



New Board takes over at helm of ECESWA



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By Ncaba Ntshakala

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Stories by Ncaba Ntshakala

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Prime Minister Dlamini pointed to the exorbitant salaries enjoyed by executives, contrasting sharply with the very little paid to junior staff. He expressed concern that with each cost-of-living adjustment, the gap widens further, exacerbating social tensions and economic implications.

"We have also created a problem of inequality. Executives are paid exorbitant salaries while junior staff are paid very little," stated the Prime Minister.

"With every major cost of living adjustment, the gap is increasing. I hope that the salary reviews that will follow from today onwards will adjust this gap and not seek to increase salaries for executives. We must hold on to the increase of the cap in salaries. We need redistribution." The Prime Minister applauded the Eswatini Public Enterprises Association (ESPEA) for responding to the call for the meeting. The Premier expressed that ESPEA is very important, and it is a forum that is taken seriously and should be taken



▲ Prime Minister Russell Dlamini during the meeting with SOE CEOs and Chairpersons held at ERS Auditorium.

advantage of, especially to communicate pertinent issues that could improve SOEs as well as the Government.

As he was delivering his remarks, Dlamini said the SOEs must make sure that they deliver on the legislated mandate and refuse mission drift. He said many SOEs were formed for one purpose but they are now pursuing a different purpose; often of prestige and inward-looking.

Economic growth

"We need to understand the important role played by SOEs in any country's economic growth and, as His Majesty's Government, we appreciate the different roles that you carry out in your respective portfolios," said the Prime Minister.

"By setting up semi-autonomous public institutions, the Government sought to achieve optimal efficiencies in the delivery

of national services in terms of speed, cost-effectiveness and professional approach for the benefit of all emaSwati."

He further mentioned that His Majesty King Mswati III graciously convened Sibaya last year where emaSwati openly expressed their views on how the country's development could be expedited.

The Prime Minister explained, "A number of issues were raised during the Sibaya submissions and these need the Government, working with State Owned Entities, to urgently address them. These include amongst others, calls for improved service delivery, support for business startups for our youth, job creation, and deliberately moving away from poverty to wealth creation and many more. It is therefore my request that you align your strategies to these submissions."

... Urges SOE leaders to drive job creation, wealth for all emaSwati

IN his rousing address to State-Owned Enterprise (SOE) CEOs and Chairpersons, Prime Minister Russell Dlamini challenged them to become engines of job creation and economic prosperity for emaSwati.

He emphasised that this is the key to achieving His Majesty King Mswati III's vision of a developed Eswatini.

"I am asking you to go and formulate concepts of business ventures that can create jobs and make the lives of every liSwati better," the Prime Minister declared. "This is the route to His Majesty's vision of being a developed state. We must create jobs and focus on creating wealth for the people." The Prime Minister called upon the SOE leaders to formulate innovative business ventures that can provide employment opportunities and improve the lives of emaSwati. He stressed the importance of aligning these ventures with national development goals and ensuring



▲ Some SOE Chairpersons and CEOs during the meeting with the Prime Minister.

they benefit all communities across the Kingdom. The Premier further warned that the SOEs must do away with the mindset of forking out money from the economy but must strive to inject more into the country's

coffers. "We must urgently do away with the reductionist mentality that seeks to take money out of the economy but we must inject more into the economy to stimulate growth."

'Govt to spearhead Eswatini's economic growth through SOEs'

PRIME Minister Russell Dlamini has declared that state-owned enterprises (SOEs) will be the driving force behind Eswatini's economic development, urging private companies to follow suit.

This shift in strategy marks a significant departure from the traditional approach of relying solely on the private sector.

"I truly believe that for Eswatini

to experience meaningful economic development and growth, Government must lead through SOEs," the Prime Minister declared during the meeting with SOE CEOs and Chairpersons.

"The notion that Government must be on standby, watch and provide a conducive environment has not worked anywhere in the world for developing countries. The

government must lead industrialisation. The government must lead investment. Why in the world did we ever think it would work for us?"

The Prime Minister cited the success of past government-led infrastructure projects and public-private partnerships in creating significant employment opportunities. He argued that relying solely on the private



▲ ESPEA Chairperson Dumisane Msibi who spoke on behalf of the CEOs of the State Owned Enterprises.

... ESPEA pleads for extended terms, proposes Annual Gala Dinner

STATE-Owned Enterprise (SOE) CEOs and Chairpersons have called for a review of their contract terms, proposing an extension from three to five years.

This, they argue, would better match the five-year strategic plans of most SOEs and ensure continuity with the government's vision. Dumisane Msibi, Chairperson of the Eswatini Public Enterprises Association (ESPEA) and Group Managing Director of FINCORP said this when delivering his remarks. "Review of the current tenure of contracts for CEOs from three (3) to five (5) years would align quite well with corporate strategies of the respective SOEs which are mostly five (5) years and most importantly, align with the vision and tenure of the Cabinet of the day and ensure continuity," Msibi explained.

ESPEA further called for timely appointments and replacements of Board Members. Msibi asserted, "We have come to understand that some organisations have found themselves operating without a board for several months while due process is being followed to make appointments which is not an ideal situation and does not conform to the principles of good corporate governance."

Appointment

They also expressed that there must be an Annual Board Evaluation process which will ensure the effectiveness of Boards and ESPEA proposed that this exercise be administered by the Public Enterprise Unit through an external consultancy and highlighted that it can be funded using the Public Enterprise Guarantee Fund.

Msibi said ESPEA believed there must be timely consideration of the appointment of CEOs and CFOs whenever a new appointment or renewal arises to ensure no vacuum is created at any given point.

The ESPEA has also proposed hosting an annual "State Owned Enterprises Gala Dinner," graced by the Prime Minister and his Cabinet. This event envisioned as a platform for reflection and collaboration, would allow SOEs to showcase their successes, share challenges, and receive valuable guidance from the government's leadership.

sector has not yielded the desired results and called for a more proactive approach from the government.

"The significant jobs created were because of Government involvement in infrastructure and in partnership with the private sector. The private sector is important, but they must follow the Government's lead; those are the lessons from the world," he added.

PRESIDENT Cyril Ramaphosa has promised to continue to fight crime and corruption, build on the work of the state capture commission, hire more police officers and fix the energy crisis.

Ramaphosa said he was still considering the National Health Insurance (NHI) Bill after it was sent to him by Parliament.

Ramaphosa said they were fixing port and rail problems, adding that teams were established to focus on this.

While the economy has not performed well since the 2008 global financial crisis, Ramaphosa said that they have managed to create jobs. However, this was not enough as there more young people who were unemployed.

Ramaphosa was delivering the State of the Nation Address (Sona) in Cape Town ahead of the elections.

EFF boycotts 2024 ‘undemocratic’ Sona activities after Malema and other MPs lose court bids to attend

Sona 2024: Parliament welcomes court decision to ban EFF MPs, but party to boycott Sona

The Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) boycotted the Sona after it failed in its urgent application in the Western Cape High Court to get the suspension of its six members lifted.

They were suspended by the national legislature for disrupting last year’s Sona.

Speaker, Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula, said the rules were going to be enforced on Thursday.

Ramaphosa said he was going through the NHI Bill.

“Yes, I am looking for a pen. We plan to incrementally implement the NHI,” said

South Africa State-of-the-Nation Address

President Cyril Ramaphosa promises to revive economy



▲South African President Cyril Ramaphosa has promised to revive the economy.

Ramaphosa in reference to signing the bill into law and implementing it.

He said they have set out a roadmap to fix Transnet and dedicated teams have been established to clear the congestion in the ports of Durban and Richards Bay.

Ramaphosa also said they will allow third parties to enter the railway network as part of measures to improve the performance of Transnet.

He also promised work was underway to reduce the severity of load shedding. This

was because of the work they were doing to add more renewable energy projects to the grid.

There are 120 renewable energy projects that were in development. He said through all these actions they were confident the worst was behind us and the end of load shedding was finally within reach.

Ramaphosa said they were cracking down on state capture and corruption. They have taken a number of initiatives deal with these cases.

“We set up the Investigating Directorate as a specialised and multidisciplinary unit within the National Prosecuting Authority to investigate corruption and other serious crimes,” he said.

“Legislation is currently before Parliament to establish the Investigating Directorate as a permanent entity with full investigating powers,” said Ramaphosa.

The president said that “great progress” was made in bringing those responsible for state capture to justice.

“More than 200 accused persons are being prosecuted. More are under investigation. Stolen funds are being recovered,” he said.

Ramaphosa said freezing orders of R14 billion have been granted to the National Prosecuting Authority’s Asset Forfeiture Unit for state capture-related cases, adding that around R8.6 billion in corrupt proceeds have been returned to the state.

“A restored and revitalised [the SA Revenue Service] SARS has collected R4.8 billion in unpaid taxes as a result of evidence presented at the Commission, while the Special Investigating Unit has instituted civil litigation to the value of R64 billion,” said Ramaphosa.

Ramaphosa said they will fight crime in all its facets and this had led to the employment of 20,000 police officers in the last two years. They will hire 10,000 more police officers this year. (IOL)

By Ncaba Ntshakala

New Board takes over at helm of ECESWA, Minister urges efficiency

THE Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) announced the first ever Board of Directors for the Examinations Council of Eswatini (ECESWA) on Thursday marking a significant milestone for the institution.

This follows the enactment of the Examinations Council of Eswatini Act of 2023, which mandated the establishment of a board. Announcing the Board of Directors was the Minister of Education and Training, Owen Nxumalo.

Minister Owen highlighted the critical need for the board, stating that its primary role will be to “facilitate more efficiency in terms of delivery.” This comes after ECESWA faced challenges last year, including a malpractice scandal involving leaked examination papers. Minister Owen emphasized the importance of transparency and accountability, urging the board to “solve issues that will interrupt the processes of ECESWA.”

The newly appointed board comprises a diverse group of individuals with expertise in education, law, and finance. Dr. Siphon Shongwe of the University of Eswatini (UNESWA) will serve as Chairperson, while Dr. Mandlenkhosi Dlamini, ECESWA’s Registrar, will act as Secretary. Other members include representatives from the Ministry of Education, the National Curriculum Centre, primary and high schools, the Ministry of Finance, the Attorney General’s office, and the private education sector.

Minister Nxumalo further encouraged the board to work well towards achieving His



▲Minister of Education Owen Nxumalo (Seated centre) with the newly-appointed ECESWA Board of Directors.

Majesty’s vision for education, emphasizing the importance of regular communication and reporting any challenges to the Ministry for collaborative solutions.

The board is expected to play a crucial role in ensuring the smooth running of examinations, upholding academic integrity, and contributing to the overall improvement of the education system in Eswatini.

Ngebo Hlophe, a teacher in one of the schools in Manzini said that he believes that

the establishment of the ECESWA board is a positive step towards strengthening the examinations system and promoting transparency in education.

“With a diverse and capable board in place, Eswatini can expect increased efficiency, better governance, and improved public confidence in the integrity of examinations,” stated Hlophe “The board’s effectiveness will depend on its ability to address past challenges, implement strategies for

COMPOSITION OF THE BOARD:

- Dr Siphon Shongwe (UNESWA) - Board Chairperson
- Dr Mandlenkhosi Dlamini (ECESWA Registrar) – Secretary
- Director of Education (From Ministry) - Member
- Musa Hlophe (Director of the National Curriculum Centre) - Member
- Welcome Mhlanga (Principal of SOS High School and President of Eswatini Principals Association (EPA) representing high schools.) - Member
- Kidwell Nkutha (Representative of Primary Schools) - Member
- Sizakele Dlamini (Principal Secretary Ministry of Finance) - Member
- Attorney General’s Representative - Member
- Muzi Dlamini (Good Shepherd Nursing College) – Member

improvement, and work collaboratively with stakeholders in the education sector.”

ECESWA is an assessment body that is responsible for the administration of examinations in the Kingdom of Eswatini which was set up under the Ministry of Education and Training.

It is the sole examination body that is mandated to administer examinations and issue certificates to primary, junior secondary and senior secondary school graduates in Eswatini and was established through the Examinations Regulations of 1984, a product of the Education Act of 1981.

No fuel hike in February

By Bahle Gama
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MOTORISTS will be pleased to know that there will not be a fuel increase in February.

This was disclosed by the Ministry of Resources and Energy in a statement, where it stated that despite the market situation that warrants a fuel increase, there will be no adjustment of the price of all fuel products during the month.

Principal Secretary (PS) Dorcas Dlamini said the reason for this decision is the deficit incurred which is within the allowable limit to cushion the price.

The Ministry observed that in January, global oil prices were on an upward trend.

Brent crude oil traded at an average of E1,562.78 (US\$82.72) a barrel, compared to an average of E1,532.36 (US\$81.11) a barrel realized in December 2023.

The Lilangeni/Dollar exchange rate continued to depreciate to an average of E18.79 in January compared to E18.67 in December 2023.

"In view of the fact that the international oil markets and the Lilangeni/Dollar exchange rate remain highly volatile, the public is encouraged to use fuel efficiently," Dlamini said.

Reacting to the news, the Chairman of the Consumers Forum Mandla Ntshakala said the fuel price maintained was a good thing for emaSwati.

He said this was good news for motorists because the transport used to move from point A to B by consumers requires them to fork out money from their pockets based on a certain budget.

"And we are aware that

a fuel increase affects all the benchmarking commodities, so this decision is warmly welcomed by us because we will not have to worry about tweaking budgets this month, in relation to fuel," he said.

Ntshakala said he wished all ministries including agriculture and commerce would also review the prices of basic commodities in stores and check whether there is correspondence to the way they are bought.

He said some of these ministries may not be responsible for controlling prices but should look into the associations that make the final decision across that particular sector.

The reason is that some do not have a valid reason for hiking a particular commodity or better yet do not consult with the relevant ministry because implementing a hike out of the blue.

"We hope these ministries will investigate and resolve this for the benefit of emaSwati who are barely surviving. An unreasonable hike in basic commodities is very deadly for such people," he said.

Ntshakala said the Forum is also hoping that the next announcement will be about a fuel decrease. He further hinted that he hopes the Phuzumoya fuel reserve facility project will be completed very soon.

"This will allow for the cushioning of motorists, especially at times when the

global oil prices are not in our favour," he said.

On Wednesday, the South African government implemented a fuel hike in which unleaded petrol of both grades (93 and 95) increased by 75 cents a litre, bringing the Gauteng price of 95 unleaded petrol to E23.24 a litre, while the coastal price reached E22.52.

The wholesale price of diesel increased by between 70 cents and 73 cents on Wednesday, leaving the Gauteng diesel price at E21.36 a litre, with the coastal price rising to E20.64.

The wholesale price of illuminating paraffin will be hiked by 53 cents a litre and the maximum retail price for LP gas went up by 37 cents per kg.

According to the Department of Mineral Resources and Energy, South African fuel prices are largely determined by international oil costs and the rand exchange rate, as oil is priced in dollars.

