



Eswatini rekindles ties with Morocco, eyes stronger economic partnership

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MPAKENI DAM E3.5 BILLION PROJECT DRAMA 33 Chinese nationals arrested for working without permits



By Bahle Gama
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THE unending issues of contravening labour laws at the E3.5 billion Mpakeni Dam took another interesting twist in the past week when 33 Chinese nationals were arrested for overstaying and working without permits at the project. This was a result of random inspections conducted by officials from the immigration department in the Ministry of Home Affairs last week. The Ministry disclosed this information on its Facebook page on Saturday afternoon. However, it is unclear which part of the Mpakeni project were the Chinese nationals working.

■ SEE FULL STORY ON PAGE 2



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MPAKENI DAM E3.5 BILLION PROJECT DRAMA

33 Chinese nationals arrested for working without permits

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This was a result of random inspections conducted by officials from the immigration department in the Ministry of Home Affairs last week.

The Ministry disclosed this information on its Facebook page on Saturday afternoon. However, it is unclear which part of the Mpakeni project were the Chinese nationals working.

Out of the 33 individuals taken into custody, 28 were found to possess passports but lacked the necessary work permits, while five had initiated the application process for the required permits.

These individuals have been charged with violating Section 14 (2) (c) and (f) of the Immigration ACT No. 17 of 1982.

They were arrested and detained at the Hlathikhulu police station. On Friday, they made an appearance at the Hlathikhulu Magistrates Court, where they were formally charged.

They were each granted bail at E2,000



▲Some of the Chinese nationals working at the Mpakeni Dam project.

and further advised to arrange legal representation for their upcoming trial, scheduled to be held on April 8, 2024.

According to the Ministry of Home Affairs, this incident underscores the government's commitment to upholding immigration laws and regulations, as well as its dedication to addressing instances of visa overstay and unauthorized employment.

The Ministry said it would continue

to conduct thorough inspections to identify and address violations of immigration laws.

"The Ministry of Home Affairs continues to monitor the situation closely, and additional updates regarding the legal proceedings and any further developments will be provided as they unfold," reads the post.

The Eswatini Water and Agricultural Development Enterprise (EWADE) Mpakeni

Dam project has been surrounded by controversy since it was launched due to the extent that it was turned back to tendering but without prequalification.

The Mkhondvo-Ngwavuma Water Augmentation Programme Phase IA (MNWAP) came under the spotlight when it emerged that local companies had been left behind in the prequalification process for the Mpakeni Dam and Associated Works. Including the Permanent Access Road.

Three foreign joint ventures (JVs) were prequalified for the project and a JV which included a local company was left out. EWADE cited that the CCI Mpakeni JV did not meet the financial and technical criteria set out in the prequalification document.

To date, there has been a series of events that have delayed the project from proceeding at the pace it ought to have been when it was launched.

In October 2023, EWADE suspended operation within the E3.5 billion project amid protests by workers who were demanding better salaries. Again in early January, work was halted as workers demanded to have their grievances attended to. The project had only resumed for a week when the 33 Chinese nationals were arrested on Thursday for not possessing work permits and having expired visas.

EWADE Head of Communications Nokwazi Hlophe could only confirm that they are aware of the arrest of the Chinese nationals and referred further enquiries to the contractor, Sakhalive Joint Venture.

Eswatini rekindles ties with Morocco, eyes stronger economic partnership

By Ncaba Ntshakala

ESWATINI and Morocco have renewed their bilateral relations, paving the way for strengthened economic and sectoral cooperation, following a meeting between the two nations' ministers.

Eswatini's Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Pholile Shakantu, met the Moroccan Minister of Industry and Trade, Ryad Mezzour, after the High Level Ministerial Conference on Middle-Income Countries (MICs) held in Rabat, Morocco last week. The meeting signified a renewed commitment to collaborate on shared goals and address common challenges between Morocco and Eswatini.

The two kingdoms previously signed an industrial cooperation protocol and a joint declaration of intent on health sector cooperation in 2020. The recent discussions focused on bolstering these existing agreements and exploring new avenues for partnership.

Addressing the MIC conference, Minister Pholile Shakantu emphasized the multifaceted challenges faced by middle-income countries, including technological gaps, environmental concerns, and the lingering effects of natural disasters. She

urged for solidarity and innovative solutions to overcome these hurdles.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Pholile Shakantu stressed the need for the international community to adopt a more nuanced approach to supporting MICs. She called for a model that provides tailored assistance and caters to the specific developmental needs of each nation, ensuring equity and comprehensiveness.

By aligning their efforts and expertise, Eswatini and Morocco, along with other MICs, hope to forge a more equitable and prosperous global landscape. This renewed partnership serves as a positive example of collaboration and a shared vision for sustainable development in a rapidly changing world.

The Industrial Cooperation Protocol and the joint declaration of intent on health sector cooperation were signed in Rabat in 2020 by the then Eswatini Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation and current Deputy Prime Minister Thulisile Dladla, African Cooperation and Moroccans expatriates, following bilateral talks. In the same year, Eswatini opened its embassy in Rabat. The Kingdom of Eswatini Embassy in Morocco is also accredited to Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Chad, Egypt, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Togo, Ghana and Tunisia



▲Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Pholile Shakantu and the Moroccan Minister of Industry and Trade Ryad Mezzour in discussion whilst their delegation looks on.

The industrial cooperation protocol was intended to create a mutually beneficial approach between the two countries so as to develop an economic partnership with the aim of promoting private initiative and sustainable growth. It also aims to strengthen and expand the existing partnerships between the two countries and develop new ones, in addition to promoting the exchange of experiences and expertise in industrial policy.

Through the joint declaration of intent, the two countries show their willingness to strengthen their cooperation in the field of health and set the bilateral cooperation

actions to be developed in this field, namely the capacity building of health professionals and the sharing of experiences and expertise.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Pholile Shakantu has been on an international spree expanding the Kingdom's bilateral relations. Before Morocco, the Minister had a productive five-day visit to Taiwan, where she met with President Tsai Ing-wen, President-elect Lai Ching-te, and signed a joint declaration that highlights and reaffirms the rock-solid Taiwan-Eswatini relationship and promises to strengthen future cooperation between the two countries.

King calls for unity, National interest, Tinkhundla system protection

By Ncaba Ntshakala

ADDRESSING the newly elected members of the 12th Parliament on Friday, His Majesty King Mswati III outlined critical tasks and responsibilities for the legislators, emphasizing national unity, constitutional protection, and continued support for the Tinkhundla system of governance.

The King addressed the legislators of the 12th Parliament when he officially opened the first session of the 12th Parliament.

King Mswati III acknowledged the diverse composition of the new parliament, welcoming both returning and new members. "As we gather here today, we are in the midst of a diverse group of politicians, many of whom are just starting their political journeys. we welcome you all to this daunting task after securing the support of your constituencies." The King stated. "We wish you success in fulfilling this significant national role, which entails enacting laws and providing oversight to drive our national development agenda."

His Majesty also praised the efforts of the previous parliament for setting the stage for a strong economic start in 2024. "We also recognise the remarkable achievements of those who came before you. their efforts have positioned the country favourably for a strong 2024 economic start." The King asserted. "You are urged to establish a collab-



▲ His Majesty King Mswati III making his Speech from the Throne 2024.

orative partnership with the other branches of government and enhance service delivery to the nation with the highest level of efficiency and speed collaboration and efficiency for service delivery."

The King urged the parliamentarians to foster collaboration with the other branches of government, emphasizing the importance of efficiency and speed in service delivery to the nation. He stressed the need for a united

approach to address national challenges.

Recognizing the significant role of parliamentarians, King Mswati III underscored the importance of demonstrating "unquestionable integrity, credibility, trustworthiness, respect and a firm dedication to national unity at all times." He reminded them of their responsibility to protect the nation, its constitution, and the Tinkhundla system of governance.

... Huge task ahead, address challenges that lie ahead – HMK

The King also expressed to the Parliamentarians that they have a vast task which is to address key national issues raised by emaSwati.

The King further implored the legislators to put their best foot forward and work towards bettering the lives of the people "You have a huge task ahead of you in addressing the challenges that lie ahead." Said the King. "It is time to roll up your sleeves and put your best foot forward to ensure we attain our aspirations of first world status.

The King further said, "During Sibaya, emaSwati showed their gratitude for the peaceful environment and expressed their desire for progress."

Submissions

The King said a take away from the submissions was the agenda the people set for government, and he added that it is important for parliament to follow through on that task. "The primary focus was to address the pressing issue of unemployment which is also witnessed around the world. This challenge has been exacerbated by the far-reaching impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic." Expressed the King.

The King also added that it is vital for Members of Parliament to address these issues and come up with well-established strategies to achieve good economic growth for the country.

