Ndlovu, Sibongakonkhe Silenge and Colani Dlamini from injuries.

The trio missed their recent defeat against the sugar belt side.

The 'Correctional Services' side will be looking to maintain dominance over the ambitious Shiselweni-based side after their 4-0 first round league win.

'Inyoka eluhlazana' recently lost the services of their captain Mxolisi Mkhonto to Botswana Premier League side Jwaneng Galaxy on a two-year contract.

E50 to watch Ingwenyama Cup double header

By Ntokoza Magongo
ntokozaom@rubiconmedia.group

SUPPORTERS will pay E50 to watch the Ingwenyama Cup quarterfinals to be played on Saturday and Sunday.

The first double header will be played at Mayaluka Stadium on Saturday with defending champions, Green Mamba taking on Nsingizini Hotspurs at 1:30pm and the last match will be between Young Buffaloes and Madlenya at 3:45pm.

The second double header is billed for Mavuso Sports Centre on Sunday with Mbabane Swallows first to take centre stage against National First Division League side Pigg's Peak Rangers at 1:30pm and the last match will see Mbabane Highlanders facing Ezulwini United at 4pm.

Ingwenyama Cup Public Relations Officer (PRO) Nkosilehlehle 'Makawosi' Masuku said this was a bargain for the fans as usually they charge E30 for a single header but they had discounted the double header to E50.

"We are looking forward to a great weekend and we invite the nation to come



▲ Supporters will pay E50 for the each of the double header in the Ingwenyama Cup quarter-finals.

out in numbers to support their teams. We are also giving the people away from the urban area to also enjoy the games and that is the reason two games were taken to Mayaluka Stadium," he said.

Saturday (February 10)

Mayaluka Stadium:

Green Mamba vs N. Hotspurs 1:30pm
Y. Buffaloes vs Madlenya 3:45pm

Sunday (February 11)

Mavuso Sports Centre:

M. Swallows vs PPK Rangers 1:30pm
M. Highlanders vs Ezulwini 4pm



**Reds ‘contacted
Xabi Alonso in
November’**

Page 19



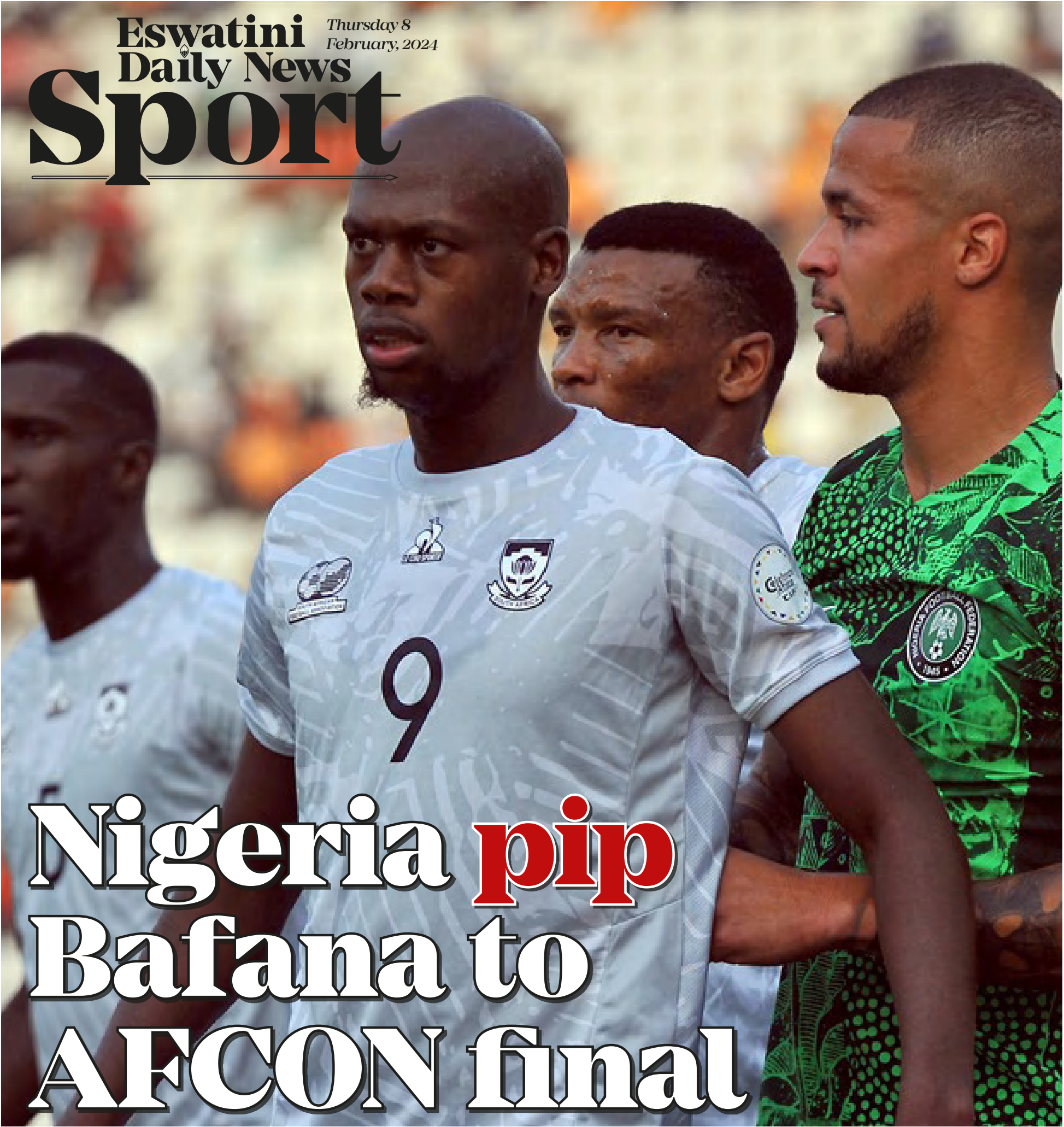
**E50 to watch
Ingwenyama Cup
double header**

Page 23

Eswatini
Daily News

Thursday 8
February, 2024

Sport



**Nigeria *pip*
Bafana to
AFCON final**

... Nigeria advanced to the final of the Africa Cup of Nations after defeating Bafana Bafana on penalties on Wednesday night. *Page 23*



CAF
AFRICA CUP
OF NATIONS
CÔTE D'IVOIRE 23