The average Brent Crude oil price increased from E1,468.31 (US\$77.35) a barrel to E1,557.15 (US\$82.03) over the past month.

The Department also noted that this was due in part to attacks on Red Sea oil cargoes, which caused shipping companies to reroute cargoes around the Cape of Good Hope.

This increased shipping rates as the route is much longer. In addition, cold weather hit oil production in the US.

The rand also weakened from around E18.66/US\$1 to E18.77 over the past month, amid concerns that US interest rates may not be cut as early as expected.



▲ Deputy Prime Minister Thulisile Dladla receiving the donation from ESCCOM staff members

ESCCOM staff donates 61 pairs of shoes to DPM for OVCs

By Ncaba Ntshakala

GUIDED by a spirit of philanthropy, the Eswatini Communications Commission (ESCCOM) staff members donated 61 pairs of brand-new school shoes and socks to support vulnerable pupils in the country.

The donation was received by Deputy Prime Minister Thulisile Dladla on Wednesday, bringing smiles to the faces of both the ESCCOM staff and the soon-to-be beneficiaries.

Deputy Prime Minister Dladla expressed her appreciation for the initiative, highlighting the importance of such contributions in ensuring equal access to education for all children.

The DPM further appreciated the generosity displayed by the donors. Dladla has been spearheading the good welfare of children in the country together with the Cabinet Ministers who have been touring across the Kingdom, ensuring that the children are learning in a conducive environment.

Lucky Sibisi of the Help A Child Charity Organisation (HACCO) applauded the efforts and said that he wished some other companies could do the

same. Sibisi added that the lack of proper footwear can be a significant barrier to education, especially for students from underprivileged backgrounds.

"The donated shoes will undoubtedly alleviate this challenge for some students, allowing them to attend school with confidence and comfort," Sibisi said.

Lucky Sibisi asserted that the act of kindness displayed by ESCCOM staff members extends beyond their core mandate of regulating the communications sector.

"By supporting vulnerable students, they are actively contributing to the social and educational development of Eswatini," Sibisi said. "This exemplifies the power of corporate social responsibility and its potential to create positive change within communities."

Dladla also appreciated the continued support received by the DPM's office from the Commission which always supports vulnerable children.

The Eswatini Communications Commission (ESCCOM) is the regulatory body responsible for regulating the communications sector in Eswatini, constituting telecommunication services and networks, broadcasting services, postal services, and the use and allocation of radio spectrum.





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2 men arrested for late Manzini Wanderers player's murder

Stories by Nokunceda Magagula
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LATE Manzini Wanderers legend Wandile 'Ridondo' Malindzisa's alleged killers have been arrested by the police and charged with murder.

The suspects are Kwanele Sobhuza Dlamini (26) from Sidvashini and Mfundo Hlophe (31) from Makholokholo.

Both accused persons appeared at the Mbabane Magistrate's Court before Magistrate Innocent Motsa, where they were formally charged with the murder of Malindzisa.

According to the charge sheet, on February 4, 2024, at Sidvashini, both accused persons jointly assaulted Malindzisa with fists, kicks, and a log multiple times all over his body.

During the court proceedings, Dlamini and Hlophe represented themselves. The prosecution requested that the suspects be remanded in custody until February 16, 2024, pending their committal to the High Court. Magistrate Motsa granted the submission and advised

both accused individuals to file their bail applications at the High Court.

The arrest of the duo follows reports of the former football star being assaulted by a group of men, which resulted in his death. The incident occurred in Sidvashini, KaQobonga, on Sunday morning. It is alleged that Malindzisa was attacked following a verbal altercation with the assailants, suspected to be gang members from the area.

Sources indicate that Malindzisa went out with friends and visited a hangout spot at Sidvashini (KaQobonga) to enjoy themselves throughout the night. While there, he reportedly passed out and was left sleeping by his friends as they continued to have fun. Unbeknownst to him, his friends claimed that he was pickpocketed while asleep, losing an undisclosed sum of money and his cell phone.

Upon waking up, Malindzisa became furious and questioned those around him about his missing money. It is said that he confronted a certain lady who was pinpointed as the culprit. During the confrontation, a group of men believed to be gang members, retaliated by attacking the player and causing injuries.



▲ The late Manzini Wanderers legend Wandile 'Ridondo' Malindzisa

The situation escalated, and other patrons were unable to diffuse the situation as the gang members continued their violent actions.

"They say he was badly injured and was rushed to the hospital, where he was pronounced dead upon arrival," said a source.

A family member confirmed 'Ridondo's death.

"He died while undergoing treatment at Mbabane Government Hospital. There is nothing much I can say for now except to confirm that," the family member briefly stated.

Man arrested for child maintenance of 2 years

A 41-year-old man, Sifiso Nxumalo, has been arrested for violating Section 227 of The Children Protection and Welfare Act 2012 after he failed to provide support for his child for a period of two years.

Nxumalo appeared before Magistrate Sifiso Vilakati at the Mbabane Magistrate's Court. According to the charge sheet, Nxumalo neglected his 18-year-old daughter from July 2022 to February 2024, during which time he was legally obligated to provide maintenance and contribute to her well-being. This includes the provision of food, clothing, healthcare, and education.

During the court proceedings, the accused pleaded guilty to the charge, and his plea was accepted. The prosecution noted that the accused had no prior convictions. In his defence, Nxumalo explained that he had faced financial difficulties since losing his job in 2022, which was exacerbated by the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

"I lost my job due to the effects of Covid-19, and as a result, I was unable to provide for my daughter as I had done before. Your worship, I sincerely apologize for my actions, but they



▲ A 41-year-old man, Sifiso Nxumalo, has been arrested for violating Section 227 of The Children Protection and Welfare.

were driven by unforeseen circumstances," Nxumalo stated.

He also expressed remorse for his behaviour and requested the court to consider his current unemployment status when determining his sentence.

Senior Magistrate Vilakati emphasized the importance of fulfilling parental responsibilities, even in the face of unemployment, and suggested alternative ways to generate income, such as entrepreneurship.

Consequently, the magistrate ordered the accused to resume paying the usual amount he had contributed towards maintenance before ceasing payments.

Sentencing was postponed to February 26, and on that day, he is required to present the proof of payment to the court.

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By Bahle Gama
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THE Eswatini Water Services Corporation (EWSC) has taken to court its customer for refusing plumbers access to his premises to repair a damaged sewer pipe system.

In an urgent application, EWSC Operations Coordinator in the Northwest Ronald Zulu told the court that the customer Bongani Delisa Dlamini of Ezulwini was refusing entry to the company's plumbers and technicians to fix the damage.

According to Zulu, in 2015, EWSC developed a sewage system that was to be installed at Satellite, Ezulwini.

The route of the pipe system went through some of the individual homesteads in the area. This then necessitated that a survey be conducted to determine the affected individuals and/or homesteads. To this end, the Ministry of Agriculture was engaged to conduct the assessment of the affected crops as well as the reasonable amount that would be payable as compensation.

The ministry determined that Dlamini's property would be affected. EWSC as well as the ministry then embarked on a consultative process together with Dlamini to discuss the extent of the effect as well as the proper and reasonable compensation.

On July 18, 2016, after a consultative process, it was determined that E22 225 was a reasonable compensation, which was then paid to Dlamini on August 23, 2016.

Following the payment of the amount of the compensation, EWSC proceeded to install the sewer pipe system. The line passing through Dlamini's premises is about 80 metres. Following the installation of the sewer pipe system the parties continued with their usual business.

Early this year, EWSC was installing a water pipe system for one of Dlamini's neighbours when plumbers on site were approached by a man who reported that there was a water leakage at Dlamini's premises, and from the look of things the source was a pipe beneath the ground.

A preliminary investigation by the team revealed that there was indeed a leak, and the root cause was sand that had penetrated the pipe canal. An assessment was also undertaken

Customer refuses EWSC access to fix damaged sewer system

... Putting company at risk of paying E200 000 for contravening the Environmental Act



▲ Eswatini Water Service Corporation (EWSC) technicians at work.

on the extent of the leakage and how long the sand had been in the canal.

The Assessment revealed that an area of about 40 metres had been affected and required a whole piping system within Dlamini's premises to be replaced.

Excavate

EWSC Chief Plumber Lucky Mahlala who was on site advised that there would be a need to also excavate the ground.

On January 12, Mahlala and his team proceeded to Dlamini's premises and commenced the repair of the damaged pipe. Whilst excavating the affected area, Dlamini arrived and informed the technicians to stop what they were doing and vacate the premises.

EWSC engaged Dlamini and explained its statutory obligation to maintain and repair all damaged sewer systems, one that is onerous

for the benefit of the general public.

Furthermore, it was explained to Dlamini that not only did the EWSC have a duty of good faith towards the general public but also had an obligation to comply with other statutory obligations, especially those that related to the preservation of the environment.

It was specifically explained to the Dlamini that the continuing leakage and excavated area posed an environmental health hazard and needed to be addressed forthwith. It was explained that the danger was extreme considering that nearby was a stream utilised by the public.

Installation

This stream is less than 5 metres away from the hazardous area. Notwithstanding being advised, Dlamini was adamant that he was not going to allow any maintenance by the

company on his premises. When asked about the reasons why he was refusing, he said he had not been compensated for the installation of the pipe.

On January 12, EWSC received a final notice from the Eswatini Environmental Authority (EEA) and was told the company was contravening the Environment Management Act of 2002 for digging and leaving open sewer pipes resulting in a strong and unpleasant odour and wastewater from the sewer pipes being released to the nearby stream.

Contravening the Act would result in ESWC paying a fine of about E200 000.

Dlamini was engaged again and on January 26, an attempt was made yet again to repair the damaged pipe at his premises. He was adamant and denied EWSC plumbers from entering his premises.

He allegedly threatened the plumbers with violence, particularly that he would shoot them if they dared come onto his property. He also took the vehicle's keys from Mahlala and the plumbers were held captive for more than four hours before he returned the keys.

EWSC moved an urgent application at the High Court to have Dlamini ordered to grant access to his premises for plumbers to repair the damaged sewer pipe.

The court granted the application and further ordered Dlamini not to interfere with the lawful maintenance of the repair and to ensure that members of the Royal Eswatini Police Service assist with the execution of the order by ensuring peace is maintained between the two parties.



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Makate's victory a win for litigation funding

VODACOM's long losing streak in the Please Call Me case is not getting any better. This week the Supreme Court of Appeal (SCA) gave Vodacom 30 days to come up with a reasonable compensation package for Please Call Me inventor Kenneth Nkosana Makate.

Uganda's central bank nets \$339 mln

UGANDA'S central bank raised 1.3 trillion shillings (\$339 million) in a rare private placement Treasury bond auction this week, against a target of 1.5 trillion shillings, results of the auction showed on Thursday.

The private placement bond auction was the first since June 2022.

Rand steady ahead of manufacturing data, SONA

JOHANNESBURG - South Africa's rand was little changed in early trade on Thursday, ahead of manufacturing production figures and President Cyril Ramaphosa's annual address to parliament later in the day.

At 0635 GMT, the rand traded at 18.9000 against the dollar ZAR=D3, not far from its previous close of 18.8900.

The dollar =USD was also flat against a basket of global currencies (Reuters)

Agricultural sector thrives as: Eswatini among leaders in banana production systems

By Nokunceda Magagula
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THE Minister of Agriculture, Mandla Chawuke, announced that Eswatini is among the few countries in Africa that have successfully established a banana production system.

The Minister made this declaration during the handover ceremony for the second phase of the fruit tree production and marketing project by the Tawain government, as well as the launch of the emerging fruit tree production and marketing project at the Malkerns Research Station on Thursday.

During the event, the Minister expressed gratitude for the collaborative efforts and longstanding diplomatic partnership that have contributed to the achievements in food security and economic growth in the Kingdom of Eswatini.

"This gathering celebrates the milestone of our successful collaboration during our long-standing diplomatic partnership relating in particular to food security," Chawuke said.

He highlighted the significance of fruit tree production and emphasized the privilege and honor that the government and the entire Kingdom feel in receiving Phase II of the Fruit Tree Project

Seedlings

The Minister explained that recent studies revealed a major constraint faced by fruit farmers in Eswatini, which was the lack of good quality and affordable seedlings. "Studies conducted recently indicated that lack of good quality and affordable seedlings in the country was a major constraint to fruit farmers" he said.

He added that to address this issue, the governments of Eswatini and the Republic of China on Taiwan initiated the Fruit Tree Production



▲ Minister of Agriculture Mandla Chawuke with Tawain Ambassador Jeremy H.S. Liang during the event

Project, which aimed to produce seedlings through tissue culture.

"The Ministry of Agriculture received infrastructure and facilities from Taiwan to support the effective production of healthy and sufficient fruit seedlings in the country" Minister asserted.

As the current phase of the program nears completion, the developmental partner handed over project equipment to the Ministry.

The donated equipment includes passenger vehicles, a cold storage vehicle, a tractor, seedling production tunnels, and shade nets. These resources are expected to improve work efficiency and service delivery to farmers in Eswatini.

Chawuke expressed appreciation for the opportunity to collaborate with experts from Taiwan and hoped that there were adequate skills transfer between the experts and the local team.

He emphasized the responsibility of the Ministry to ensure the sustainability of the program, which aims to enhance food and nutrition security and create job opportunities for the people of Eswatini.

Furthermore, the Minister highlighted the achievement of Eswatini in estab-

lishing a fully operational banana production system, making it one of the few countries in Africa to do so. "Eswatini is amongst the few African countries to establish a full banana production," he said.

He emphasized the importance of agriculture in the country's mandate to combat hunger and poverty, as stated by His Majesty King Mswati III and the people at the recent Sibaya gathering.

The Minister stressed that a country that cannot feed itself risks losing its sovereignty and mentioned the pain of importing 50 per cent of fruits, which employs non-citizens. He called for the development and implementation of pragmatic strategies to move the agricultural sector forward.

The Ministry of Agriculture is in the process of completing a strategic plan that will guide the sector's development. This plan will align with the Government's Grand Plan, which will be the result of the Sibaya gathering commanded by His Majesty. The Minister acknowledged the need for funding and looked to developmental partners, such as the Republic of China in Taiwan, for the necessary financial as-

sistance.

The Ministry's strategy focuses on three main areas: service delivery and decentralization, food security and self-sufficiency, and job creation. Detailed action plans and activities under these categories have been identified and will be discussed in future forums.

Regarding service delivery and decentralization, the Minister emphasized the importance of being customer-centric and taking services directly to the people. Food security and self-sufficiency efforts include dam construction, irrigation development, commercializing farming, and providing access to finance for farmers. Job creation initiatives will target youth, with a focus on agro-product beneficiation and the development of value chains to generate downstream industries.

With the groundwork laid and the available equipment, the Ministry aims to produce 100,000 banana seedlings per season. This will contribute to the commercialization of agriculture under the Food Security and Self-Sufficiency theme, in conjunction with the development of LUSIP II.