Cloudy to warm week ahead

THE FORECAST IS AS FOLLOWS:

Area	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
Mbabane	15÷23	16÷26	16÷27
Mankayane	16÷24	17÷27	17÷28
Manzini	18÷26	19÷29	19÷30
Siteki	17÷25	18÷28	18÷29
Mhlume	19÷29	20÷32	20÷33
Big Bend	20÷30	21÷33	21÷34

By Bahle Gama

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Due to climate change, the country and the world at large have experienced a series of "unexpected" weather events that have altered wardrobe "schedules" and other things for many.

According to a three-day weather forecast by the Eswatini Meteorological Services, this

week is expected to be rainy and foggy in most places with partly clouds and warm to hot in the Lowveld.

On Monday there will be morning rain and fog in some places, otherwise cloudy with intervals and cool but warm to hot in the Lowveld.

Tuesday and Wednesday on the other hand will not have a morning rain however, there will be fog, partly cloudy, and warm to hot in the Lowveld.

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Stories By Ncaba Ntshakala

PRIME Minister Russell Dlamini has declared corruption a “scourge” robbing Emaswati of critical resources and demanded immediate action from law enforcement during the opening of the Royal Eswatini Police Service (REPS) annual senior officers’ conference.

“Corruption is a form of criminality that is a cause for concern to the government,” Dlamini asserted. “It diverts resources meant for delivering critical public services to the pockets of a few individuals driven by greed.”

The Premier stressed the urgency of tackling the issue, stating that corruption had been spoken about for too long, and was now time to act.

He said those who are entangled in corruption should feel the full wrath of the law.

During the conference, REPS unveiled that this year’s conference theme, “Accelerated speed (sitawutsi nkwe) in the fight against all forms of crime and road traffic carnage,” which underscored the organization’s commitment to tackling security challenges.

The Prime Minister placed the onus on the REPS to lead the fight against corruption, emphasizing, “The REPS, as a law enforcement agency, should not be found to be involved in corrupt practices as this will taint the organization and make the public

PM urges REPS to lead fight against corruption

lose confidence in the service.”

He commended the creation of a specialized anti-corruption unit within the Crime Detection Services Department (CID), expressing hope for its “requisite headway” in supporting government efforts.

Dlamini, who also serves as the Minister responsible for police affairs, reiterated the government’s top priority, “Safeguarding the nation’s safety and security through effective policing arrangements.” He further emphasized the importance of a society free from fear of crime, urging the police service to act “expediently” in preventing and responding to security challenges.

Recognizing the evolving nature of threats, Prime Minister highlighted the need for “constantly reviewing and updating policing measures” to effectively counter emerging dangers.

Prime Minister Russell Dlamini concluded by reiterating the government’s commitment to supporting the police service in its fight against crime and ensuring the nation’s safety and security.

He urged the REPS to collaborate with the government to achieve these goals and move the country forward.



▲ Prime Minister Russell Dlamini reiterated government’s commitment to supporting the police service in its fight against crime and ensuring the nation’s safety and security.



▲ Prime Minister Russell Dlamini.

... REPS unveils media communication policy

MARKING a significant milestone in its communication practices, the Royal Eswatini Police Service (REPS) officially launched its Media Communication Policy at the Annual Senior Officer’s Conference.

Prime Minister Russell Dlamini, also the Minister responsible for Police Affairs, personally unveiled the policy, highlighting its importance and high-level endorsement.

The newly launched policy signifies REPS’ commitment to transparent and responsible communication with the media and the public.

It outlines best practices and guidelines for police officers and internal members when engag-

ing with media outlets, ensuring consistent and professional dissemination of information.

The policy serves as a strategic framework, aiming to enhance public understanding of police operations and activities, promote trust and confidence between the police and the community, ensure accurate and timely reporting of police matters, and maintain professionalism in all media interactions.

Policy

By adhering to this policy, REPS expects to strengthen its relationship with the media, improve public perception of the police service, facilitate more accurate reporting of police news and enhance transparency and accountability within the organization.

Power sector gets a boost as: Revised Electricity Acts underway with EU, GET.transform support

ESWATINI is taking a significant step towards transforming its power sector with the successful completion of stakeholder consultations on revised electricity legislation.

This collaborative effort, involving the Eswatini Ministry of Natural Resources and Energy (MNRE), the European Union (EU), and GET.transform, has signified a commitment to modernizing the legal framework and paving the way for improved energy access, affordability, and security.

Over two workshops held in December 2023 and January 2024, public sector stakeholders were invited to provide feedback on the revised versions of the Electricity Act, the Energy Regulatory Act, and the Electricity Company Act. This inclusive approach ensures diverse perspectives are incorporated into the final legislation.

Eswatini embarked on a power sector transformation journey in 2020, recognizing the need to unlock its renewable energy potential. Partnering with the EU and GET.transform provides expert guidance and aligns the new laws with global best practices. The valuable feedback gathered from stakeholders will now be integrated into the draft legislation before being submitted to the Ministry and Attorney General’s office for further processing and potential adoption.

This comprehensive legal review aims to ensure the new laws are in line with current policies and international standards. This modernization will create a supportive en-



▲ Electrical power lines.

vironment for continued progress in Eswatini’s energy transformation objectives. The EU and the Kingdom of Eswatini have a long-standing and cordial partnership dating back more than 50 years now which was established in the 1960s. The partnership has been beneficial and developmental in the Kingdom.

This partnership focuses on poverty reduction and the promotion of sustainable and inclusive growth and development. In pursuit of democracy, rule of law and human rights, the EU also supports the democratization process within the country. This is done through regular political dialogues and direct engagements with the country’s authorities including His Majesty King Mswati III. The relationship has assisted Eswatini to enjoy the benefits of their mutual relations.

GET.transform operates globally and offers its services to selected high-impact countries and regions in Africa, Latin America, and Asia. Linking strategic insight to practical implementation experience, GET.transform has the agility to close the gap between short-term technical facilities and long-term bilateral programmes. This agile approach unlocks effective progress on the ground.

With a view to integrate activities across regions and topics, the programme helps countries to enhance their energy sector governance, planning and regulation. Deriving best practices and adapting standardized tools to local needs, GET.transform enables partner countries to develop conducive framework conditions for large-scale clean energy investments.

Stories by Nokunceda Magagula
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THE National Maize Corporation (NMC) has made a plea to the government, requesting funds to facilitate the recapitalization of their tractor fleet, which plays a vital role in their subsidy programme.

NMC's Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Mavela Vilane expressed concern over the ageing tractors currently in use. "We are pleading with the government to consider and allocate funds for the recapitalization of the tractor fleet, as well as tractor-drawn implements," stated Vilane.

He explained that the current fleet of tractors is quite old, and there is a scarcity of implementation, particularly planters for both maize and beans. He said that this scarcity leads to delays in the planting process, resulting in reduced yields and a decline in the overall national output. Additionally, harvesters pose another challenge, and their availability would significantly contribute to the improvement of the grain value chain management process.

Vilane highlighted his view that it would be ideal for each of the 55 Tinkhundla centres to be given an equal quota of the total subsidies budget and suggested that the centres should then select individuals based on their vulnerability and need and submit those names to NMC.

"We now await the budget allocation in anticipation of an improved allocation so that more Emaswati can benefit in our quest to end hunger and rural poverty," emphasized Vilane.

Vilane's comment comes after His Majesty King Mswati III's speech during the opening ceremony of the first session of the 13th Parliament on Friday.

The King emphasized the significant wor-

NMC pleads with govt for the allocation of funds

... to facilitate the recapitalization of their tractor fleet used on the subsidy programme

ry about the country's inability to meet its food security requirements domestically, leading to a heavy dependence on imports.

To address this imbalance, the government has introduced a horticulture subsidy and information system to support the marketing of fresh produce and agri-businesses. The existing subsidies for maize, beans, and sorghum inputs, as well as tractor hire services, will continue.

The current cost for the subsidy packages is approximately E14,000 for maize, E12,000 for beans, and E7,000 for sorghum. These packages covered an area equivalent to one hectare. The subsidy scheme at that time ran from August 2022 to October 2022.

The average price breakdown is as follows:

1. Maize: E4,900 (farmer contribution) and E9,100 (government contribution)
2. Beans: E4,200 (farmer contribution) and E7,800 (government contribution)
3. Sorghum: E2,450 (farmer contribution) and E4,550 (government contribution)
4. Tractor Hire: E300 per hour (increased from E270/hr due to fuel price increase).



▲ NMC's CEO Mavela Vilane expressed concern over the ageing tractors currently in use.

ESPPRA to host a webinar on open contracting data standard

THE Eswatini Public Procurement Regulatory Agency (ESPPRA) is set to host a webinar on Monday, February 12, 2024.

In a statement published last Friday by the ESPPRA CEO Vusi Matsebula, he stated that the webinar will feature Umrbek Allakulov who is a Senior Data Support Manager at the Open Contracting Partnership (OCP).

Matsebula said Allakulov will be delivering a presentation on the topic of "Reporting on Public Procurement Using the Open Contracting Data Standard."

He explained that the Open Contracting Data Standard (OCDS) is

non-proprietary open data standard for public contracting, which has been adopted by over 30 governments worldwide." It provides guidelines on how to publish data and documents related to contracting processes for goods, works, and services" Matsebula said.

The CEO highlighted three key concepts behind the OCDS. First, it aims to publish and use open, accessible, and timely information on public contracting to engage citizens and businesses in problem-solving and achieving desirable outcomes. This includes enhancing the efficiency, effectiveness, and integrity of the public contracting system.

Emphasized

Matsebula further emphasized that open data refers to data that can be freely used, modified, and shared by anyone for any purpose. To achieve this, data must be accessible, and machine-readable, and permissions for reuse should be granted. He stated, "A Data

Standard defines the structure and meaning of data to resolve ambiguity and aid interpretation by systems and individuals."

The CEO explained that the OCDS encompasses all three of these concepts, with its ultimate goal

being the promotion of open contracting through standardized open data. "It provides guidelines on publishing data and documents related to the procurement of goods, works, and services, making this information available for anyone to utilize, modify, and share for various purposes" Matsebula said.

The OCDS can be tailored to meet the specific needs of a country, whether it involves purchasing medicines, managing a municipal recycling program, or constructing an airport." It serves as a framework for organizing and publishing relevant data and documents throughout the procurement process" he added.

Clarified

Matsebula clarified that while the OCDS is not an electronic procurement system or database, it can inform the collection, storage, and publication of data in such systems. By adhering to global best practices, the OCDS ensures that the collected and published contracting data is fit for purpose and serves the diverse needs of different users.

He said the OCDS contributes to increased transparency, enables in-depth analysis of contracting data, and facilitates its use by various stakeholders.

"Academic research has shown that improved openness and transparency are beneficial for public integrity, value for money, and competition when accompanied by systemic changes that empower people to utilize the available information. Over 50 countries and cities, ranging from Argentina to Zambia, are currently pursuing open contracting reforms to enhance the fairness and efficiency of public procurement" Matsebula asserted.

He said to facilitate the publication of contracting data that meets a variety of needs, the OCDS provides a standardized data model, including a schema, code lists, and common rules and definitions for data fields and contracting processes.

Workshop

Providing more details on the person conducting the workshop, Matsebula stated that Allakulov is responsible for assisting OCP's partners in adopting a data-driven approach to improve public procurement outcomes. "He provides guidance on data collection, structuring, and utilization to make informed decisions and enhance the user experience of procurement systems. Additionally, he advises OCP partners on data digitization and publication" Matsebula briefly mentioned.

The CEO added that before joining OCP, Allakulov coordinated the research and evidence program of the Water Integrity Network, focusing on corruption, its impacts, and the effectiveness of integrity programs in the global water sector. Moreover, he has previously worked with the World Bank in Washington DC and GIZ in Uzbekistan and has experience supporting a tech startup in data science and machine learning applications.

"Allakulov holds a master's degree in international and development economics from the University of Applied Sciences in Berlin and is currently pursuing a degree in Computer Science," Matsebula said. He added that he has received numerous scholarships, including a Carlo Schmid Fellowship and a DAAD Scholarship for Development-Related Postgraduate Studies in Germany.



▲ ESPPRA CEO Vusi Matsebula, he stated that the webinar will feature Umrbek Allakulov who is a Senior Data Support Manager at the Open Contracting Partnership (OCP).

By Bahle Gama
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Form 4 pupil facing murder, assault charges

A Form 4 pupil is facing a murder and assault charge after he was allegedly involved in a fight which led to these charges.

The 17-year-old was reportedly involved in a fight which resulted in one man stabbed to death and another heavily assaulted.

In his bail application, the teenager said he never fought with anyone, instead he attempted to break a fight between two of his neighbours.

He said he was shocked when he received a call to appear at Buhleni Police Station where upon arrival he was charged with stabbing and killing Absalom Matsaba and assaulting Bhekumusa Mahlalela.

He said what he recalled was that Matsaba was fighting with Mahlalela near his parental home in January.

The suspect said he tried to separate the two and succeeded in doing so and went home to sleep.

“I then learnt later that Matsaba had died from an alleged stab wound inflicted on him by me. I further learnt that Mahlalela had been stabbed once in the stomach,” he said.

The accused person said he did not remember stabbing either of the alleged victims and only remembered trying to separate Matsaba and Mahlalela who were fighting.

In pleading for bail, he told the court that special circumstances existed for him to be admitted to bail, stating that he is a school-going pupil.

“My incarceration may affect my lessons as

I am still at school and with hopes of a bright future as a young person,” he submitted.

He further told the court that he was born with a strained breathing condition that requires that he does not get exposed to humid conditions, referencing the Piggs Peak holding cell which he said he struggles to breathe normally.

The teenager undertook to adhere to all bail conditions, further acknowledging the seriousness of the charges he faces.

He noted that, however, there has not been any evidence against him that can influence him to flee the country whilst out on bail.

“Although I have been charged with an offence where violence is a component, I have no propensity to such. I have never been violent or threatened anyone with violence, neither have I been charged with such before,” he submitted.

He further said he conceded that murder is a serious offence which attracts a heavy sentence, however, the prospects of being convicted of murder and assault are negligible.

He added that his community would not be outraged therefore his release on bail would not lead to public disorder, and his safety would not be jeopardised.

Bail was granted at E15,000 and was ordered to pay E3,000 cash and the rest as surety. He is expected to report at Buhleni Police Station every last Friday of the month.



▲ High Court of Eswatini.

Stokvel treasurer sentenced to 3 years, no fine

By Nokunceda Magagula
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... After staging a robbery of E48 000 stokvel funds

BONGANI Tsela, a stokvel treasurer who pleaded guilty to staging his robbery of stokvel funds amounting to E48,000, has been sentenced to a custodial sentence of three years.

Senior Magistrate Sifiso Vilakati handed down the sentence on Friday after Tsela was found guilty of theft.

Tsela was charged with theft in December 2023 after stealing money entrusted to him as the treasurer of a stokvel comprised of security guards in Mcitsini, Mbabane. According to reports, Tsela devised a plan to stage a robbery to divert suspicion away from himself.

He tied his hands and feet, blindfolded himself, and made it appear as though someone had broken in and stolen the money. However, as the police conducted their investigations, they discovered that Tsela was the primary suspect.

During the trial, Tsela pleaded guilty to the theft charge. The prosecution presented Amos Magagula, another member of the stokvel, as a witness who testified that the stokvel was established in December 2022 after the members left another stokvel. Tsela proposed the idea because he believed that the treasurer of the previous stokvel had embezzled some of the funds.

Magagula explained that the stokvel’s purpose was to pool money to purchase groceries at the end of the year and distribute them among the members. The stokvel had



▲ Bongani Tsela.

26 members at the time. Magagula stated that they made monthly contributions of E150 per person, and he registered two names, paying a total of E300 each month. They had agreed to keep the money in Tsela’s mobile money account.

Magagula recounted the events leading up to the staged robbery. He mentioned that earlier that day, they had a meeting at Mbabane market to discuss the grocery purchases as the year was coming to an end. During the meeting, Tsela informed them

that the stokvel had accumulated E48,000 in 2023, with E4,000 remaining unpaid by members who had borrowed from the stokvel. They finalized their plans for buying the groceries.

Later that night, Magagula heard a loud noise coming from Tsela’s house. He and three other individuals rushed to Tsela’s house, where they found him in a distressed state. Tsela had tied his hands and feet with a cloth-like item, had socks in his mouth, and his eyes were blindfolded.

Tsela appeared to be in excruciating pain. They called the community police, who arrived to assess the situation. Although they attempted to question Tsela, he was unable to speak. When asked about the money, Tsela pointed to a drawer where a large purse was found empty. Tsela finally spoke, saying, “Oh Lord, people’s money is gone.”

Magagula stated that Tsela was then taken to the hospital. Upon his return the next day, Tsela informed Magagula that he had been attacked by three men carrying bush knives who had robbed him of the stokvel money. However, Magagula did not believe Tsela’s story and suspected that Tsela had planned the entire incident.

During cross-examination, Tsela denied being the one who proposed the idea of starting the stokvel and had nothing further to add to his defense.

In mitigation, Tsela pleaded for a lenient sentence and Senior Magistrate Vilakati sentenced him to the aforementioned without an option of a fine.