The Minister expressed gratitude to the Republic of China on Taiwan for their ongoing technical and financial support in various projects. He extended thanks to the Ambassador and requested that the gratitude of His Majesty's Government be conveyed to the Taiwanese Government and people.

Equipment

The Minister assured that the facilities and equipment received will be put to good use for continuous production of healthy and quality bananas, from the tissue culture laboratory to the net houses and the farmers' fields, for years to come.

Lastly, the Minister announced the commencement of the third phase of fruit tree production in Eswatini, supported by the Republic of China. The Emerging Fruit Tree Production, Marketing, and Capacity Building Project will establish orchards for farmers using the seedlings produced in Phase II.

The Ministry expressed appreciation for the support received and committed to ensuring the project's growth and sustainability for future generations. Stakeholders were also called to play their part in this endeavor.



▲ The minister with Tawain ambassador during the handover and launch of the Eswatini-Taiwan Fruit Tree Production & Marketing Project.



FX RATES

| Notes/Cash | | |
|------------------------|--------------|---------|
| | Buy | Sell |
| U.S. Dollar | 18.2950 | 18.7579 |
| G.B. Pound | 23.0861 | 23.7701 |
| EURO | 19.7393 | 20.3461 |
| Bank Rate (July 2023) | | 7.50% |
| Prime Rate (July 2023) | | 11% |
| Inflation (July 2023) | | 4.5% |
| Petrol | E20.50/Litre | |
| Diesel | E20.50/Litre | |
| Paraffin | E16.75/Litre | |





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Makate's court victory against Vodacom also a win for litigation funding

VODACOM's long losing streak in the Please Call Me case is not getting any better.

This week the Supreme Court of Appeal (SCA) gave Vodacom 30 days to come up with a reasonable compensation package for Please Call Me inventor Kenneth Nkosana Makate.

Given the 15 years of legal dispute and the monstrous legal bills that come with it, Makate would not have made it this far without funding of the kind provided by Sterling Rand Litigation Fund, which has reportedly backed his legal campaign to the tune of millions of rands.

The fund is in line for a handsome payout once the case is finally settled, and should Makate clear the next hurdle at the Constitutional Court – where Vodacom has vowed to appeal the SCA decision.

Litigation funding occupies an interesting, if limited, space in SA lawfare, having featured in the 2020 Steinhoff case, where the role of third-party funders was discussed (see below).

In 2020 it was estimated by the Swiss Re Institute that litigation finance was worth \$17 billion a year in funding, and is a global phenomenon that is gaining traction in the insurance and



▲ This week the Supreme Court of Appeal (SCA) gave Vodacom 30 days to come up with a reasonable compensation package for Please Call Me inventor Kenneth Nkosana Makate (Left).

other sectors.

A report by GRM Intelligence says litigation funding has exploded in recent years and “will become a mainstream asset class in Africa”.

It's a way for shallow-pocketed litigants to take on the giants and beat them. It's also a popular way to get class action suits off the ground, as was done by Richard Spoor Inc in the silicosis case

against the mines, and more recently the coal case.

Read/listen: Litigation funding as an alternative investment

Third party funders typically take a percentage of the winnings, anywhere between 25% and 50%. Sometimes these percentages are not disclosed, and that can potentially prejudice legal outcomes.

Third party litigation funder Augusta Ventures has a £585 million (R14 billion) war chest to assist claimants around the globe, effectively placing a Patriot missile in the hands of woefully underarmed combatants.

They also set a cap on how much they're prepared to spend on the case. Augusta Ventures wants a 1:8 costs-to-awards ratio,

meaning the total budget to run the case must be no more than an eighth of the claim value.

“Litigation funding is generally not considered a loan, but rather as a form of an asset purchase as the funding does not have to be repaid if the plaintiff's lawsuit is unsuccessful. If the litigant loses, he does not have to repay the money,” says corporate finance analyst Maano Thovhakale.

Is this legal? Pretty much. The courts have ruled that agreements to share the proceeds of lawsuits is not necessarily unlawful and need to be considered when litigants cannot finance their own cases.

Makate came up with the Please Call Me idea in 2000 when he was an employee at Vodacom – though there are claims that MTN beat him to it. The idea was to allow Vodacom users to send a free text message to other Vodacom users requesting a call back, which is particularly useful when airtime has run out.

Makate claimed he was entitled to a share of the revenue generated from his idea, which Vodacom eventually conceded – though the amount of compensation and its duration was the basis of the dispute. This fell outside the context of a traditional employer-employee relationship, as Makate departed Vodacom's employment some years later.

Though it's taken 15 years to get this far, it's not over yet.

Vodacom says it is “surprised and disappointed” with the SCA ruling and plans on appealing it to the Constitutional Court.

At this stage Vodacom does not have much choice, given a potential payout running into billions of rands should it lose at the ConCourt. (Moneyweb)



Uganda's central bank nets \$339 mln in rare private placement debt auction

UGANDA's central bank raised 1.3 trillion shillings (\$339 million) in a rare private placement Treasury bond auction this week, against a target of 1.5 trillion shillings, results of the auction showed on Thursday.

The private placement bond auction was the first since June 2022.

The bank typically sells government bonds monthly through open auctions, but in 2020 began selling some bonds using private placements where it invites only specific banks to take part in the offer as opposed to customary open auctions.

In this week's auction, three-year, five-year, 10-year, 15-year and 20-year Treasury bonds were on offer and the central bank received bids worth 2.3 trillion shillings.

The debt notes are due to mature at various dates between 2026 and 2043.

Eight banks were invited to participate in the auction, including local units of global lenders Standard Bank, Standard Chartered, Citibank and Absa. (Reuters)

“Three-year, five-year, 10-year, 15-year and 20-year Treasury bonds were on offer and the central bank received bids worth 2.3 trillion shillings”



▲ The rand traded at 18.9000 against the dollar ZAR=D3, not far from its previous close of 18.8900.

South African rand steady ahead of manufacturing data, SONA

JOHANNESBURG -South Africa's rand was little changed in early trade on Thursday, ahead of manufacturing production figures and President Cyril Ramaphosa's annual address to parliament later in the day.

At 0635 GMT, the rand traded at 18.9000 against the dollar ZAR=D3, not far from its previous close of 18.8900.

The dollar =USD was also flat against a basket of global currencies.

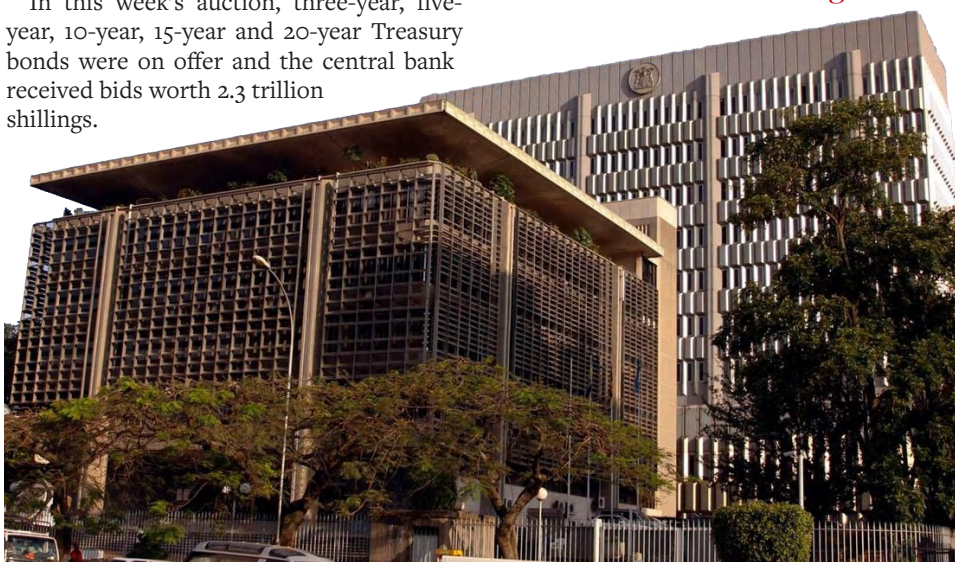
Investors will be looking ahead to Ramaphosa's State of the Nation Address (SONA) around 1700 GMT for any solutions he might propose to the nation's power

shortages and logistics crisis.

“Investors will be unwilling to take any significant positions ahead of the SONA later today, although one eye will also turn to a whole range of Federal Reserve, European Central Bank and Bank of England speakers that will be taking to the podium today and which could influence offshore market sentiment,” said ETM Analytics in a note.

South Africa's benchmark 2030 government bond ZAR2030= was flat in early deals, with the yield at 9.885%

(Reuters)



▲ RES Corporation General Operations Manager Patrick Myeni was recently appointed EEC Board

Google rebrands Bard chatbot as Gemini, rolls out paid subscription

SAN FRANCISCO - Google on Thursday renamed its Bard chatbot after the new artificial intelligence that is powering it, called Gemini, and said consumers can pay for better reasoning capabilities as it vies with Microsoft to win subscriptions.

U.S. customers can subscribe for \$19.99 a month to access Gemini Advanced, which includes a more powerful Ultra 1.0 AI model, the Alphabet subsidiary said.

Subscribers will receive two terabytes of cloud storage that typically cost \$9.99 monthly, and they will soon gain access to Gemini in Gmail and Google’s productivity suite.

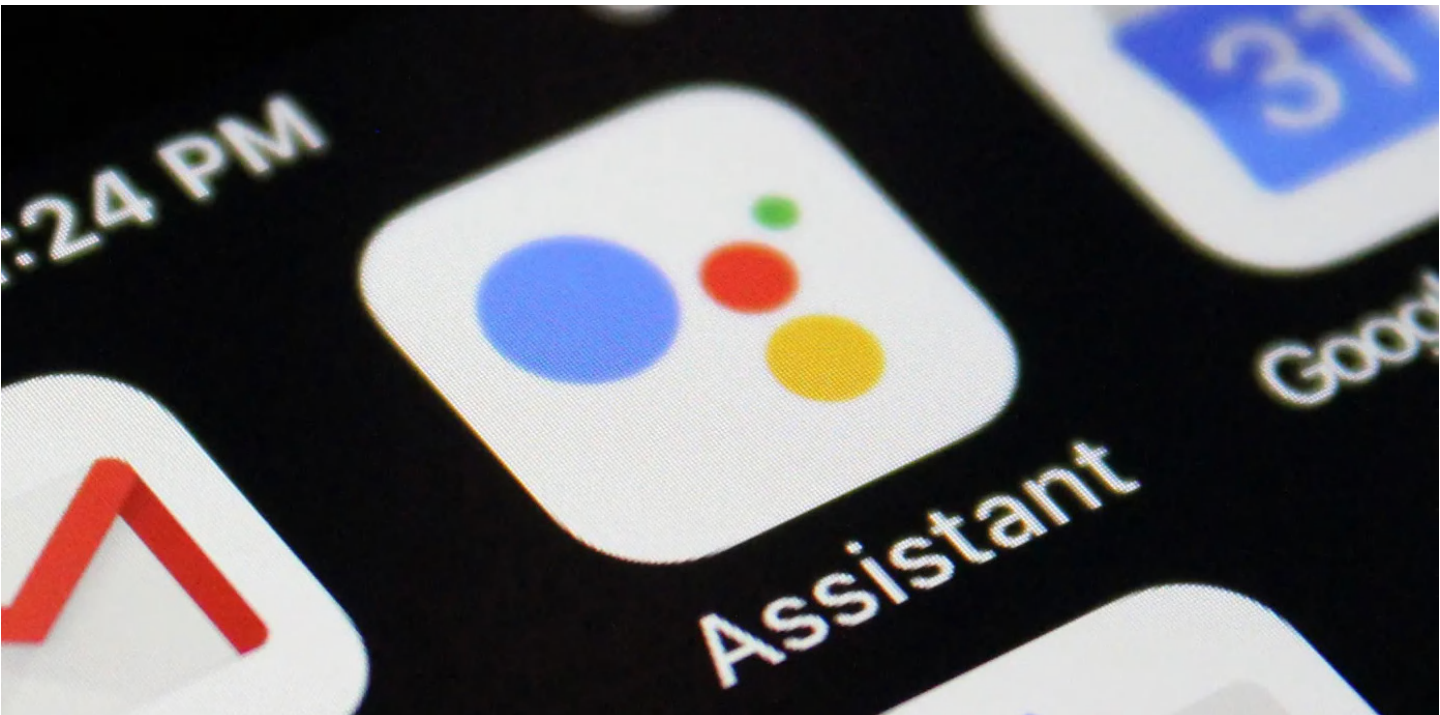
Answers

This bundle, known as the Google One AI Premium plan, represents one of the company’s biggest answers yet to Microsoft and its partner OpenAI.

It also shows growing competition over consumers, who now have several paid AI subscription options.

OpenAI’s ChatGPT Plus a year ago pioneered the market for buying early access to AI models and other features, while Microsoft recently announced a competing subscription for AI in programs such as Word and Excel. Both subscriptions cost \$20 a month in the United States.

In an interview, Product Lead Jack



▲Subscribers will receive two terabytes of cloud storage that typically cost \$9.99 monthly, and they will soon gain access to Gemini in Gmail and Google’s productivity suite.

Krawczyk said cloud storage, Gmail and other integrations would put Google’s subscription in harmony with how people work.

“When I pay \$20 a month, access to a model alone is not really enough,” he said.

Krawczyk said the target market is people who want the most capable generative AI technology that can conjure new content on command and handle queries where no obvious answer exists online.

Google, hoping for another product with billions of users, will use its large base of Android phone customers to give it a leg up.

(Reuters)



▲In a statement, Pakistan’s interior ministry said the move to cut off phone and internet services was prompted by recent incidents of terrorism in the country.

Pakistan cuts off phone, internet services on election day

PAKISTAN has temporarily suspended mobile phone network and internet services across the country to combat any “possible threats,” a top ministry said, as the South Asian nation commences its national election.

In a statement, Pakistan’s interior ministry said the move was prompted by recent incidents of terrorism in the country.

The internet was accessible through wired broadband

connections, local journalists posted on X earlier Thursday.

But NetBlocks, an independent service that tracks outages, said later that Pakistan had started to block internet services as well.

The polls have opened in the nation and will close at 5 p.m.

The interior ministry didn’t say when it will switch back on the mobile services.

Though it’s not unprecedented for a nation to switch off the mobile networks and internet on key

days — governments in countries including neighbor nation India, Uganda and Ethiopia in Africa have also made similar moves in the past — a nationwide block is still very uncommon.

Free speech advocates have criticized governments in the past for what they see as overuse of mobile network shutdowns, arguing access to information and communication should be maintained even more during political votes.

(TechCrunch)

Glass supercharges smartphones with AI – minus hallucinations

YOUR phone’s camera is as much software as it is hardware, and Glass is hoping to improve both.

But while its wild anamorphic lens creeps to market, the company (running on \$9.3 million in new money) has released an AI-powered camera upgrade that it says vastly improves image quality — without any weird AI upscaling artifacts.

GlassAI is a purely software approach to improving images, what they call a neural image signal processor (ISP). ISPs are basically what take the raw sensor output — often flat, noisy, and distorted — and turn that into the sharp, colorful images we see.

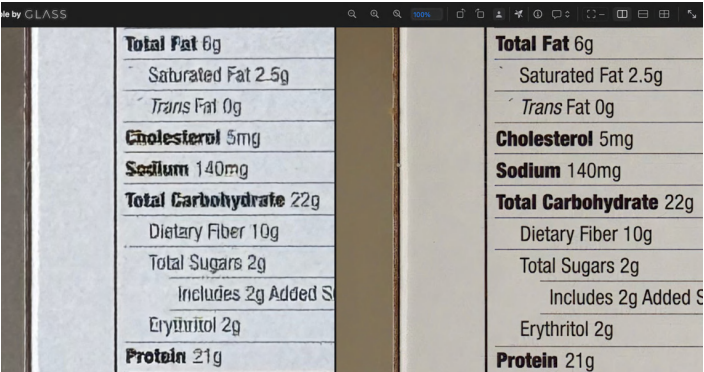
The ISP is also increasingly complex, as phone makers like Apple and Google like to show, synthesizing multiple exposures, quickly detecting and sharpening faces, adjusting for tiny movements, and so on. And while many include

some form of machine learning or AI, they have to be careful: using AI to generate detail can produce hallucinations or artifacts as the system tries to create visual information where none exists. Such “super-resolution” models are useful in their place, but they have to be carefully monitored.

Glass makes both a full camera system based on an unusual lozenge-shaped front element, and an ISP to back it up. And while the former is working towards market presence with some upcoming devices, the latter is, it turns out, a product worth selling in its own right.

“Our restoration networks correct optical aberrations and sensor issues while efficiently removing noise, and outperform traditional Image Signal Processing pipelines at fine texture recovery,” explained CTO and co-founder Tom Bishop in their news release.

(TechCrunch)



▲Photo provided by Ziv Attar showing an iPhone 15 Pro Max zoomed to 5x, and the Glass-processed version of the phone’s RAW images.

‘EFF will give jobless matrics R1 000 grant’

IF the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) have their way, those who have passed matriculation but were not employed or absorbed into the higher education system would be paid a monthly support grant. This is among the commitments that EFF leader Julius Malema promised to scores of Durban University of Technology (DUT) students on Monday afternoon.

The gathering was part of the party's activation campaign ahead of its manifesto launch, billed for Moses Mabhida on Saturday.

Give grant according to education
He slammed the R350 Social Distress Grant offered to unemployed South Africans, saying instead people should be granted a basic income grant based on their level of qualifications to improve the literacy rate in the country.

“You must get it according to your qualifications. Why must we get the same amount of money when we are not educated the same? We want you to go to school, and when you can't get a job, the government must pay you for going to school. This will ensure that those who follow after you know that going to school pays,” said Malema to a loud applause from the student community.

The red berets hope to leverage their dominance in student elections at various campuses in KwaZulu-Natal towards their ambitious plan to win the province outright or be in a coalition government. The party's student wing, known as the Student Command, has been in charge of DUT itself for six years running.

KZN targeted for new order



▲ President of the Economic Freedom Fighters Julius Malema told students that basic income grant should be paid according to qualifications.

The ANC-aligned South African Student Congress (Sasco), like its mother body, has recorded an electoral decline over the years, with some campuses being wiped out completely.

Malema also used the gathering to promise that there will be a new government in the province after the 2024 elections, vowing to remove the ANC from power at all costs.

“Whatever happens, I can tell you now that the ANC will not be in

KwaZulu-Natal. Prepare yourself for the people's government, a caring government,” he said.

The EFF has made it known that it wants to receive 1 million new votes in the province. KZN is one of the provinces that will be closely watched ahead of the elections, with the IFP, DA, EFF, and the new ANC splinter grouping uMkhonto weSizwe party all vying for the ANC's scalp.

(Sunday World)

Ethiopia names new deputy prime minister

ADDIS ABABA - Ethiopia's parliament on Thursday approved the appointment of intelligence service chief Temesgen Tiruneh as deputy prime minister, replacing Demeke Mekonnen, who had served in the role for 11 years, the government said.

In addition, parliament accepted the nomination of Taye Atske Selassie, a former ambassador to the United Nations, as foreign minister. Demeke had also served as foreign minister since 2020.

Temesgen, who has coordinated the government's response to a conflict that broke out last year in the Amhara region, was elected in late January to succeed Demeke as a vice president of the ruling Prosperity Party.

A vice president of the party typically serves as deputy prime minister.

Ethiopia's national security adviser Redwan Hussein was chosen to replace Temesgen as head of the National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS).

Ethiopia's top spy agency.

A long-time ally of Abiy, Redwan was

also the lead government negotiator during the peace deal brokered in Pretoria to end the civil war in the Tigray region in 2022.

His previous experience includes serving as a state minister at the foreign affairs ministry, and also as Ethiopia's ambassador to Eritrea.

Demeke has been a face of continuity during a turbulent period in Ethiopian politics. He was appointed deputy prime minister after the death of longtime Prime Minister Meles Zenawi in 2012 and survived a reorganisation of the ruling party after Abiy came to power in 2018.

Abiy appointed Demeke as foreign minister days after civil war broke out in November 2020 in the northern Tigray region. The conflict lasted two years and killed tens of thousands of people.

Mekdes Daba, a former World Health Organization official, has also been appointed to replace Lia Tadesse as health minister, the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation said.

(Reuters)



▲ Chief Temesgen Tiruneh as deputy prime minister

Man accused of killing girlfriend escapes from police custody in Kenya

A man awaiting extradition on a Massachusetts warrant alleging he killed his girlfriend and left her body in a car at a Boston airport escaped from police custody in Kenya, police said Thursday.

Kevin Adam Kinyanjui Kangethe slipped out of the police station and jumped into a privately owned minivan, Nairobi police chief Adamson Bungei said. A fresh search for him began immediately.

Four police officers who were on duty at the station are in custody and have recorded statements, according to a police report seen by The Associated Press.

The officers said that around 4 p.m. on Wednesday, a man named John Maina Ndegwa introduced himself to the officers as Kangethe's lawyer and said he wanted to speak with his client.

“The officers agreed to his request and removed the prisoner from the cells and took him to (an) office ... leaving them there. After a short while the prisoner escaped by running away and left the (lawyer) behind,” the report said.

Officers pursued Kangethe but did not catch him, the police report said, adding that Ndegwa was arrested.

Nairobi police chief Adamson Bungei said he rushed to the station when he learned of the escape. “We have arrested the officers who were on duty when he escaped to explain how it happened. It is just embarrassing to us,” he said.

Kangethe, 40, had been detained pending a ruling on whether he should be extradited to face a first-degree murder charge in connection with the death of Margaret Mbitu on Oct. 31, 2023.

Massachusetts State Police said in early November that Kangethe had left her body in a car at Logan International Airport and boarded a flight to Kenya. Massachusetts officials said they were working with Kenyan authorities to locate him, and he was arrested in a nightclub on Jan. 30 after being on the run for three months.

A police official told the AP that Kangethe said he had renounced his U.S. citizenship. The police official, who insisted on anonymity in order to speak freely about an ongoing investigation, said if Kangethe were an American citizen he would have been repatriated without a court process.

The court approved a police application for him to be detained for 30 days while the extradition issue was heard.

On Feb. 2, prosecutor Vincent Monda

asked the court to endorse the U.S. warrant for Kangethe's arrest and issue directions for the extradition proceedings.

The suspect's lawyer sought directions on surrendering Kangethe to the U.S. and opposed his continuing detention as disregarding his rights.

Chief Magistrate Lucas Onyina was to give further directions on the matter and issue orders related to the bond issue on Feb. 9.

Mbitu, a health care aide in Halifax, was last seen leaving work Oct. 30 and reported missing by her family. The preliminary investigation showed Mbitu had left her workplace and traveled with Kangethe to Lowell, where he lived, the prosecution said.

Police have been ranked as Kenya's most corrupt institution for decades, and his escape raised suspicions that bribes were paid for his freedom. Other suspected killers have escaped police custody in the past.

On Oct. 14, 2021, Masten Wanjala, who had confessed to killing 10 children in his hometown of Bungoma in western Kenya, reportedly escaped from police cells in Nairobi under unclear circumstances. A mob in his hometown traced him to a house and beat him to death a couple of days later.

(Africa News)



▲ Kevin Adam Kinyanjui Kangethe appears at the Mililani law court in Nairobi, Kenya

Putin, Xi reject US ‘interference’, praise their own ties and trade

MOSCOW - Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping spoke by phone on Thursday and both rejected what they called U.S. interference in the affairs of other countries, the Kremlin said.

Kremlin aide Yuri Ushakov gave details of the call in a briefing to journalists, saying the two leaders had spoken of creating a “multipolar, fairer world order” in the face of U.S.-led efforts to contain both of Washington’s biggest adversaries.

Putin and Xi would continue to have “close personal interaction” but there were no plans for reciprocal visits right now, Ushakov said.

China and Russia have grown closer and expanded trade ties in recent years as the United States and its allies imposed sanctions against both countries, particularly Moscow after its invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

Putin and Xi met twice last year as China-Russia trade hit \$218.2 billion during January-November, according to Chinese customs data, achieving a goal set by the two countries in 2019 a year ahead of schedule.

Russia meanwhile leapfrogged Saudi Arabia to become China’s top crude oil supplier in 2023, Chinese data showed last month.

The two countries would press on with joint energy projects in 2024, Ushakov said.



▲ Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping spoke by phone on Thursday and both rejected what they called U.S. interference in the affairs of other countries, the Kremlin said.

Putin and Xi also discussed the situation in Ukraine and conflict resolution in the Middle East and see eye to eye on those conflicts, he said, without elaborating. Russia supported China’s policy on Taiwan, he said.

Moscow and Beijing have increas-

ingly carried out trade in roubles and yuan as they phase out trade in U.S. dollars. Putin and Xi stressed on their call that it was important to build “financial infrastructure that ensures reliability of payments”, Ushakov said. (Reuters)

UN urges Russia to end forcible transfer of Ukrainian children

GENEVA - The U.N. Committee on the Rights of the Child on Thursday urged Russia to end the forcible transfer of children from occupied areas of Ukraine in violation of international law, and return them to their families.

Kyiv says 20,000 children have been taken from Ukraine to Russia without family or guardians’ consent, and the International Criminal Court (ICC) is seeking the arrest of Russian President Vladimir Putin for alleged illegal deportation, an accusation the Kremlin denies.

In a report on Russia, the U.N. committee said Moscow should provide information about the precise number of children taken from Ukraine and their whereabouts, so they can be identified and returned.

The committee also said Russia should ensure that no child was deprived of their Ukrainian nationality, and that their identity, name and family relations must be preserved.

Moscow, which launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, says it has only been protecting vulnerable children from a war zone.

Committee chair Ann Skelton said the committee and a Russian delegation that travelled to Geneva last



▲ The U.N. Committee on the Rights of the Child on Thursday urged Russia to end the forcible transfer of children from occupied areas of Ukraine in violation of international law, and return them to their families.

month for talks on child issues had been “talking past one another”.

“We found often in the dialogue that we were using one type of terminology and they were using another,” she said.

“We were using the word ‘adoption’ and they were denying that it’s adoption and talking about ‘fostering children’.”

She said the delegation had acknowledged that many children had been given Russian citizenship, “which would also in itself mean that these children were losing their identity and being given a Russian

identity”.

The ICC issued arrest warrants last March for Putin and Maria Lvova-Belova, Russia’s commissioner for children’s rights, on charges of illegally deporting children from Ukraine.

The ICC’s chief prosecutor said Russia had transferred “at least hundreds” of children from orphanages and care homes in occupied regions of Ukraine, and that many had been given up for adoption.

The Kremlin dismissed the ICC allegations as “outrageous and unacceptable”. (Reuters)

Pakistan counts votes in poll hit by violence, suspended mobile services

ISLAMABAD - Pakistan began counting votes after polling ended on Thursday in a general election marred by militant attacks and suspension of mobile phone services, with authorities saying that at least nine people had been killed nationwide.

The vote was held as the South Asian country struggles to recover from an economic crisis while it grapples with rising militant violence in a deeply polarised political environment.

TV channels are expected to make projections of first results a few hours after voting closed at 5 p.m. (1200 GMT) and a clear picture is likely to emerge early on Friday as counting continues through the night.

Many analysts believe the vote may not produce a clear winner.

Thousands of troops were deployed on the streets and at polling stations across the country and borders with Iran and Afghanistan were temporarily closed as security was stepped up to ensure peaceful polling.

Despite the heightened security, nine people, including two children, were killed in bomb blasts, grenade attacks and shootings.

At least 26 people were killed in two explosions near electoral candidates’ offices in the southwestern province of Balochistan on Wednesday. Islamic State later claimed responsibility for those attacks.

Victims

Thursday’s victims included five police killed in a bomb blast and firing on a patrol in the Kulachi area of Dera Ismail Khan district in the northwest, authorities said. Two children died in a blast outside a women’s polling station in Balochistan.

In spite of the security worries and bitter winter cold, people lined up at polling stations hours before voting was due to start. “The country is at stake, why should I come late?” said 86-year-old Mumtaz, a housewife a decade older than Pakistan itself as she queued up in Islamabad.

Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar ul Haq Kakar said there had been high voter turnout in “a clear indication of public commitment to shaping the future of our country”.

“In the face of adversity, the people of Pakistan have shown remarkable courage and determination,” he posted on

X. “Your resolve in the aftermath of the recent terrorism incidents, continuing to participate in the electoral process, is a powerful statement against the forces that seek to destabilise our nation.”

The move to suspend mobile networks sparked criticism from leaders of opposition parties, with the Pakistan Peoples Party’s Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, the 35-year-old son of assassinated former premier Benazir Bhutto, calling for its “immediate restoration”.

Amnesty International called it “a blunt attack on the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly”.

Chief Election Commissioner Sikandar Sultan Raja said the decision on mobile networks was made by “law and order agencies” following Wednesday’s violence and the commission would not interfere.

There was no word on when the networks would be restored.

Jailed former Prime Minister Imran Khan’s Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party, in a post on X, called on people to remove passwords from their personal Wifi accounts “so anyone in the vicinity” could have internet access.

Election officials said they received several complaints from people who were unable to find their polling stations because of the internet shutdown.

Difficult

“The communication with voters and others is very difficult ... we are facing so many problems due to the internet closure,” said 50-year-old Mehmood Chaudry, a school teacher who cast his vote in the city of Rawalpindi.

Former prime minister Nawaz Sharif, considered by many analysts to be the front-runner, dismissed talk of an unclear result and emphasised the need for a “clear majority”.