BUSINESS NEWS

BUSINESS BRIEFS

TMS Construction wins EIPA E4 million tender

THE Eswatini Investment Promotion Authority (EIPA) has issued a tender worth E4,06 million to TMS Construction (Pty) Ltd for the extension to Lush Haircare Factory Phase II T Ngwenya. According to the intention to award issued by ESPRA on their website, TMS Construction (Pty) Ltd was awarded in terms of section 45 of the Public Procurement Act No. 7 of 2011 (the Act), following a competitive bidding process, and scored 89.9 per cent beating seven other tenderers.

'Paying back a loan creates good credit score'

YOUTH Enterprise Revolving Fund (YERF) says by paying back the loans they got from the fund, the youth will be ensuring that they have good credit scores. YERF CEO Mandla Nkambule says as a fund they have been advocating for its beneficiaries to honor their loan obligations, which can translate into good credit scoring as they continue their entrepreneurship journey.

IMF's Georgieva says Mideast growth to slow in 2024 on oil cuts, Gaza

DUBAI — The International Monetary Fund said on Sunday Middle East economies were lagging below growth projections due to oil production cuts and the Israel-Gaza conflict, even as the global economic outlook remained resilient. Despite uncertainties, "the global economy has been surprisingly resilient," IMF managing director Kristalina Georgieva told the Arab Fiscal Forum in Dubai, while warning of a potential wider impact on regional economies of continued conflict in Gaza.

ESCCOM makes E11.6m surplus in year ended 2022/2023

By Silindzelwe Nxumalo

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THE Eswatini Communications Commission (ESCCOM) has made a surplus of E11.6 million for the year ended 2022/2023.

The organisation earned E122.7 million from annual license fees. According to the commission's annual report the Commission's income is comprised mainly of mobile license fees, spectrum fees, type approval and general electronic communication license.

The report stated that during the Financial Year 2022/2023 the Commission earned E122.7 million, and main source of revenue is based on 5 per cent levied on the net operating income of mobile network operators (MNOs), spectrum fees, as well as the 2 per cent levied on the net operating income of internet service providers (ISPs). According to the report these fees are used to fund the cost of regulation. Interest income Interest is earned from the Commission's investments, and long-term investments consist of Government bonds, whereas short term investments are money markets at various institutions.

"Interest income is reported at E11.4 million. The total accumulated expenditure for the period is reported at E102 million," read part of the report.

The report explained that included in this amount is the Commission's contribution to the Universal Access and Service Fund amounting to E10 million, and E568 000 was contributed to purchase equipment for Eswatini Television Authority (ESTVA) and Eswatini Broadcasting and Information Services (EBIS).

"E1 million was contributed to purchase terminal equipment to support Eswatini Posts and Telecommunications Corporation (EPTC) redundancy connections to undersea cable. The National ICT Access and Usage Survey was completed during the year. The total costs incurred for this survey during the year amounted to E2.6 million," read part of report.

The commission reported that the passing of the Data Protection Act and the Cybersecurity and Computer Crime Act, 2022, has expanded the mandate of the Commission, and this regard a Directorate for Data Protection and Cybersecurity was established in 2023, and the establishment of this Directorate incurred costs amounting to E211 000.

"During the year under review the Commission has successfully grown its total assets from E452 million to E514 million. To date, the Commission has spent E160 million on the new office building project. The total cost is estimated at E221.9 million," read part of the report.

The report further reported that E40 million investment in bonds was made to assist government in alleviating the economic fiscus at the time the investments were made.

The commission explained that the first E20 million bond earns fixed interest at 9.85 per cent annum and will mature in August 2023, and the second E20 million bond is a floating interest at (prime -1.5) per annum and will mature in February 2026.

"Other investments as of 31st March 2023 amount to E66.9 million. These investments are short term in nature and are held with Stanlib Swaziland (Pty) Ltd, African Alliance Eswatini



▲ ESCCOM CEO Mvilawemphi Dlamini.

Management Company Ltd, Status Capital Building Society and Old Mutual Investment Group (Eswatini) Pty Ltd," read part of the report.

The report added that designated funds represent license and spectrum fees earmarked for future projects of the Commission, and cost incurred on these projects are subsequently transferred to capital reserves.

"The capital reserves are amortized in line with the useful lives of the underlying assets," read part of the report.

The Commission further stated that its cash resources are held to meet prudential liquidity targets and the liquidity levels enable the Commission to respond effectively to changes in cash flow requirements, and the overall financial structure of the Commission shows a healthy year-on-year improvement.

ESCCOM Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Mvilawemphi Dlamini said while they have seen growing penetration, they have also been confronted with a bigger threat emanating from the ageing fixed infrastructure of the backbone provider. Dlamini stated that several sectors, from health to agriculture, education to banking, have a high dependency on broadband connectivity for the provision of their services.

"This has necessitated the need for redundant international links. The report is a manifestation of what the Commission has achieved in the reporting period and is an indication of how, through effective regulation, ESCCOM has changed the ICT landscape of Eswatini," he said.

The CEO stated that the reporting period coincides with the end of their five-year strategy and looking back over the milestones covered in the last five years, it is increasingly clear that

the ICT sector is no longer a nice to have, but broadband connectivity has become an enabler for economic activity not only in Eswatini but worldwide. He said in pursuit of a better connected Eswatini, ESCCOM together with the Ministry of ICT, is working on the development of a Digital Eswatini Strategy complementing the National Development Strategy 2022 – 2027.

He explained that this strategy and commitment to its implementation, will catapult the nation's aspirations of bridging the ever-widening digital divide.

"Our relentless efforts to expand connectivity and reduce the cost of communications has introduced many Emaswati to the benefits ICTs can offer for socio-economic growth," he said.

Mobile cellular subscriptions growth decrease by 0.8%

The weakening demand for mobile and fixed connectivity in 2022/23 has led to the mobile cellular subscription growth decrease by 0.8 per cent in the country.

ESCCOM Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Mvilawemphi Dlamini, in his CEO note on the commission's annual report stated that it was interesting to note that with the advent deployment of 5G technology, technological advancement is poised to leapfrog even in the Kingdom of Eswatini, thus ensuring that the ICT industry remains an attractive sector, ushering in a period of significant changes bringing both challenges and opportunities.

He said the Telecoms market growth slowed down in the period under review compared to the previous periods 2020/21 and 2021/22, and this is mainly attributed to weakening demand for mobile and fixed connectivity in 2022/23.

The CEO stated that Mobile cellular subscriptions growth was negative at 0.8 per cent from 1 524 629 in FY 2021/22 to 1 513 118 in FY 2022/23.

"Mobile broadband subscription growth was also uninspiring at 0.8 per cent; this growth in mobile broadband connectivity was supported by growing smartphone connectivity which grew by 10 per cent in the period under review," he said.

He added that the Telecoms services market growth also slowed down in value in the period under review compared to 9 per cent and 8 per cent growth recorded in 2020/21 and 2021/22, respectively.

The CEO stated that the Total revenue generated by the market only grew by 2 per cent in FY 2022/23 to E2.260 million from E2.209 million reported in FY 2021/22.

ANNUAL ICT MARKET INDICATORS 2022/23

Mobile network connectivity

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Cellular subscriptions	1 279 599 ↑ 11.2%	1 524 629 ↑ 19%	1 513 118 ↓ 0.8%
	112% per 100 inhabitants	131% per 100 inhabitants	129% per 100 inhabitants
Broadband subscriptions	1 105 987 ↑ 30.3%	1 379 526 ↑ 25%	1 389 894 ↑ 0.8%
	96% per 100 inhabitants	119% per 100 inhabitants	118% per 100 inhabitants
Smartphone connectivity	663 497 ↑ 20.1%	809 155 ↑ 22%	890 886 ↑ 10.1%
	58% per 100 inhabitants	70% per 100 inhabitants	75% per 100 inhabitants

FX RATES

Notes/Cash	Buy	Sell
U.S. Dollar	18.6396	19.1457
G.B. Pound	23.4276	24.1116
EURO	20.0367	20.3822
Bank Rate (July 2023)		7.50%
Prime Rate (July 2023)		11%
Inflation (July 2023)		4.5%
Petrol	E20.50/Litre	
Diesel	E21.80/Litre	
Paraffin	E16.75/Litre	

Stories by Silindzelwe Nxumalo
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THE Eswatini Investment Promotion Authority (EIPA) has issued a tender worth E4,06 million to TMS Construction (Pty) Ltd for the extension to Lush Haircare Factory Phase II T Ngwenya.

According to the intention to award issued by ESPPRA on their website, TMS Construction (Pty) Ltd was awarded in terms of section 45 of the Public Procurement Act No. 7 of 2011 (the Act), following a competitive bidding process, and scored 89.9 per cent beating seven other tenderers.

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

According to the Request For Proposal (RFP) Eswatini Investment Promotion Authority (EIPA) is a Public Parastatal Under Category A and is implementing the Extension to Lush Haircare Factory for their operations in Eswatini.

TMS Construction wins EIPA E4 million tender



Through the RFP the Authority invited suitably qualified building contractors registered with the Construction Industry Council Category (B3) only, for the proposed Extension of the Lush Haircare Factory in Ngwenya

The RFP stated that there was a compulsory site visit which was a compulsory briefing session on November 20, 2023, starting at 10:00 local time and the meeting place is Ngwenya Lush Haircare Factory.



“Tenderers are advised to allow enough traveling time as the factory is under operation and there is an entry or check-in system at the gate. Failure to attend the site inspection shall result in automatic disqualification,” read the RFP.

The RFP also stated that the scope of works for the project entails the construction and completion of a warehouse structure measuring 1,010m² which comprises the Structural steelwork, Roof covering, Cladding works, and Guttering systems.

Paying back a loan creates a good credit score, YERF tells youth

YOUTH Enterprise Revolving Fund (YERF) says by paying back the loans they got from the fund, the youth will be ensuring that they have good credit scores.

YERF Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Mandla Nkambule says as a fund they have been advocating for its beneficiaries to honor their loan obligations, which can translate into good credit scoring as they continue their entrepreneurship journey.



He explained that a Loan repayment is fundamental to ensure that the Fund revolves resulting in other young people being able to benefit from the Fund.

YERF
CEO Mandla
Nkambule.

Nkambule stated that it is also an opportunity for our youth entrepreneurs to build solid credit records that will assist them in accessing financing from other lending institutions to grow their businesses.

The CEO said it is important to keep a good credit score because Credit scoring is a statistical analysis performed by lenders and financial institutions to determine the creditworthiness of a person or a business.

“It provides an estimate of the probability of default or delinquency, which is widely used for lending decisions. Scores can be scaled to any numerical range; generally, the higher the credit score of the borrower, the lower the risk of nonpayment of credit,” he said.

He added that the application of credit

scoring has evolved from the traditional decision-making of accepting or rejecting an application for credit to the inclusion of other facets of the credit process such as the pricing of financial services to reflect the risk profile of the consumer or business and the setting of credit limits.

He explained that credit applicants with a good credit profile can access preferential rates on loan pricing.

“Additionally, it is a valuable tool for improving financial inclusion by providing credit access for individuals and micro, small, and medium enterprises,” he said.

Nkambule further stated that the impacts that one’s Credit Score has included payment history which is a record of late or non-payments on current and past credit accounts may have an adverse effect on an individual’s score.

He said it also included public records which matters of public record such as bankruptcies, judgments, and collection items may impact the score, and the amount owed and loan purpose of which high levels of debt may impact the score negatively.

It will also impact the length of credit history in a way that the longer the credit history the better the chances of accessing new credit.

Furthermore, the CEO also encourages the youth to improve their credit score by consistently paying debt obligations on time, making payment arrangements with the credit provider if there are challenges before the payment due date, and checking credit bureau records regularly to ensure that there are no errors which may impact lending decisions.

He concluded by revealing that YERF is now implementing a vetting system for all its applicants before their projects are assessed for viability and funding, this will help verify their credit history and status.

“We believe this will also help reduce the default rate of beneficiaries. We encourage all our beneficiaries to comply with their loan requirements and obligations, as this will be very helpful as they build their business profiles in the entrepreneurship space,” said the CEO.

IMF's Georgieva says Mideast growth to slow in 2024 on oil cuts, Gaza

By Maha El Dahan and
Federico Maccioni

DUBAI — The International Monetary Fund said on Sunday Middle East economies were lagging below growth projections due to oil production cuts and the Israel-Gaza conflict, even as the global economic outlook remained resilient.

Despite uncertainties, “the global economy has been surprisingly resilient,” IMF managing director Kristalina Georgieva told the Arab Fiscal Forum in Dubai, while warning of a potential wider impact on regional economies of continued conflict in Gaza.

In a regional economic report last month, the IMF revised its GDP growth forecast for the Middle East and North Africa down to 2.9 per cent this year, lagging below October projections, due in part to short term oil production cuts and the conflict in Gaza.

The IMF last month edged its forecast for global economic growth higher, upgrading the outlook for both the United States and China and citing faster-than-expected easing of inflation.

Georgieva said economies neighbouring Israel and the Palestinian territories saw the conflict weighing on tourism revenues, while Red Sea attacks weighed on freight costs globally.



▲ International Monetary Fund (IMF) Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva attends the 54th annual meeting of the World Economic Forum, in Davos, Switzerland.

Those factors compounded “the challenges of economies that are still recovering from previous shocks,” she told the forum on the sidelines of the World Governments Summit in Dubai.

The Iran-aligned Houthis in Yemen have been targeting commercial vessels with drones and missiles in the Red Sea since mid-November, and say their attacks are in

solidarity with Palestinians as Israel strikes Hamas militants in Gaza. But the U.S. and its allies characterize them as indiscriminate and a menace to global trade. Several global shippers have been diverting traffic to the Cape of Good Hope, a longer route than through Egypt's Suez Canal.

Egypt's Finance Minister Mohamed Maait told Reuters on the sidelines of the summit

that part of the impact of the diversion on Suez Canal revenues could be absorbed due to good growth in “the period before the events.”

AI Tsunami

The IMF will publish on Monday a paper that shows phasing out energy subsidies could save \$336 billion in the Middle East, equivalent to the economies of Iraq and Libya combined, Georgieva said.

Georgieva said that eliminating regressive energy subsidies also “discourages pollution, and helps improve social spending.”

In the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, fossil fuel subsidies made up 19 per cent of GDP in 2022, the IMF has said. It has recommended the gradual unwinding of energy subsidies for the region's economies, including oil exporters, and suggested targeted support as an alternative.

Advanced technology, including Artificial Intelligence, is a key theme of focus at the World Governments Summit, with several top executives from major global tech firms due to speak, including Sam Altman, CEO of OpenAI.

Georgieva said globally, 40 per cent of jobs are exposed to AI, and countries that lack the infrastructure and a skilled workforce to invest could fall behind.

Regional economies such as the UAE and Saudi Arabia have significantly increased investment in AI as part of strategies to diversify income sources. (Reuters)

By Chris Prentice and Huw Jones

NEW YORK/LONDON — Global equities rose on Friday, with the S&P 500 crossing the 5,000-point milestone for the first time ever, as U.S. inflation data raised expectations of an interest rate cut this year, while closely watched U.S. Treasury yields rose.

The greenback reversed earlier gains, falling 0.06 per cent.

Oil LCOc1 notched a gain for the week on worries over a broadening conflict in the Middle East after Israel rejected a ceasefire offer from Hamas. The MSCI All Country stock index climbed 0.4 per cent to a third straight weekly gain.

The mood in stock markets was buoyed by Wall Street, where the S&P 500 index rose above 5,000 points, helped by big gains in megacap stocks such as Nvidia.

The chipmaker climbed to a record high after Reuters reported it was building a new business unit.

“The new closing high over 5,000 bodes well over the intermediate to longer term, with a key technical level being cleared today,” Larry Tentarelli, Chief Technical Strategist with Blue Chip Daily Trend Report, in North Andover, Massachusetts.

“We believe that the combination of very strong corporate earnings, strong jobs data, strong GDP data and declining inflation are an excellent backdrop for equities going forward.”

U.S. monthly consumer prices rose less than initially estimated in December, but underlying inflation remained a bit warm,

data showed on Friday. The data revision did little to alter expectations for central bank rate changes.

U.S. inflation data for January is coming next week.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average fell 54.64 points, or 0.14 per cent, to 38,671.69, the S&P 500 gained 28.70 points, or 0.57 per cent, to 5,026.61 and the Nasdaq Composite gained 196.95 points, or 1.25 per cent, to 15,990.66.

The yield on benchmark U.S. 10-year notes rose 0.7 basis points to 4.177 per cent, from 4.17 per cent late on Thursday.

The 2-year note yield, which typically moves in step with interest rate expectations, rose 3.2 basis points to 4.4883 per cent, from 4.456 per cent late on Thursday.

Gold prices came under pressure from the stronger yields, with spot gold down 0.44 per cent at \$2,024.16 an ounce. U.S. gold futures settled 0.4 per cent lower at \$2038.7.

Brent crude futures settled up 0.7 per cent at \$82.19 a barrel, and U.S. crude futures finished up 0.8 per cent at \$76.84.

European shares ended slightly lower under pressure from rising yields and sliding L'Oreal shares.

The pan-European STOXX 600 index closed 0.1 per cent lower, but still eked out a weekly advance of 0.2 per cent.

L'Oreal dropped 7.6 per cent after the French cosmetics company reported underwhelming fourth-quarter sales growth.