“Don’t talk about a coalition government. It is very important for a government to get a clear majority... It should not be relying on others,” he told reporters after casting his vote in the eastern city of Lahore.

The main contests are expected to be between candidates backed by former cricket superstar Khan, whose party won the last national election, and the Pakistan Muslim League of Sharif, who analysts say is being backed by the powerful military.

(Reuters)



By Siphesihle Dlamini
siphesihled@rubiconmedia.group

It's a weekend, let's go party!

HOW is the Feb-ulous month treating you? I am quite sure you are having a month better than the 'drought month'.

Speaking of drought, it is a condition the entertainment scene has not seen this month as there are a variety of events to keep you busy this weekend. Eswatini Daily News has your weekend gig guide.

►► **LOCAL IS LEKKER**
When: Friday
Where: Xchange Lounge and Shisanyama
Fee: Free

Prepare to immerse yourself in a night of pure musical bliss as the highly anticipated Local Is Lekker event takes centre stage.



This extraordinary event, headlined by the sensational DJ Knoxman, promises to be an unforgettable experience for all music lovers. The event will showcase a lineup of talented acts that will keep the crowd grooving all night long. Joining Knoxman on stage will be a stellar roster of artists including Bisto, Soulsticks, Teesto, Acoustic Soul, and Tidal Deep. Each act brings its unique style and energy, ensuring a diverse and captivating musical journey for attendees. The theme dress code for the evening is smart-casual, allowing guests to express their style while maintaining an air of sophistication. So, put on your best outfit and get ready to dance the night away in style. For those planning to join the festivities after 8pm, a small fee of E30 will be required. Don't miss out on this incredible night of music, camaraderie, and unforgettable memories.

►► **EKHAYA LISTENING SESSION**
When: Friday
Where: University of Eswatini, Kwaluseni Campus, SLT2
Fee: E15

The air is thick with excitement as renowned poet and multi-award-winning artist, Christian Maz, prepares to take centre stage for a mesmerising listening session of his latest album, 'Ekhaya'. Released just last month, the album has already made waves in the music industry, captivating fans, and critics alike with its powerful and evocative poetry set to soul-stirring melodies. Maz, known for his ability to captivate audiences with his words, has pulled out all the stops to ensure that this listening session is an unforgettable experience for all in attendance. Adding to the excitement, Maz has invited two special guest performers, Fisiwe and Yung Keys, both featured artists on the album. Fisiwe's enchanting vocals and Yung Keys' masterful piano skills perfectly complement Maz's poetic verses, creating a harmonious blend of spoken word and music that is sure to leave the audience spellbound.



►► **FRIDAY GROOVE**
When: Friday
Where: IF's Lounge
Fee: Free

IF's Lounge is set to ignite the city's nightlife this Friday with an electrifying event that promises to keep fun lovers grooving all night long. The highly anticipated 'Friday Groove' event will feature an impressive lineup of talented DJs, headlined by the dynamic DJ duo, Drum Rhythm. IF's Lounge will transform into a haven for music enthusiasts, offering an unforgettable night of pulsating beats and infectious rhythms. The atmosphere will be charged with excitement as the crowd eagerly awaits the arrival of Drum Rhythm, known for its ability to captivate audiences with its unique blend of genres. To ensure that groove lovers are kept on their feet all night, Wacko, Yamkela, and Acoustic Soul will be taking turns on the decks, dishing out fire sets that will have the dance floor pulsating with energy. These talented DJs are no strangers to the scene, and their ability to read the crowd and curate a seamless musical journey is unmatched.

►► **SATURDAY CHILLOUT VIBES**
When: Saturday
Where: IF's Lounge
Fee: Free

Get ready to immerse yourself in a sonic battlefield of the top local DJs as Saturday Chillout Vibes takes over the city this weekend. This highly anticipated event, set to be an unforgettable night of music and fun, will showcase the talents of some of the most sought-after DJs in the region. Headlining the event is the enigmatic UrCousin Phayo, who is ready to serve up the coolest tunes on the decks. The stage is set for an epic showdown as local DJ titans go head-to-head, each bringing their unique style and sound to the battlefield. Joining UrCousin Phayo are the formidable trio of Wacko, Yamkela, and Acoustic Soul.

►► **OUR HOUSE**
When: Saturday
Where: Hot Bar
Fee: Free

Brace yourself for an extraordinary night of music, vibes, and pure unadulterated fun at The Hot Bar. This highly anticipated event promises to be an experience like no other, where the house genre takes centre stage and unleashes a world of unmatched energy. Prepare to be mesmerised by a lineup of talented artists who will ignite the dance floor and keep you grooving all night long. AyaCity, a very talented local DJ, will take you on a musical journey that will touch your heart and move your feet in perfect harmony. Joining AyaCity will be the dynamic Wicked and Crooks, the master of deep and melodic music. Orthodox, Flava, Knoxman, Shibz, and Junior will also grace the stage, each bringing their unique style and flavour to the mix.

►► **SIBEBE SOUL SUNDAYS**
When: Sunday
Where: Ehawini Lifestyle
Fee: Free

Ehawini Lifestyle and Sibebe Premium Lager are proud to present the highly anticipated 2nd edition of Ehawini Soul Sundays, now aptly renamed 'Sibebe Soul Sundays.' This Sunday, prepare to indulge in the ultimate sensory experience as you sip on your favourite home-brewed premium lager while being serenaded by a soulful live band. The event promises an unforgettable evening filled with soulful melodies, good vibes, and an opportunity to win exciting prizes. The stage will come alive with the enchanting voice of Rina, one of the country's most talented vocalists. Accompanied by a band, Rina's performance is sure to leave the audience yearning for more. Attendees will have the chance to participate in various contests and activities, with plenty of prizes up for grabs.

Velemseni, Judah to rock Polar Park

Stories by Siphesihle Dlamini
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FUN lovers are in for an unforgettable evening of soulful melodies and electrifying performances as Eswatini's talented artists, Velemseni and Judah, take centre stage at Polar Park Guest Lodge.

Dubbed the 'Amagrootman Sessions,' this event promises an enchanting blend of jazz and R&B, accompanied by the finest selection of wine and whiskey.

Joining Velemseni and Judah on this musical journey are Mixmash, Ntombz, Resh on Decks from South Africa, and Zulu D. Adding a touch of humour to the proceedings will be the renowned comedian, Ndosh. The event is scheduled for March 3, 2024, and best of all, entry is free.

Velemseni, whose star continues to rise, has captivated audiences with her powerful vocals and soul-stirring performances. Having served as a supporting vocalist for esteemed artists such as Bholoja, Siyinqaba, and Nomalungelo Dladla, Velemseni's music beautifully reflects the rich culture and aesthetics of Eswatini.

Drawing inspiration from an array of genres, including Swazi gospel, soul, African soul, cinematic, and traditional music, Velemseni weaves a sonic tapestry that captures the mysticism of the southern African terrain. Her songs are an exploration of the region's rich



▲ Judah and Velemseni.

heritage, both sonically and symbolically.

Likewise, Judah, a multi-talented artist, is a force to be reckoned with in the Swazi music industry.

With his undeniable passion and natural artistic flair, Judah has firmly established himself as a rising star. He is a talented singer, composer, songwriter, and producer.

Blending soul, R&B, and Afro-pop,

Judah's fresh fusion sound represents the next generation of Swati musicians. Hailing from the vibrant city of Manzini, he draws inspiration from legendary artists such as Hugh Masekela, Tsepho Tshola, Jabu Khanyile, Joe Thomas, Boys II Men, and Musiq Schoolchild. Infusing their influences into his unique musical stylings, Judah has created a refreshing sound.

MTN Bushfire online Golden Lounge tickets to Phase 3

THE MTN Bushfire, a globally infused and authentically African music and arts festival, is gearing up for another incredible edition.

Selling like hotcakes, the online Golden Lounge tickets have now moved to Phase 3 after Phase 2 tickets were snatched up. The full festival Golden Lounge tickets, which offer an exclusive and luxurious experience are now priced at E3 100.

However, it's worth noting that the other ticket categories are still in Phase 1. The full festival Main Arena tickets are available for E400, while the full festival Children's tickets are priced at E350. Children aged five and under can enter for free when accompanied by their parents.

The ticketing system operates in batches, with each phase selling out before moving on to the next. MTN Bushfire is not just any ordinary music festival. It is a celebration of diversity, inclusivity, and the vibrant culture of Eswatini. With attendees from over 60 countries, this family-friendly event attracts more than 20 000 festival goers during the festival weekend. It is a melting pot of different cultures, united by the love for music and the arts.

But what sets MTN Bushfire apart from other festivals is its commitment to responsible and sustainable practices. In 2017, it was awarded the prestigious "Best Responsible Event" at



▲ Fun lovers pictured at the MTN Bushfire Festival.

the WTM Africa Responsible Tourism Awards.

Initiative

Through its #GREENYOURFIRE initiative, the festival is dedicated to promoting socially and environmentally sustainable policies and practices throughout its operations.

MTN Bushfire actively seeks out vendors who align with their values. They invite experienced and socially

conscious vendors who offer high-quality products sourced and produced locally.

These vendors also prioritise eco-friendly packaging, ensuring that the festival's environmental impact is minimised. #BRINGYOURFIRE is the festival's rallying cry, encouraging everyone to come together and make a positive impact on society and the environment.



▲ Poet Christian Maz.

Christian Maz to host 'Ekhaya' listening session

ANTICIPATION is building as multi-award-winning poet, Christian Maz, prepares to host an engaging listening session for his latest album, 'Ekhaya'.

The album, released last month, has already garnered significant attention and praise from fans and critics alike. The eagerly awaited listening session will take place this Friday at the University of Eswatini, Kwaluseni Campus, SLT2.

Maz has pulled out all the stops to ensure that this event is a memorable one, with the inclusion of special guest performances by Fisiwe and Young Keys, both featured artists on the album.

'Ekhaya' boasts a collection of 12 meticulously crafted songs, each designed to poetically address the everyday struggles faced by individuals. To connect with a wider audience, the album features a mix of English and SiSwati songs, catering to those who may not understand the local lingo.

Maz's decision to incorporate this versatility into his album is a strategic move to expand his brand and tap into new markets locally and in Southern Africa. Drawing inspiration from personal experiences and the intricacies of life, Maz has woven a tapestry of heartfelt poetry and music.

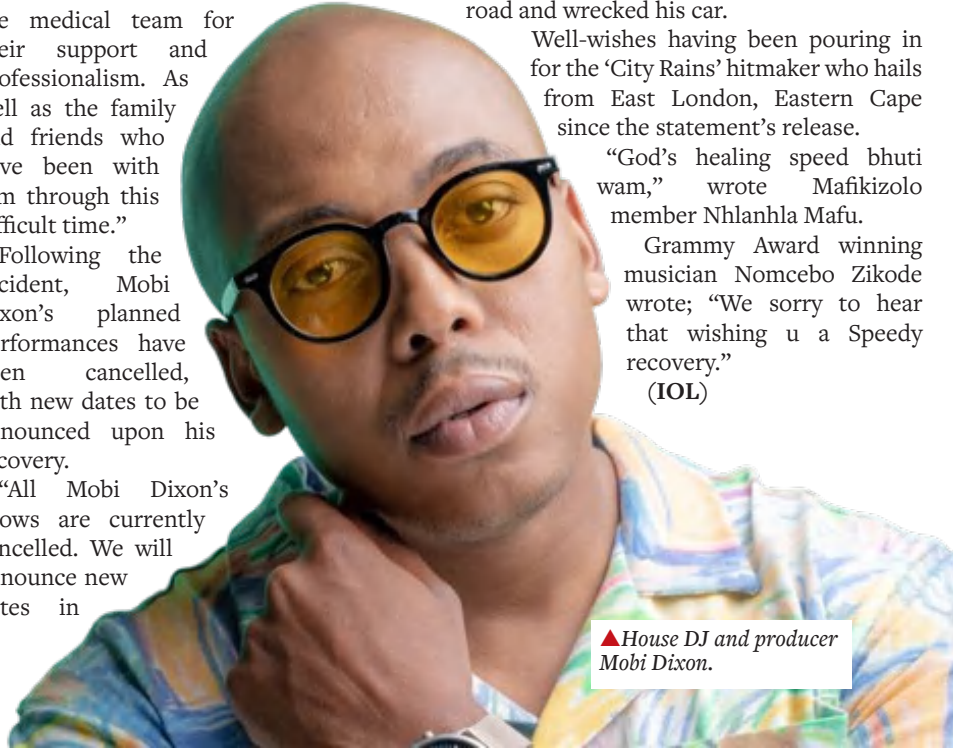
The songs on 'Ekhaya' are a harmonious blend of uplifting melodies and captivating lyrics that resonate with people of all ages. Among the standout tracks are 'Emoyeni,' 'At First,' 'Buya Ekhaya,' 'Ejele,' and 'Emaphupho,' showcasing Maz's ability to seamlessly fuse poetry and music.

Known for his ability to evoke deep emotions through his performances, Maz has a reputation as a highly sought-after poet in Eswatini and is well-deserved, as he is a three-time Poet of The Year.

Mobi Dixon fans shower him with well-wishes after car accident

VETERAN house DJ and producer Mobi Dixon, real name Mabi Ntuli, has been involved in a car accident on Grayston Drive in Sandton. The news was shared in a statement by his team through his official platforms. “After an unfortunate car accident, Mobi Dixon is currently receiving the best medical care,” read the statement. “We would like to thank the medical team for their support and professionalism. As well as the family and friends who have been with him through this difficult time.” Following the accident, Mobi Dixon’s planned performances have been cancelled, with new dates to be announced upon his recovery. “All Mobi Dixon’s shows are currently cancelled. We will announce new dates in

future. Thank you for your understanding and continued support.” His team also requested privacy for the DJ during his recovery. “In order to give Mobi the space he needs to recover, we ask for privacy and patience from the media and fans during this time.” This is not the first time, the music producer has been involved in a car accident in 2016, when he collided with a cow on the road and wrecked his car. Well-wishes having been pouring in for the ‘City Rains’ hitmaker who hails from East London, Eastern Cape since the statement’s release. “God’s healing speed bhuti wam,” wrote Mafikizolo member Nhlanhla Mafu. Grammy Award winning musician Nomcebo Zikode wrote; “We sorry to hear that wishing u a Speedy recovery.” (IOL)



▲House DJ and producer Mobi Dixon.

P!nk says bye to Twitter ‘or whatever it’s called’

AMERICAN singer P!nk has announced that she is leaving Twitter “or whatever it’s called now”. Elon Musk re-branded the social media app to X last year after his acquisition of the company. The “So What” hitmaker is currently in Sydney for her Summer Carnival tour and before things kicked off on her tour she penned her thoughts on X. “Have you ever been at a party with a bunch of salty old people that never realized their dreams? Where the liquor ran dry ages ago,there’s no music-no one’s dancing-you would’ve had more fun at home with your blind cat? Have you ever been at a party with a bunch of salty old people that never realized their dreams?Where the liquor ran dry ages ago,there’s no music-no one’s dancing-you would’ve had more fun at home with your blind cat? That’s twitter these days-or what-ever it’s called now....