Global equities notch third weekly gain; US yields up



▲ Traders work on the floor at the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) in New York City, U.S.

Inflation in Germany, Europe's biggest economy, eased in January to 3.1 per cent, adding fuel to bets on when the European Central Bank will begin easing rates.

However, euro zone bond yields hit multi-week highs after several ECB rate setters warned against easing monetary policy too early.

“Indeed, it seems pretty clear now that the ECB will be waiting for European wage data statistics at the end of April before likely cutting rates in June,” ING bank said in a note.

Japanese shares hit 34-year highs. The yen recovered after falling to a 10-week low, with traders reassessing their bets on how quickly the Bank of Japan might raise rates.

In China, mainland markets were closed and Hong Kong traded thinly and shut early, with the Hang Seng down 0.8 per cent amid worries authorities might not deliver on promises for support.

“I am betting that (decisive action) is happening,” said Chi Lo, senior markets strategist for Asia Pacific at BNP Paribas Asset Management. (Reuters)

Jeff Bezos just sold off \$2 billion in Amazon shares

... in what could be a strategy to make him the richest man in the world —

Jeff Bezos this week unloaded 12 million shares of Amazon stock, netting him about \$2 billion in a strategic move that may position him to once again claim the title of “world’s richest man.”

The sale was in keeping with a plan announced by the company earlier in February for Bezos to sell off 50 million shares by the end of the year, valued at roughly \$8.5 billion total.

Bezos owned 988 million shares, just shy of 10% of Amazon, at the end of December, according to the company’s 2023 proxy statement, with his entire stake worth about \$168 billion.

A sharp rise in Amazon’s stock this year has led to a \$22.6 billion rise in the company’s founder and executive chairman’s estimated wealth, according to the Bloomberg Billionaires Index. The surge has propelled Bezos into second place on the world’s richest people list, with a net worth of \$200 billion at the time of publication.

While the exact motive behind Bezos’ decision to offload shares is unknown, the massive sale does



▲ Tech billionaire Jeff Bezos.

shrink the gap between his and Elon Musk’s net worth, positioning Bezos to overtake the Tesla CEO in the rankings of the world’s richest people.

Before this week’s sale of Amazon stock, Bezos’ net worth was only \$5 billion behind Musk’s \$200 billion fortune, putting the title of

#1 billionaire well within reach. Musk’s net worth rose to \$209 billion in the days since, per Bloomberg’s Billionaires Index, but the race for Bezos to catch up to Musk is on.

Bezos first became the richest person in the world in 2017, overtaking Bill Gates. The pair traded

off the title through the end of the year, but Bezos held the position of the wealthiest man in the world from 2018 through 2021, per Forbes’ list of the world’s billionaires, when Musk overtook him.

As Bezos’ wealth has surged this year, Musk’s has fallen by \$29 billion, due in part to a 27% plunge in

Tesla’s stock prompted by weaker-than-expected growth for the electric car company, as well as a Delaware judge’s January 30 ruling that voided Musk’s \$55 billion compensation package at Tesla.

Forbes’ list of billionaires as of February 1 positions Musk as the #2 billionaire, second to Bernard Arnault, the CEO and chairman of luxury goods group LVMH, and Bezos holding the third place title. Bloomberg’s list, however, which is updated at the close of every trading day in New York, ranks Musk as having the top slot with a fortune of \$209 billion, with Bezos about \$9 billion behind and Arnault in third.

Musk maintains 411 million, or about 13% of Tesla shares, valued at roughly \$73 billion. His investments in his other companies, including SpaceX, The Boring Company, and X, comprise the rest of his wealth.

Bezos and representatives for Amazon did not immediately respond to a request for comment from Business Insider.

This week’s stock sale is not Bezos’ first time offloading a large portion of his Amazon holdings, though it is the only major sale he’s made since 2021. That year, Bezos sold \$2.5 billion worth of shares as he prepared to step down as CEO.

In 2020, he dumped \$1.8 billion after Amazon’s stocks surged following the company’s 2019 full-year earnings call. In 2019, Bezos offloaded roughly \$2.8 billion worth of the company’s stock.

(MSN)

Neanderthals, humans lived side by side in Northern Europe 45,000 years ago

BONE fragments found in a German cave reveal that early humans made it to northern Europe thousands of years earlier than we thought. Dating over 45,000 years ago, they are the oldest human remains ever found so far north. This means that early Homo sapiens lived alongside Neanderthals in that region for thousands of years.

Archaeologists discovered the remains in Ilsenhöle cave, in the small town of Ranis, east of Frankfurt. The cave was first excavated in the 1930s. Researchers assumed that the tools discovered there came from Neanderthals.

Now, new excavations exposed the human remains, as well as several other tools. “Our most exciting finding was the identification of new, well-dated Homo sapiens fossils,” co-author Geoff Smith told The Independent. “There were no previously identified human remains from Ranis, so holding these in my hands for the first time was both exciting and nerve-racking.”

The team uncovered 13 Homo sapiens bone fragments dating between 44,000 and 47,500 years ago.

Their location suggests that our early ancestors were able to withstand the cold far better than we realized. At that time, the region would have been up to 15°C colder than today — more akin to Siberia or northern Scandinavia than to Germany.

It had been assumed that cold barred early Homo sapiens from these higher latitudes. “This fundamentally changes our knowledge about the period,” lead author Jean-Jacques Hublin said in a statement. “Homo sapiens reached northwestern Europe long before the Neanderthal’s disappearance in



▲ A human bone fragment from the new excavations at Ranis. Stone tools from the Lincombian-Ranisian-Jerzmanowician technocomplex at Ranis. (Inset) The partial bifacial blade point (left) is characteristic of the stone tools produced by hominids, now identified as modern humans, who occupied the Ranis cave.

southwestern Europe.”

It is well known that Homo sapiens came to Europe during the Middle-to-Upper Palaeolithic transition. Only a few thousand years later, approximately 40,000 years ago, Neanderthals disappeared. What exactly led to their extinction, and the role that our early predecessors played, has always been a mystery.

The stone artifacts included leaf-shaped

stone blades dating from this crossover period. It was always just assumed that Neanderthals made them.

The research team wanted to locate the deposits from the original excavations and verify who made them. The challenge was to excavate the full eight-meter depth and hope that some deposits remained from the 1930s excavations.

“We were fortunate to find a 1.7-meter-

thick rock the previous excavators did not get past,” researcher Marcel Weiss said in a statement. “After removing that rock by hand, we finally uncovered the layers and even found human fossils.”

Besides the human bones, thousands of other fragments belonged to animals including reindeer, cave bears, woolly rhinoceroses, and horses.

(Reuters)

Election protests turn deadly in Senegal

ON Saturday (Feb. 10) at least two people were confirmed dead after protests were held across Senegal, Friday (Feb. 09). Demonstrators were not allowed to gather, and groups were dispersed by security forces.

The victims confirmed so far, two men in their twenties, were killed in Saint-Louis and in Dakar according to local media reports.

The victim in Saint-Louis was a student. He was killed on a school campus following demonstrations in the northern city, according to a statement from the public prosecutor.

Anger has mounted since President Sall last week postponed presidential elections scheduled this month.

The delay came hours before official campaigning was due to begin.

Parliament backed a delay until December and voted to keep Sall in power until his successor takes office, which is unlikely to be before early 2025.

Sall's second term was due to end April 2nd.

The president said he postponed the vote because of a dispute between parliament and the Constitutional Council over aspiring candidates who were not allowed to

stand.

In an interview Friday (Feb. 09), he said he wants to rapidly organize a national dialogue that will pave the way for a peaceful electoral process.

Opposition lawmakers have filed an appeal at the Constitutional court while presidential candidates appealed to the Supreme Court.

A new round of protests is planned for Tuesday (Feb. 13).

Senegalese in the diaspora have also taken to the streets. In France where a large community of Senegalese lives, crowds gathered Saturday (Feb. 10) in major cities including Paris, Bordeaux (South west) and Nice (south). (Africanews)



▲ On Saturday (Feb. 10) at least two people were confirmed dead after protests were held across Senegal, Friday.

‘I am seeking for nothing except to leave a country in peace’

IN his first interview since announcing the postponement of the presidential election, Senegal's Macky Sall argues his decision to intervene was necessary to prevent worse electoral chaos.

He spoke Friday (Feb. 09) as nationwide protests shook the country.

“I am for an inclusive, transparent and peaceful process that allows me to pass on the baton smoothly and in peace. That is the most important thing for our country today. You are right that West Africa is currently in an extremely difficult time, it's not at such a time when I am about to end my term that I will reinvent myself in a new career as a dictator or non-democrat,” Sall told the Associated Press.

“That's a picture they are painting, but it doesn't correspond to my profile or my personality and that doesn't correspond to reality. The reality is that if there hadn't been this crescendo of successive crises, despite the breaches, we wouldn't have gone in this direction”.