“That’s twitter these days-or whatever it’s called now. Byeeeeeeeeeee” “ Many of her fans were sad to see her leave the platform with some begging her to stay, but some asked her when will her account “self-destruct”. While P!nk said bye to her 30 million following account, she is yet to actually deactivate her account. In a deleted tweet, P!nk said that it would self-destruct in two minutes, it has been almost days and the account is still up. Celebrities are known for wanting to take breaks from social media for various reasons be it mental health or just not feeling like being socially active. South African rapper and TV presenter Moozlie previously opened up about her decision to leave the platform that can get “toxic” for famous faces. “Got a new phone about a month ago, never downloaded it again & I’m not going back. I would HIGHLY recommend this. Thanks for sharing brother,” she previously shared in response to Nasty C’s post. (Bang Showbiz)



▲American singer P!nk.

‘Star Wars’ actor Gina Carano sues Disney with funding by Elon Musk’s X

A Star Wars actor backed by Elon Musk’s X is suing Disney for firing her over inflammatory social media posts about the Holocaust, the pandemic and trans rights. Gina Carano, who had a major role in the wildly popular Disney+ series The Mandalorian until 2021, filed a lawsuit in California on Tuesday claiming wrongful termination. The suit says Carano was expressing personal political views but was hounded by an “extreme progressive” online mob, and alleges that Disney’s actions and comments had damaged her reputation and ability to find work in the future. “Today is an important day for me -- I am filing a lawsuit against @lucasfilm & @Disney,” she wrote on X (formerly Twitter). The lawsuit is being funded by X, a spokesman for the company confirmed to AFP. Carano, an outspoken former martial arts fighter-turned-actor, was fired by Disney for what the company at the time dubbed “abhorrent and unacceptable” social media posts “denigrating people based on their cultural and religious identities”. One particularly controversial post shared by Carano appeared to liken being a conservative in the United States to being Jewish in Nazi Germany. “Nazi soldiers could easily round up thousands of Jews” because “the government first made their own neighbors (sic) hate them simply for being Jews,” the post said. “How is that any different from hating someone for their political views?” it concluded, with a graphic photo of a Jewish woman being beaten in Nazi Germany. Another post appeared to mock a

person for wearing multiple masks during the Covid-19 pandemic in California. And Carano had earlier drawn the wrath of members of the trans community for adding “boop/bop/beep” as preferred pronouns on her Twitter profile. In a statement Tuesday, Carano said she had “never even used aggressive language” but had shared “thought provoking” posts with “respect & the occasional comedy”. Both her statement and the lawsuit allege that Carano was afforded less right to exercise her freedom of speech than some of her male colleagues. Carano said she had been contacted by an X lawyer offering to take on her case after she publicly replied to an open offer from Musk to help anyone fired after using X to exercise free speech. The lawsuit does not specify the amount of damages Carano is seeking, but claims she lost a role on planned “Mandalorian” spin-off “Rangers of the New Republic” that would have been worth “\$150,000 to \$250,000 per episode”. Disney did not respond to AFP request for comment. (AFP)

“Nazi soldiers could easily round up thousands of Jews” because “the government first made their own neighbors (sic) hate them simply for being Jews”



▲Gina Carano, who had a major role in the wildly popular Disney+ series The Mandalorian until 2021, filed a lawsuit in California on Tuesday claiming wrongful termination.

BEFORE I began a career in science some ten years ago, I was a chef on a super yacht and my job was to provide delicious but nutritious food.

These days I am just as passionate about the joy good flavours can bring, but thanks to my job as a scientist and dietitian working at the cutting edge of nutrition research I can combine that with an insight into how what you eat can affect your health.

And one of the areas where diet can have a major effect is on cholesterol.

Look, for example, at research into the Portfolio Diet — based on eating cholesterol-lowering foods, including plenty of fibre and protein from mainly plant sources, including nuts. This can lower cholesterol as much as statins, according to a study published in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition in 2005.

That's not to say statins aren't effective in reducing cholesterol levels — they are — but, for some people, the right foods can be too. The problem is that raised cholesterol — like high blood pressure — is a silent killer; typically there aren't any symptoms until the damage is done.

But not all cholesterol is bad. While some comes from what we eat, about 80 per cent is made in the liver, as cholesterol is needed to form cell walls and is a vital component of many important hormones, such as oestrogen and testosterone.

There are two main types of cholesterol: 'bad' LDL (low-density lipoprotein) which can lodge in your blood vessel walls, forming fatty deposits which can obstruct blood flow; and 'good' HDL (high-density lipoprotein) which carries excess LDL back to the liver where it is recycled or removed in waste. Ideally you want to keep LDL levels down and your HDL up (although with HDL, the latest thinking is that you can have too much of a good thing and after a certain level the benefits reduce).

It's a good idea to get your levels checked. Total cholesterol should be below 5mmol/L and LDL below 3mmol/L. If your levels are raised you may be prescribed statins.

Here I guide you through how diet can help lower cholesterol.

Learn to love kimchi...

The health of your gut micro- biome — the community of bacteria, yeast and viruses in your gut — can, among other health benefits, have a significant effect on your cholesterol levels, and the more diverse that community the better. That was the finding of research I co-authored with colleagues at King's College London, published in Nature Medicine in 2021.

It's thought that your gut bacteria convert bad cholesterol into coprostanol — a non-absorbable, waxy solid that's then excreted.

One way you can support your gut bacteria is by eating foods that contain fibre: when they feast on fibre the bacteria produce a by-product, short-chain fatty acids, which help the liver remove LDL from the blood. The healthier and more diverse your gut microbiome, the better your cholesterol levels should be — so eat more of the fibrous food these microbes love.

The benefits are clear: consuming just 7g more fibre a day is linked to 6 per cent lower risk of heart disease and stroke.

However, on average we eat only 60 per cent of our recommended 30g fibre a day.

Diet tips to cut cholesterol

... It's a good idea to get your levels checked. Total cholesterol should be below 5mmol/L and LDL below 3mmol/L. If your levels are raised you may be prescribed statins.



So aim to have fruit and veg with every meal, snack on nuts and seeds and eat wholegrains daily.

Another way to support your gut bacteria is by eating live fermented foods such as kimchi (made from fermented cabbage with spices) which, as well as being a source of fibre, is itself a source of friendly bacteria.

For one study 100 people ate exactly the same food for a week — but half also had 15g (i.e. a spoonful) of kimchi daily, while the other half had 210g (a small bowl) daily for seven days.

At the end of the week both had significantly lower levels of bad LDL cholesterol. However, the group eating the most kimchi had the biggest reduction, reported the Journal of Medicinal Food in 2013.

...and legumes

If you want to do just one other thing to improve your health, eat legumes. Chickpeas, kidney beans, black beans and lentils are fantastic in so many ways, including reducing cholesterol. They are high in soluble fibre which swells in the water in the gut, forming a gel that encases bile acids (which help with the digestion and absorption of fat). These acids also contain LDL cholesterol, so encasing them also removes them from the body, meaning more LDL is excreted.

Eating 130g of legumes a day — that's less than half a can — may reduce LDL cholesterol by 5 per cent, according to a review in the Canadian Medical Association Journal, published in 2014.

Switch to filter (or instant) coffee

There has been contradictory research around coffee and cholesterol, but it's thought it may lower the production of bile acids, reducing how

much LDL is excreted from the body. Coffee beans contain oil-based compounds including cafestol which some evidence has suggested may increase cholesterol.

A number of studies found that 10mg cafestol raises cholesterol (largely LDL) by about 0.13mmol/L and a cup of unfiltered coffee has roughly 3-6mg of cafestol.

So, if you're a big coffee drinker and worried about cholesterol levels, you might be better switching to filter (filtering catches the cafestol) — or even instant, which contains negligible amounts. If you're wedded to your cafetiere, just don't leave the coffee to brew too long as the longer the water is in touch with the grinds, the more cafestol it contains.

Try plant-based spreads

Plant sterols and stanols are compounds found in foods such as vegetable oils, veg and nuts that are natural cholesterol busters.

They have a similar structure to cholesterol and compete with it for absorption at entry points in the gut. The more sterols and stanols, the less cholesterol can be absorbed.

Eating 2g a day can reduce your LDL cholesterol by up to 12 per cent when eaten regularly, according to some studies.

It is, however, quite hard to get the 2g from natural sources (you'd need to eat about five handfuls of walnuts or five heads of broccoli) — but you can get enough in one hit with foods such as yoghurt or butter replacement spreads with added stanols or sterols.

Avoid instant oats and go jumbo

Oats are well known to help lower cholesterol, but how much they help depends on the type.

Oats contain a form of soluble fibre called

beta glucan which forms a gel in the gut that helps reduce the absorption of cholesterol.

However highly ground oats (e.g. instant oats) will provide less beta glucan than the groats (oats with the kernel intact), jumbo or large (or steel cut) oats.

Usually the longer they take to cook, the better they are for you.

Eating 3g of beta glucan a day reduces LDL cholesterol levels by about 7 per cent. An average 40g bowl of standard porridge oats contains around 2g.

You can increase your intake by adding barley to stews, for instance, or using it in place of rice, snacking on oatcakes, or eating rye bread.

Cut back on butter

In general, eating too much saturated fat blocks the work of receptors in the liver that attract LDL cholesterol in the blood and break it down. However, not all saturated fat is equal. Some dairy, such as butter and cream, raise LDL more than cheese or other fermented dairy, such as yoghurt and kefir.

One theory with cheese is that even though it has similar amounts of fat to butter its molecular structure means the fat binds to the calcium in it, making it harder for enzymes to break it down, so less saturated fat enters the bloodstream.

Like kefir and yoghurt it is also thought to feed 'good' gut bacteria, resulting in higher HDL. A study of 47 people who swapped butter for olive oil in cooking found their LDL dropped on average by 6 per cent, reported the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition in 2015.

Make it a green cuppa

Drinking green tea regularly can 'significantly' lower LDL levels, concluded a review of 31 trials in the Nutrition Journal in 2020. It said high levels of catechins — a type of antioxidant — in green tea encourage the body to excrete LDL and limit the formation of fatty plaques in the blood vessels.

On average you need to drink two cups a day to benefit.

Go nuts for almonds

Regularly eating tree nuts such as walnuts, Brazil nuts or cashews cuts LDL cholesterol by between 3 and 19 per cent, reported the journal Nutrition Review in 2011. Evidence suggests you need to eat one to two handfuls a day to benefit. One study found eating about two handfuls a day of almonds cut cholesterol by nine per cent.

Nuts are a good source of healthy fats which can raise HDL. They're also a useful source of fibre and contain vitamin E, helping neutralise some of the harmful effects of LDL. I keep a jar by the kettle to snack on while making tea.

n Dr Emily Leeming is a dietitian and microbiome scientist at King's College London. Her book, Genius Gut: How to Eat for Your Second Brain will be available from July.

DailyMail



Overview

YOUR nose is stuffy, your throat is scratchy, and your head is pounding.

Is it a cold or the seasonal flu? Symptoms can overlap, so unless your doctor runs a rapid flu test — a quick check done with a cotton swab from the back of your nose or throat — it’s hard to know for sure.

Here are some basic guidelines for telling the difference between cold and flu symptoms, and what to do if you have either one of these infections.

How to spot the difference

Viruses cause colds and the flu. Both are respiratory infections. The simplest way to tell the difference is by looking at your symptoms.

If you have a cold, you’ll probably have symptoms like these:

- ▶ runny or stuffy nose
- ▶ sore throat
- ▶ sneezing
- ▶ cough
- ▶ headache or body aches
- ▶ mild tiredness

Flu symptoms can include:

- ▶ dry, hacking cough
- ▶ moderate to high fever, although not everyone with the flu will run a fever
- ▶ sore throat
- ▶ shaking chills
- ▶ severe muscle or body aches
- ▶ headache
- ▶ stuffy and runny nose
- ▶ severe fatigue that may last up to two weeks
- ▶ nausea and vomiting, as well as diarrhea (most common in children)

Colds come on gradually over a few days and are often milder than the flu. They usually get better in 7 to 10 days, although symptoms can last for up to 2 weeks.

Flu symptoms come on quickly and can be severe. They usually last 1 to 2 weeks.

Use your symptoms as a guide to figure out which condition you have. If you think you might have the flu, see your doctor to get tested within the first 48 hours of showing symptoms.

What is the common cold?

The common cold is an upper respiratory infection caused by a virus. According to the American Lung Association, more than 200 different viruses can cause the common cold. However, according to the Mayo Clinic, the rhinovirus is most often the one that makes people sneeze and sniffle. It’s highly contagious.

Though you can catch a cold at any time of year, colds are more common during the winter months. This is because most cold-causing viruses thrive in low humidity.

Colds spread when someone who’s sick sneezes or coughs, sending virus-filled droplets flying through the air.

You can get sick if you touch a surface (such as a countertop or doorknob) that has recently been handled by an infected person and then touch your nose, mouth, or eyes. You’re most contagious in the first two to four days after you’re exposed to the cold virus.

How to treat a cold

Because a cold is a viral infection, antibiotics are not effective at treating it.

The difference between the Cold and Flu



However, over-the-counter medications, such as antihistamines, decongestants, acetaminophen, and NSAIDs, can relieve congestion, aches, and other cold symptoms. Drink plenty of fluids to avoid dehydration.

Some people take natural remedies, such as zinc, vitamin C, or echinacea, to prevent or relieve cold symptoms. The evidence is mixed on whether they work.

A 2015 study in BMC Family Practice found that high-dose (80 milligram) zinc lozenges could shorten the length of colds if taken within 24 hours of showing symptoms.

Vitamin C doesn’t seem to prevent colds, but if you take it consistently, it might lessen your symptoms, according to a 2013 Cochrane review. Echinacea hasn’t been shown to help prevent or treat colds. A 2017 study in BMJ found vitamin D helps protect against both colds and flu.

Colds usually clear up within 7 to 10 days. See a doctor if:

- ▶ your cold hasn’t improved in about a week
- ▶ you start to run a high fever
- ▶ your fever doesn’t go down

You could have allergies or a bacterial infection that requires antibiotics, such as sinusitis or strep throat. A nagging cough could also be a sign of asthma or bronchitis.

How to prevent a cold

There’s an old saying that goes, “We can put a man on the moon, but we still can’t cure the common cold.” While it’s true that doctors haven’t yet developed a vaccine, there are ways to prevent this mild but annoying affliction.

Avoidance

Because colds spread so easily, the best prevention is avoidance. Stay away from anyone who’s sick. Don’t share utensils or any other

personal items, such as a toothbrush or towel. Sharing goes both ways — when you’re sick with a cold, stay home.

Good hygiene

Practice good hygiene. Wash your hands often with hot water and soap to get rid of any germs you might’ve picked up during the day or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

Keep your hands away from your nose, eyes, and mouth when they’re not freshly washed. Cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze. Always wash your hands afterward.

What is the seasonal flu?

Influenza — or the flu, as it’s better known — is another upper respiratory illness. Unlike a cold, which can hit at any time of year, the flu is generally seasonal. Flu season usually runs from fall to spring, peaking during the winter months.

During flu season, you can catch the flu in the same way you’d pick up a cold: By coming into contact with droplets spread by an infected person. You’re contagious starting one day before you get sick and up to 5 to 7 days after you show symptoms.

The seasonal flu is caused by the influenza A, B, and C viruses, with influenza A and B being the most common types. Active strains of influenza virus vary from year to year. That’s why a new flu vaccine is developed each year.

Unlike the common cold, the flu can develop into a more serious condition, such as pneumonia. This is especially true for:

- ▶ young children
- ▶ older adults
- ▶ pregnant women
- ▶ people with health conditions that weaken their immune system, such as asthma, heart disease, or diabetes

How to treat the flu

In most cases, fluids and rest are the best ways to treat the flu. Drink plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration. Over-the-counter decongestants and pain relievers, such as ibuprofen and acetaminophen, may control your symptoms and help you feel better.

However, never give aspirin to children. It can increase the risk of a rare but serious condition called Reye’s syndrome.

Your doctor may prescribe antiviral drugs — oseltamivir (Tamiflu), zanamivir (Relenza), or peramivir (Rapivab) — to treat the flu. These drugs can shorten the duration of the flu and prevent complications such as pneumonia. However, they may not be effective if not started within 48 hours of getting sick.

When to call a doctor

If you’re at risk of complications from the flu, call your doctor when you first have symptoms. People at risk of serious complications include:

- ▶ people over the age of 65
- ▶ pregnant women
- ▶ women who are two weeks postpartum
- ▶ children under age of 2
- ▶ children under age 18 taking aspirin
- ▶ those with weakened immune

systems due to HIV, steroid treatment, or chemotherapy

- ▶ people who are extremely obese
- ▶ people with chronic lung or heart conditions

▶ people with metabolic disorders, such as diabetes, anemia, or kidney disease

▶ people living in long-term care facilities, such as nursing homes.

Contact your doctor right away if your symptoms do not improve or if they become severe. See your doctor if you have signs of pneumonia, including:

- ▶ trouble breathing
- ▶ severe sore throat
- ▶ cough that produces green mucus
- ▶ high, persistent fever
- ▶ chest pain

Call a doctor right away if your child develops the following symptoms:

- ▶ trouble breathing
- ▶ irritability
- ▶ extreme fatigue
- ▶ refusing to eat or drink
- ▶ trouble waking up or interacting

Staying healthy

The best way to prevent the flu is by getting the flu shot. Most doctors recommend getting the flu vaccine in October or at the very start of flu season. However, you can still get the vaccine in late fall or winter. The flu vaccine can help protect you from getting the flu and can make the illness less severe if you do catch the flu. To avoid picking up the flu virus, wash your hands often with soap and warm water, or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. Avoid touching your nose, eyes, and mouth. Try to stay away from anyone who has the flu or flu-like symptoms. It’s important to adopt healthy habits to keep cold and flu germs at bay. You should always make sure you get plenty of sleep, eat lots of fruits and vegetables, exercise, and manage your stress during cold and flu season and beyond. **Healthline**

NEWS IN PICS



▲ Britain's William, Prince of Wales, gestures as he walks to attend London's Air Ambulance charity gala dinner, in London.



▲ A girl wears a cheongsam during a fashion show at a shopping mall in South Tangerang, Banten province, Indonesia.



▲ A child moves between tractors during a farmers protest over price pressures, taxes and green regulation, grievances shared by farmers across Europe, in Barcelona, Spain.



▲ Greek university students light flares during a demonstration against a planned bill which would open the way for the operation of private universities, in Athens, Greece.



▲ Spanish farmers stand near fire, as they block access to the Castellon port during a protest against high costs, bureaucracy and competition from non-EU countries, in Castellon, Spain.



▲ Tourists from South Korea jump as they take a group photo near Elephant Rock in the Valley of Fire State Park, Nevada.



▲ Democratic State Representative Gloria Johnson, of Knoxville, Shaundelle Brooks, and Democratic State Representative Justin Jones, of Nashville, raise their hands together after Shaundelle announced her run for State House District 60, at Legislative Plaza near the State Capitol in Nashville, Tennessee.

A blue card is set to be introduced in professional football as part of sin-bin trials, marking the first new colour of card widely used in 50 years.

According to The Telegraph, the revolutionary move will be announced by International Football Association Board on Friday as part of new measures that will see players removed from play for 10 minutes if they commit a cynical foul or show dissent towards a match official.

The protocols will add a new wrinkle to dismissals as players would now be sent off if they receive two blue cards in a game or a combination of a blue and a yellow.

The report goes on to say that elite trials could begin as soon as the summer, though top-tier competition will be excluded from initial testing.

As a result, FA Cup and Women's FA Cup matches may be included in trials, with the FA reportedly considering volunteering next season's competitions for testing.

Blue cards have been used this season during a sin-bin trial in grassroots football in Wales, with the colour chosen to differentiate it clearly from a yellow or red card.

The introduction of new cards has already taken place on a smaller scale on the continent, with Portugal recently adopting a new

FIFA set to hand referees a blue card

measure to recognise good sportsmanship.

In October last year, A Portuguese fifth division player was believed to be the first recipient of a white card in the men's card after passing up an opportunity to score after an opposing defender gave the ball away on the edge of his own penalty box and immediately went down injured and in significant pain.

The attacker quickly realised the defender was badly hurt and turned away from goal before kicking the ball out for a throw-in so he could receive treatment.

The sporting gesture was applauded by the fans in attendance, and was swiftly recognised by the referee who walked over to the player and brandished the white card.

Should trials prove successful in curbing the instances of cynical fouls and dissent, the new card could added to the laws of the game. One example of a good use of the sin bin was seen in then Euro 2020 final when Italy defend-

er Giorgio Chiellini pulled the shirt of England's Bukayo Saka and only received a yellow card.

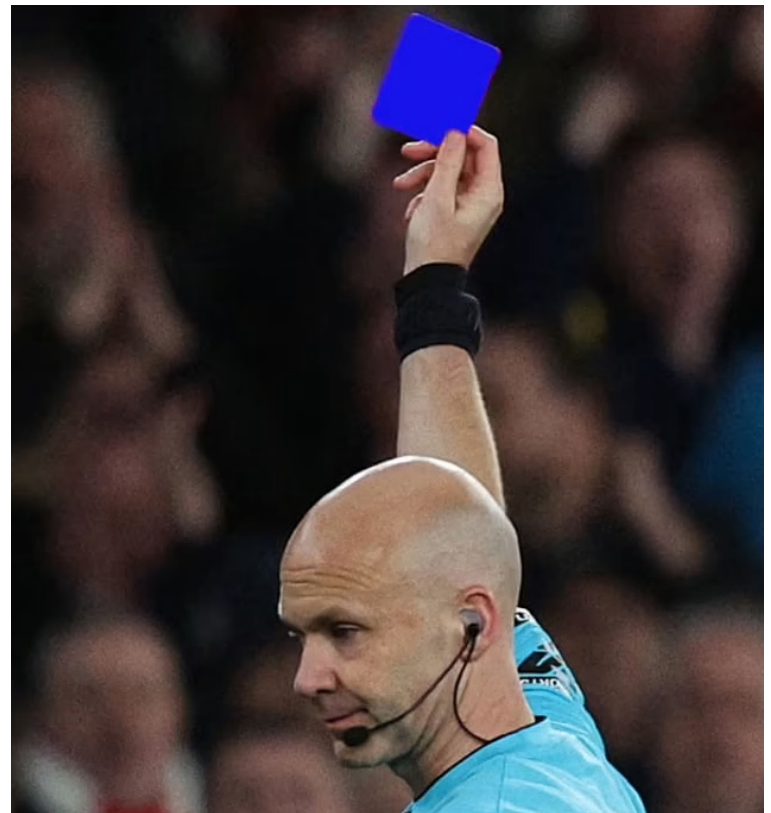
Under the new rules, Chiellini could have been forced to spend 10 minutes on the touchline, reducing Italy to 10 men against England's 11. FIFA referees' chief Pierluigi Collina backed the idea of sin bins, saying: "The idea is to start working on this as soon as possible to provide those who would be involved in the trial a protocol to be used. The idea is to get it soon."

"The trial was very successful in grassroots competitions. Now we are talking of a higher level, very probably professional or even high professional football."

Football Association chief executive Mark Bullingham confirmed their interest in using sin bins back in November.

"When we were looking at sin bins - protocol clearly has to be developed - the areas we were looking at were dissent, where it's worked very, very well in the grassroots game in England," he said.

(Daily Mail)



▲ A blue card is set to be introduced in professional football as part of sin-bin trials, marking the first new colour of card widely used in 50 years.

UEFA boss will not stand for re-election in 2027

PARIS - The head of European soccer's governing body UEFA, Aleksander Ceferin, said on Thursday that he would not stand for re-election in 2027 for family reasons, even though an amendment had been passed allowing him to do so.

The 56-year-old added that he was tired of COVID, two wars and "nonsense projects of so-called super leagues".

There had been a 12-year limit on the UEFA presidency, which Ceferin helped introduce, and he has been in power since taking over in 2016 from Michel Platini. He was re-elected for a second term in 2019 and a third term last year.

"I have decided, let's say around six months ago, that I am not planning to run in 2027 anymore," the Slovenian told reporters after the UEFA Congress in Paris.

"The reason is that after some time every organisation needs fresh blood, but mainly because I was away from my family for seven years now and I will be away from them for another three years."

Before he revealed his decision not to stand again, Ceferin said there were two important points of view around the statutes, first a legal one and secondly a factual one.

"The legal one is that it had to be changed because the text from the 2017 Congress was unclear and later clarified by the administration without the approval of Congress and that is illegal."

"The statutes had to be changed or term limits wouldn't exist at all and many articles were published

about it before anyone asking me any questions.

"The factual one, that's my decision if I want to run after 2027, honestly speaking, I'm tired of COVID, I'm tired of two wars, nonsense projects of so-called super leagues."

"I'm also tired of self-proclaimed moral authorities who are moral just until it comes to their personal interests."

COVID-19 hit sport around the world from 2020, while Russian soccer teams were suspended by UEFA after Moscow invaded Ukraine in February 2022, which Moscow calls a 'special operation'. The Israel-Hamas conflict has also disrupted scheduling of matches.

Super League

In April 2021 UEFA prevented 12 clubs from forming a Super League, with other clubs and leagues coming together to denounce the project. Barcelona and Real Madrid are now the only clubs still supporting a breakaway Super League project.

BADLY DRAFTED

Ceferin, criticised after UEFA's executive committee meeting in Hamburg in December where he said the term-limit rules were so badly drafted that his first term did not count towards the limit, explained why he waited until now to reveal his decision.

"I intentionally didn't want to disclose my thoughts for two reasons, first I wanted to see the real face of some people and I saw it, I saw good and bad."

"And of course, I didn't want to influence the Congress, I wanted them to decide not knowing what I am telling you today, because that's



▲ The head of European soccer's governing body UEFA, Aleksander Ceferin.

an honest decision."

Last month, UEFA's chief of football Zvonimir Boban left the body in protest against Ceferin's move to support changes in the statutes that would allow him to extend his term in office.

The amendment to UEFA's Article 69 would have meant that the first partial term Ceferin served after former France midfielder Platini resigned following a FIFA ban over ethics breaches, would not be counted within the three-year limit.

(Reuters)

Man City eye top spot in three-horse title race

LONDON - Manchester City can top the Premier League for a few hours at least if they beat Everton at home on Saturday and Pep Guardiola's side are firm favourites to end the season there.

But a record fourth successive English league title is perhaps not the foregone conclusion some are predicting.

Phil Foden's hat-trick inspired City to a 3-1 victory at Brentford on Monday -- City's fifth league win in a row -- to put them two points behind Liverpool with a game in hand. It all feels ominously familiar with City looking capable again of the long winning streak that ultimately grinds down those seeking to end their domination of the top flight.

"It does feel at the moment as though Manchester City winning the title is a formality," former Arsenal striker Alan Smith said. "But Pep Guardiola and City certainly won't be taking anything for granted."

"Anything can happen and injuries could always knock them off balance but maybe that is wishful thinking!" According to entertainment data experts Gracenote, however, City are still only 57% likely to win the title.

The reason being is that this time there appears to be a genuine three-horse title race after Arsenal's superb victory over leaders Liverpool last weekend.

Only on nine occasions since the formation of the Premier League in 1992 have two points separated the top three at least 23 matches into a season. And the way all three clubs are playing -- assuming Liverpool's below-par display in London was just a blip -- it could stay tight at the top right into the climax of the season.

Liverpool will hope that relegation-haunted Everton can throw a spanner in City's works on Saturday, although that seems extremely unlikely seeing as City are unbeaten in 13 league matches against the Merseyside club.

Juergen Klopp's Liverpool will be anxious to shake off any hangover from the defeat at Arsenal and a home date with second-from-bottom Burnley looks tailor-made for them.

"It's important that we get back on track straight away. We have to try to do that," Andy Robertson, who is fully aware of the small margins for error in a title chase with City, told Liverpool's website on Thursday. (Reuters)



▲ Liverpool midfielder Thiago Alcantara has suffered a fresh injury blow after picking up a muscle problem.

Thiago suffers fresh injury blow

LIVERPOOL midfielder Thiago Alcantara has suffered a fresh injury blow after picking up a muscle problem, according to reports on Thursday. Thiago had been out since April with hip and hamstring injuries before coming on in the 85th minute of Liverpool’s 3-1 defeat at Arsenal on Sunday. The 32-year-old Spaniard is believed to have complained of muscle discomfort after the game and now faces another spell on the sidelines. Thiago is out of contract at the end of this season and his future at Anfield is in doubt given his fitness issues. The former Bayern Munich star’s absence will be a blow to Liverpool, who sit two points clear at the top of

the Premier League and face Chelsea in the League Cup final on February 25. Jurgen Klopp’s side are also through to the FA Cup fifth round against Southampton and the Europa League last 16. Klopp is already without Hungary midfielder Dominik Szoboszlai, who has aggravated a hamstring injury, for Saturday’s clash against struggling Burnley at Anfield. Wataru Endo could be available to fill the gap in Liverpool’s midfield after returning from the Asian Cup after Japan’s exit. Reds forward Mohamed Salah is still sidelined as he recovers from a hamstring injury sustained on Africa Cup of Nations duty with Egypt last month. (AFP)

Tiger Woods enters Genesis Invitational

TIGER Woods will play at the Genesis Invitational, the tournament he hosts annually of behalf of his TGR Foundation. Woods announced his entry Wednesday on social media, writing, “Excited to be a playing host next week.” The Genesis will be played Feb. 15-18 at The Riviera Country Club in Pacific Palisades, Calif. It is one of the PGA Tour’s “designated events” for 2024, expected to draw a top field vying for a share of the \$20 million purse. Jon Rahm won the tournament in 2023 but now is a member of LIV Golf and won’t be on hand to defend his title. Woods, 48, has played in 14 tournaments at Riviera and never has won. His best finish came in 1999 when he finished second at the Nissan Los Angeles Open, as the tournament formerly was known. It was after the Genesis Invitational in February 2021 that Woods was involved in a single-car accident that left him with severe leg injuries. Since then, the 82-time tour winner has played in just six official PGA



▲ Tiger Woods will play at the Genesis Invitational, the tournament he hosts annually of behalf of his TGR Foundation.