Last May, Sall held a national dialogue aimed at reducing political tensions after unprecedented ri-

ots.

However, rights groups continued to accuse authorities of repressing the media, civil society and the opposition.

Senegal's president now believes a new dialogue can solve the crisis the country grapples with.

“The dialogue for me can start anytime from next week, but I think there are prerequisites if we want to have success. First among these prerequisites is to establish trust between the actors, bring peace and enter a dialogue,” Senegal's president said.

“So within one or two weeks maximum if the actors accept and I see a lot of interest from more and more actors who are okay with the idea of dialogue, that means we can get there quickly.”

Opposition lawmakers have filed an appeal at the Constitutional court.

The decree voted by Parliament to postpone the election is also contested by candidates in the presidential election.

Out of 20, 14 appealed to the Supreme Court. (Africanews)



▲ Senegal President Macky Sall.

Malema renews solidarity with Palestine at EFF manifesto launch

THE leader of South Africa's third largest political party addressed a packed 56,000-capacity Moses Mabhida Stadium in Durban on Saturday (Feb. 10).

Julius Malema who launched the EFF's election manifesto renewed his commitment towards the people of Palestine and claimed support for Russia, saying that “NATO is disguising itself as Ukraine”.

“We thank you, the people of South Africa, for loving the people of Palestine. Continue to show them love against apartheid Israel. Russia is our home and...Palestinian is our home, and Palestinians must know they've got a home in South Africa. We will never retreat. We are not scared of the Jewish power.”

The leader of the Economic Freedom Fighters aimed Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu accusing him of being a “warlord”.

The military campaign conducted in Gaza by Israel's war cabinet has killed over 27,000 Palestinians and wounded over 66, 000.

“The people of Palestine are not against the Jewish nation. The people of Palestine do not want to kill Jewish women and children.

The people of Palestine want their self-determination. If there is anyone who is killing innocent people, that's (Israeli Prime Minister) Netanyahu. He's a warlord, an international criminal, and he must be charged.”

The date for this year's general elections is yet to be announced.

Land redistribution and the country's electricity crisis are top priorities for the Economic Freedom Fighters

Their slogan was announced as “Jobs and land now! Stop load-shedding”.

Popular among the youth

The EFF is popular among many disenchanted South Africans, especially the youth, due to its radical policies which include the expropriation of white-owned land and the nationalisation of mines and banks.

Malema announced the Economic Freedom Fighters slogan for the coming elections as “Jobs and land now! Stop load-shedding”.

A former ANC youth leader who was expelled from the party before forming his own, Malema is among the ruling party's staunchest critics and an outspoken lawmaker who has become a thorn in the side of the ANC and South African President Cyril



▲ On Saturday (Feb. 10) at least two people were confirmed dead after protests were held across Senegal, Friday.

Ramaphosa.

The party garnered 10% of the national vote in the country's 2019 elections to become the third-largest opposition party.

Malema said the party would stop the power blackouts that are currently impacting the country's economy and would create jobs through, among others, the creation of social housing and road infrastructure.

He also promised to jail politicians and public servants who are implicated in corruption and vowed to introduce incentives for police to fight the country's high prevalence of crime. (Africanews)

Hungarian president resigns over sex abuse case pardon

BUDAPEST- Hungarian President Katalin Novak resigned on Saturday after coming under mounting pressure to pardon a man convicted of helping to cover up sexual abuse in a children's home.

Novak, a close ally of conservative Prime Minister Viktor Orban, resigned a week after her presidential pardon was first reported by local news site 444. hu.

The revelation caused a public uproar and demands from the opposition for her and former Justice Minister Judit Varga to quit. Varga, who has been a rising star in Orban's ruling Fidesz party, resigned as a lawmaker on Saturday.

The scandal was a rare setback for Orban, who has been in power since 2010, and who faces European parliament elections just as the country emerges from an inflation crisis.

Orban has for years campaigned to protect children from what he has described as LGBTQ activists roaming the nation's schools. This has been one of several issues that Orban has clashed with the European Commission.

"I made a mistake ... Today is the last day that I address you as a president," Novak, whose role as president is largely ceremonial, said as she announced her resignation on state television. She cut short an official visit to Qatar and returned to Budapest unexpectedly on Saturday.

"I made a decision to grant a pardon last April believing that the convict did not abuse the vulnerability of children whom he had overseen. I made a mistake as the pardon and



▲ Hungarian President Katalin Novak resigned on Saturday after coming under mounting pressure to pardon a man convicted of helping to cover up sexual abuse in a children's home.

the lack of reasoning was suitable to trigger doubts over the zero tolerance that applies to paedophilia," she said.

This week, Hungarian opposition parties had demanded Novak's resignation over the case and on Friday a thousand demonstrators rallied at Novak's office calling for her to quit.

In a bid to contain the political damage, Orban personally submitted a constitutional amendment to parliament late on Thursday depriving the president of the right to pardon crimes committed against children. Some political analysts had interpreted that move as a clear message to Novak.

On Saturday, Judit Varga - who was expected to lead Fidesz's list for the elections, and who also signed off on the pardon - said on Facebook she would step down as a Fidesz MP, taking responsibility for her decision. "I resign from public life, I resign my mandate as a lawmaker and also the top position on the European party list," Varga said.

The head of Fidesz's parliamentary group, Mate Kocsis, said Novak and Varga made "responsible" decisions which the party would respect.

Fidesz leads opinion polls ahead of the June elections but about a third of voters are undecided.

(Reuters)

In a bid to curb immigration, France scrapped birthright citizenship in Mayotte

PARIS - Children of immigrants born in Mayotte, the French overseas territory between Madagascar and the African mainland, will no longer automatically become French citizens, Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin said late on Sunday.

"It will no longer be possible to become French if one is not the child of French parents", Darmanin told journalists upon his arrival on the island, announcing the scrapping of birthright citizenship there - a first in recent French history.

Located close to the impoverished Comoro islands off the East African coast, the former French colony has become the centre of fierce social unrest, with many residents blaming undocumented immigration for the deteriorating conditions.

Much poorer than mainland France, Mayotte has been shaken by gang violence and social unrest for decades. The situation has recently worsened amid a water shortage.

Since January, island residents have been staging strikes and erecting roadblocks to protest against what they say are unacceptable living conditions, paralyzing large parts of local infrastructure.

The reform, which Darmanin said was the idea of French President Emmanuel Macron, will require a change of the constitution.

Less than three weeks after France's highest court scrapped large parts of a new immigration law designed to toughen access to welfare benefits for foreigners and curb the number of new arrivals into the country.

Immigration is a hot-button issue



▲ France President Emmanuel Macron.

in France, one of Europe's strongholds for far-right anti-immigration parties. Darmanin said, however, that "there is no question of doing this for other territories of the Republic."

(Reuters)

Russia closes presidential race candidate registration with Putin, three others

RUSSIA'S registration of candidates for the March presidential election has closed, TASS reported on Sunday, with a list including President Vladimir Putin, who is expected to win, and three politicians who all support Moscow's war in Ukraine.

The list did not include the Russian anti-war candidate Boris Nadezhdin after the Central Election Commission (CEC) barred him on Thursday from running, saying it had found flaws in the collection of signatures required for the support of his candidacy.

The CEC registered Vladislav Davankov, deputy chair of the Russian Duma and a member of the New People caucus; Leonid Slutsky, the leader of the Kremlin-loyal ultra-nationalist Liberal Democratic Party (LDPR); and the Communist Party

nominee, Nikolai Kharitonov.

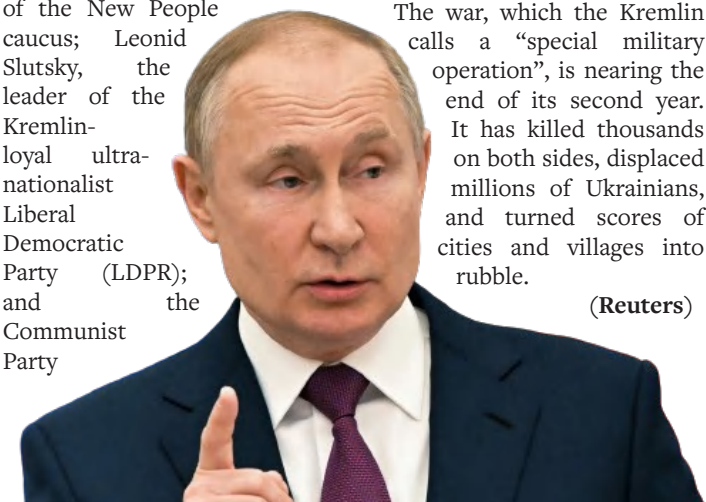
Putin, 71, who has chosen to run as an independent rather than as the candidate of the ruling United Russia party and who has been Russia's paramount leader since 2000 and controls all the state's levers, is expected to easily win next month's vote.