Tour tournaments. One of them was the 2023 Genesis, at which he shot a 1-under 283 for the tournament to finish tied for 45th place. (Reuters)

Girona still believe ahead of top-of-the-table clash with Real

WHEN Real Madrid lorded it over Girona with a 3-0 win at the snug Estadi Montilivi in September it looked as though the Catalan upstarts had been firmly put in their place and that their audacious LaLiga title hopes had been fantasy all along. Scroll forward more than four months from that defeat, however, and the club many thought would most likely be in a relegation battle are still toe-to-toe with Carlo Ancelotti’s star-studded Real side, who they trail by two points. Girona have gone 15 league games unbeaten since that setback, winning 11, and on Saturday can dislodge Real from top spot if they pull off a famous win at the Bernabeu Stadium. Girona manager Michel has been at pains to play down his side’s chances of shattering the status quo in Spanish football by winning the title only seven years since the humble club first played in LaLiga. After all, the last club other than Real Madrid, Barcelona or Atletico Madrid to finish top was Valencia 20 years ago and they were hardly regarded as underdogs. But for neutrals, and those desperate for a new narrative, Girona’s challenge to the elite has been a breath of fresh air. Girona may be part of the same City Football Group stable as English and European champions Manchester City but they operate in another universe in terms of financial firepower. Michel has constructed a youthful squad with an attacking style that is easy on the eye. Ukraine striker Artem Dovbyk, badly missed in last week’s 0-0 home draw with Real Sociedad but likely to play, has a league-leading 14 goals this term, the same

as Real’s Jude Bellingham, while Girona’s total of 52 is unmatched in LaLiga. Brazilian winger Savio has also been earning rave reviews and will be off to Manchester City at the end of the season, but Girona’s main strength is their unity and team spirit -- fitting for a club from a fiercely patriotic Catalan city. They have earned 22 points from losing positions this season and whatever happens on Saturday, Michel’s intrepid side will not be throwing in the towel. Injustice A sense of injustice could also fuel their desire this weekend after some controversial decisions against Sociedad. They had a Yangel Herrera goal ruled out for offside by VAR even though the offence took place 37 seconds earlier. Midfielder Herrera was also booked, meaning he misses Saturday’s clash along with experienced defender Daley Blind, while Michel will be absent from the touchline after being sent off for expressing his frustration. Near the end of the draw, Girona’s fans chanted ‘Asi, asi, asi gana Madrid’ which translates as ‘That’s how Madrid win’. Real also drew last weekend, 1-1 at home to fourth-placed Atletico Madrid, and have defensive headaches. Nacho is almost certainly out due to a muscle issue while Antonio Rudiger is struggling with a knee injury. David Alaba and Eder Militao are also still sidelined so Real could have a patched up back four to deal with LaLiga’s most potent attack. Ancelotti has seen it all before though. “We are leaders and we have another chance to make a statement win next Saturday,” the Italian said. (Reuters)



▲ Girona have gone 15 league games unbeaten since that setback, winning 11, and on Saturday can dislodge Real from top spot if they pull off a famous win at the Bernabeu Stadium.

PSG set to leave Parc des Princes

PARIS - Paris St Germain look set to leave the Parc des Princes after the City confirmed the stadium was not for sale, club president Nasser Al-Khelaifi said on Thursday. “It’s too easy to say now that the stadium is not for sale anymore. We know what we want, we wasted years to try and buy it. It’s easier for us now, we know what we want. It’s over for us. We want to move out of the Parc,” Al-Khelaifi told reporters at a UEFA Congress. PSG said last year that they would ex-

plore alternatives after Paris mayor Anne Hidalgo said the stadium was not for sale - a position that City Hall confirmed on Tuesday. “A sale is not desirable, because that would be a decision with no turning back... That’s why we have to rule out the sale of the Parc today. We don’t want to sell off Paris’ legacy,” Paris deputy mayor for sports Pierre Rabadan said on Tuesday. The Parc des Princes has been home to PSG since 1974, four years after the club was founded. (Reuters)



IVORY Coast coach Emerse Fae described his team’s achievement in winning through to the final of the Africa Cup of Nations as being “like a dream” after the tournament hosts beat the Democratic Republic of Congo 1-0 in Wednesday’s last-four encounter.

Sebastien Haller scored the only goal of the game in the 65th minute at the Ebimpe Olympic Stadium to take Ivory Coast through to Sunday’s final against Nigeria.

It is a remarkable turnaround for the Elephants, who were on the brink of elimination after losing 4-0 to Equatorial Guinea at the same stadium in their final group match on January 22.

“We are happy, we’re really moved. It’s like a dream, when you go back two weeks to the defeat here against Equatorial Guinea,” said Fae.

“It was hard then to imagine that we might qualify for the final of our own AFCON.”

That defeat was Ivory Coast’s heaviest ever home loss and they looked certain to be eliminated in the first round, only to scrape through as the last of the four best third-placed teams thanks to Morocco winning their last group game against Zambia.

Ivory Coast run to AFCON final ‘like a dream’ for coach Fae



▲ Ivory Coast was on the brink of elimination but find themselves at the grandest stage of this edition of the tournament.

Coach Jean-Louis Gasset was sacked following the Equatorial Guinea debacle and so Fae, who had been an assistant, was promoted to the role of interim coach.

Under him, Ivory Coast beat holders Senegal on penalties in the last 16, and then came from behind to beat Mali in extra time in the quarter-finals, despite playing

most of that match with 10 men. “As long as you still have a five or 10 percent chance you need to keep believing, because that is what makes football beautiful,”

said midfielder Franck Kessie, who was named man of the match against DR Congo.

“After the Morocco result we knew we had qualified and that changed everything.

“It gave us the strength we needed, it boosted us. We knew we couldn’t do worse than in the first round.

“We need to keep going like this because you can’t go all the way to the final only to then give up.”

Sunday’s final will be a repeat of the group game between Ivory Coast and Nigeria on January 18, which the Super Eagles won 1-0.

Meanwhile, DR Congo will have to settle for a third-place play-off in Abidjan on Saturday against South Africa.

They had been hoping to win through to a first Cup of Nations final since they were champions as Zaire in 1974, half a century ago.

If they beat South Africa they will take the bronze medal, which would match their performances in 1998 and in 2015.

(Supersport)

Broos proud of Bafana despite semifinal heartache

SOUTH Africa coach Hugo Broos says he is proud of his side despite their heartbreaking semifinal loss to Nigeria on post-match penalties at the Africa Cup of Nations in the Ivory Coast. William Troost-Ekong put Nigeria into the lead from the penalty spot midway through the second half, before South Africa earned a spot-kick of their own in the final minute of the 90 and it was converted by Teboho Mokoena.

The game went to penalties but it was, ironically, South Africa-

based goalkeeper Stanley Nwabali at Chippa United who proved the hero for Nigeria as he saved twice in the shoot-out to guide the Super Eagles to a 4-2 victory.

Bafana Bafana had arguably created the better chances in the game and might have won it at the end of the 90 minutes had Khuliso Mudau not blazed over with the goal at his mercy.

“Football can be hard sometimes, when you see the performance of my team, and then there is penalties, and then you lose the penalties and you are not in the finals, it’s hard to accept that

because we play very good game,” Broos said.

“I think we were the best team in the first half, we got the best chances, Nigeria didn’t have any chance. Second half they have few chances which resulted in a goal and we changed something tactically, and we could comeback.

“We created more chances which means if we had scored, we would have been in the final and not Nigeria.”

Broos, who confirmed he would like to stay in his role after the finals, says his players gave their all. (Supersport)



▲ Nigeria players celebrate their penalties win against South Africa.

South Africa, DR Congo looking to bow out in style

SOUTH Africa and Democratic Republic of Congo will be looking at bowing out in style of the TotalEnergies CAF Africa Cup of Nations Cote d’Ivoire 2023.

Both sides were knocked out of the title race during the semi-finals where Bafana Bafana were edged 4-2 on penalties after a 1-1 draw with Nigeria, while DR Congo lost by a slim 1-0 margin

against hosts, Cote d’Ivoire.

While both sides will be disappointed with the semi-final exit, the third and fourth place play off presents the perfect opportunity for either side to go home with the consolation of being the third best team of the competition.

Kick off at Abidjan’s Felix Houphouet-Boigny Stadium is at 20:00.

(Cafonline)



▲ Bafana Bafana will meet Cape Verde in the third and fourth place play-off match.

Hub Utility empowers youth under HRFA

By Ntokozo Magongo
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HUB Utility is a true friend of the Hhohho Regional Football Association (HRFA) development. The company continued their partnership with the HRFA by sponsoring the Under-17 Regional League under the Liyasikwa

Liyamila Hhohho Youth Development. The regional champions for the five zones were launched on Thursday during the draw at Sigwaca House. The zones are Lobamba, Mdzimba, Maphalaleni, Mbabane and Sigangeni. The winners of these zones will then compete in the Champ of Champs to be held on March 23, 2024, and the winner will be awarded a full set soccer kit. The kit excludes the E40 000 prize money

given to the 61 teams that participated in the tournament this year. The total sponsorship package is E80 000. Meanwhile, HRFA also revealed the prize breakdown to be won by the teams from the zones. The champions will take home E1 000 each with the runner-up getting up E650. The draw was also conducted in the presence of HRFA Chairman Comfort Shongwe and Khumbu Dlamini from Hub Utility.

| Hub Utility Stores finals for the 6 zones: | |
|--|----------|
| Lobamba | 10÷02÷24 |
| Mdzimba | 17÷02÷24 |
| Maphalaleni | 24÷02÷24 |
| Mbabane | 2÷3÷24 |
| Sigangeni | 9÷03÷24 |



▲ Teams with the HRFA Executive and Hub Utility’ repreasantative Khumbu Dlamini.



▲ Mabandla Bhembe from EBIS assist during the draw with Luyandza Lukhele.



▲ Khumbu Dlamini from Hub Utility make her remarks.

Qiniso Nyawo suspended AGAIN!

Stories By Sibusiso Masilela
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OLD habits die hard.
This adage holds true for Mbabane Swallows goalkeeper Qiniso Nyawo who has been suspended by the club for misconduct – for the umpteenth time.
The player was told to stop attending the team activities three weeks ago pending ongoing investigations by the management committee.
The ‘Beautiful Birds’ development product has been suspended for the time this season.
He has missed several matches in the MTN Premier League and SMVAF Ingwenyama Cup.
A source close to the matter revealed that the player will soon appear before the club’s Disciplinary Committee.
“The player’s future in the club is uncertain as the management committee is currently preparing for his disciplinary hearing. The entire MC is unhappy with his conduct,” the source said.
Swallows Public Relations Officer (PRO) Knowledge Ngwenya played his card to his chest saying the player is still undergoing internal Disciplinary procedures.
“. Mbabane Swallows did not suspend Mr Nyawo, but he was undergoing internal disciplinary measures for a corrective measure,” he said.
Nyawo was part of the Swallows squad that reached the finals of the revived Trade Fair Cup in September.
The player will also the Ingwenyama Cup quarterfinal clash against Piggs Peak Rangers



▲Mbabane Swallows goalkeeper Qiniso Nyawo.



▲Mbabane Swallows playing against Green Mamba recently.



▲Delegates and school representatives during the launch of the Atibuye Emasweni foundation on Thursday.

Atibuye Emasweni foundation launch development programme

By EDN Reporter

CATCHING them young.
That is the Atibuye Emasweni football foundation which has officially launched its national under-nine grass root programme.
The foundation is a brainchild of former Sihlangu manager Josiah ‘Digger’ Dlamini.
The foundation is currently running the development initiative at various schools in the country.
Some of their partners are Mqolo

Primary school (Mbabane), St Micheal’s (Manzini), Holy Rosary (Shiselweni) and Siphofaneni Primary, among others.
The programme is facilitated by several legends in the country such as Sibusiso ‘Spoko’ Dlamini, Mgonodi Sidell, Turbie Terblanche, Psycho Mavimbela. The event was held at Sibane Hotel on Thursday, and it was attended by dignitaries including Eswatini Sport and Recreation Council Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Darius Dlomo, among others.
The foundation Chairman

‘Digger’ Dlamini said the aim of the programme is to unearth young talent in the country.
“We are confident that the initiative will help us achieve our main goal of unearthing youngsters in the country. This will also create a platform for teams to recruit players,” he said.
He further thanked their sponsors such as the Eswatini National Provident Fund (ENPF), Futi’s, Samuels family and the Mdluli family, among others for supporting the programme

Zweli left out of Africa games squad

TOP boxer Zweli Dlamini has been left out of the final Boxing team to represent the country in the 2024 Africa games in Ghana.
The Matsapha boxing club athlete was part of the seven-member tentative squad recently announced by the Eswatini Boxing Association (EBA).
Two boxers in Thabiso Dlamini and Sibongiseni Shongwe have been included in the boxing team that will be part of team Eswatini during the continental spectacle.
The games will take place between March 8 and 23 in Accra.
The duo will be under the tutelage of internationally recognized coach Muzi Shongwe in the assignment.
EBA President Webster Lukehele confirmed the news when giving updates on the boxing mother body.
“We have selected two boxers for the African games due to the number that were allocated for us by Eswatini Olympic and Commonwealth Games Association (EOCGA). We are confident that the two boxers will make us proud during the assignment,” he said.
Zweli is one of the experienced boxers in the country and he has competed in several major international tournaments



▲Zweli Dlamini in action during a boxing tournament.

such as the 2023 African championships and the 2023 World championships.
Meanwhile, the local Olympic movement is expected to announce the Ghana bound team on Friday afternoon.
EOCGA board member Zakhele Zulu will be the chief the mission for the local team during the games.
The national team will be off by athletes from various disciplines such as swimming, Athletics, Boxing, Taekwondo, karate, and chess.



Page 19 **FIFA**
‘sin bin’
blue card in
pipeline

Zweli Dlamini
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Qiniso Nyawo
suspended
AGAIN!

... Errant Mbabane Swallows goalkeeper
Qiniso Nyawo has been suspended by the
Capital City giants for misconduct. - **Page 23**