While nobody has expected the 60-year-old Nadezhdin - who has characterised Putin's war in Ukraine as a "fatal mistake" - to win, his trenchant criticism has surprised some analysts. The Kremlin has said it does not see him as a serious rival to Putin.

Nadezhdin said on Thursday he would challenge the CEC's decision in Russia's Supreme Court.

The war, which the Kremlin calls a "special military operation", is nearing the end of its second year. It has killed thousands on both sides, displaced millions of Ukrainians, and turned scores of cities and villages into rubble.

(Reuters)



▲ Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Israel's economy will recover after Moody's cut, but action needed

JERUSALEM- Bank of Israel Governor Amir Yaron said on Sunday the country's economy was strong and would recover from the impact of the war, but called on the government to address issues raised by Moody's after the agency downgraded Israel's sovereign credit rating.

To boost the confidence of markets and rating companies in Israel, it was key for "the government and the Knesset act to address the economic issues raised in the report," Yaron said.

"We knew how to recover from difficult times in the past and quickly return to prosperity, and the Israeli economy has the strength to ensure that this will be the case this time as well," he said.

Yaron, since the Palestinian Islamist group Hamas' Oct. 7 massacre of mostly civilians in Israel, has urged the government to maintain fiscal

discipline and trim spending on items not related to Israel's reprisals against the group in Gaza.

In the first-ever downgrade for Israel, Moody's cut the country rating to "A2," five notches above investment grade, from A1 on Friday, and kept its credit outlook at negative, meaning a further downgrade is possible.

Moody cited material political and fiscal risks from the war, adding "Israel's budget deficit will be significantly larger than expected before the conflict."

The downgrade, if prolonged or if it leads to further such moves, would raise borrowing costs for Israel and could lead to budget cuts and tax hikes to keep the budget deficit from spiralling out of control.

Israel's debt-to-GDP ratio, Moody's noted, looked likely to peak at 67% by 2025, versus 62.1% in 2023.

(Reuters)

House Musiq Fest releases phase 2 line-up

Stories by Siphesihle Dlamini
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HOUSE Musiq Fest (HMF) has revealed the highly anticipated phase two lineup for its upcoming 5th Edition.

Fun lovers will be mesmerised by the sounds of top DJ Le Soul, Artwork Sounds, Darque, Expo, The Bishops, Gazi, and Tharo. These exceptional talents will grace the stage and deliver performances that will leave attendees in awe.

The festival, known for its electrifying atmosphere and diverse musical offerings, is set to take place on March 30, 2024, at the Manzini Club. Now in its 5th Edition, House Musiq Fest has firmly established itself as a must-attend event on the country's music calendar.

Each year, the festival attracts a massive following of music enthusiasts, and this year promises to be no exception. With a lineup of this calibre, HMF aims to surpass all previous editions, delivering an experience that will leave attendees craving for more.

Beyond the music, House Musiq Fest offers a plethora of experiences for all festival goers. From delectable food and beverages to artisanal crafts, therapy and body wellness, health and wellbeing,



▲ South African DJ Darque will perform at House Musiq Fest.

merchandise, retail, and corporate stalls, the festival caters to every taste and interest.

Attendees can immerse themselves in a vibrant and diverse atmosphere, indulging in a range of activities that go beyond the auditory delights.

Anticipation has crept in for the

upcoming House Musiq Fest, and music lovers from all walks of life eagerly await the chance to witness this extraordinary event. With a lineup that promises to ignite the dance floor and an array of experiences to explore, the 5th Edition of House Musiq Fest is anticipated to be the biggest and most unforgettable one yet.



▲ Sands.

Sands in a song with SA rapper Zakwe

MUSIC fanatics' eardrums are up for a treat as Eswatini's talented musician, Sands joins forces with South African rapper Zakwe for an upcoming musical masterpiece.

The talented artists have teamed up alongside the sensational Ray T to create a powerful track titled 'Sukuma,' which is set to take the music scene by storm. Notably, the song belongs to Malungelo.

Although the song has yet to be released, fans are already buzzing with excitement. The cover artwork for 'Sukuma' has been unveiled, giving a tantalising glimpse into the magic that awaits. With Sands' soulful vocals, Zakwe's lyrical prowess, Malungelo's finest production and Ray T's undeniable talent, this collaboration promises to be an unforgettable musical experience.

Sands, a multi-award-winning musician, and gold-selling artist has fascinated audiences with his unique sound and heartfelt lyrics. His album 'Sands of Time' achieved gold status, making him one of Eswatini's most celebrated artists. Tracks like 'Tigi' and 'Vuma' have resonated with listeners, displaying Sands' ability to create music that touches the soul.

Confidence

The journey of Sands as an artist began during his high school years when his brother-in-law gifted him a guitar and taught him a few chords. From there, Sands took it upon himself to learn and grow as a musician, gaining confidence through his studies in music.

He started performing around campus, honing his skills until he crossed paths with Qibho Intalektual. Together, they began recording with the highly respected producer Sub Jamz, who is renowned in the kingdom.

Sands' talent has not gone unnoticed, as he has had the privilege of collaborating with industry giants such as the late music legend Tsepo Tshola and Loyiso Bala, further showcasing his versatility and ability to create music that transcends boundaries.

Now, with the upcoming release of 'Sukuma,' Sands is poised to make waves once again. Teaming up with Zakwe, a prominent figure in the South African rap scene, Malungelo and Ray T, the artists bring together their unique styles and influences to create a track that is sure to propel the single to great heights.

◀ South African rapper Zakwe.

Line-up for Traffic Lights Party revealed

THE highly anticipated Traffic Lights Party at House on Fire has unveiled an exciting line-up of acts that are set to dazzle attendees.

These are All Blaq, Ash, Baybash, Nelsonx, and MK72 who have been announced as the performing artists for this vibrant event. With the theme of Neon Love, the Traffic Lights Valentine's Party encourages attendees to stand out with outfits that are fun, colourful, bold, striking, and, above all, bright. This year's event promises to be a night of electrifying energy and unforgettable experiences.

Taking place on February 16, 2024, the Traffic Lights Valentine's Party at House on Fire marks the venue's first major event of the year. It's an opportunity for attendees to dress up, don their Traffic Light colours, and let loose.

The night will feature games inspired by the classic theme of Valentine's Day and Love, ensuring that everyone can enjoy a night of memorable fun and the chance to meet new people.

Tickets for the event are priced at E120 and will be available for purchase from Dala Spaces at Malandela's Lifestyle in Malkerns starting on February 5, 2024. They will also be available at the door on the night of the event. With the combination of exciting performances, engaging games, and a lively atmosphere, the Traffic Lights Valentine's Party promises to be an unforgettable night.

Now in its 13th successful year, this Valentine's themed event continues to deliver a host of exciting games and a sizzling line-up of some of Eswatini's most talented DJs.

Sponsor

House On Fire and official Traffic Light Party sponsor, Castle Lite, are pulling out all the stops to make this a night to remember. The collaboration between these two powerhouses ensures that attendees will be treated to an evening of entertainment that surpasses all expectations.

At the Traffic Lights Party, guests can express their relationship status through the choice of

Traffic Light colours. Green signifies being "single and ready to mingle," while red indicates being in a relationship or not looking for one. The orange/yellow colour may represent being "unsure" or "maybe," or it could simply mean that the situation is "complicated."

For those looking to fast-track their love connections, red, green, and orange Traffic Light wristbands will be available at the door.

◀ All Blaq.



Stories by Siphesihle Dlamini
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ESWATINI is about to experience an electrifying musical journey this Easter as South African DJ and producer, Sdala B, prepares to host a series of unforgettable shows.

With his well-curated beats and undeniable talent, Sdala B is set to entertain audiences in Siteki and Nhlanguano. The first stop on this musical adventure will take place on March 29, 2024, at Polar Rest and Bar in Mpolonjeni, Siteki.

This vibrant venue will come alive with the pulsating rhythms of Sdala B's music, accompanied by the incredible skills of the resident DJs. Music lovers should be prepared to be swept off their feet as Sdala B showcases his unique sound and takes the crowd on a journey they won't soon forget.

On March 30, Sdala B will make his way to T-Junction in Nhlanguano, where he will once again grace the stage with his mesmerizing beats. Joined by the talented resident DJs, this show promises to be a night of pure musical bliss.

Tickets for both events are priced at E50, ensuring that everyone can be part of this extraordinary musical celebration. Sdala B believes that music has the power to bring people together, and he wants to share his passion with as many people as possible.

Born and raised in Mpumalanga, South Africa, Sdala B's journey in the music industry began at a young age. Driven by his unwavering passion for music, he made the bold decision to pursue his dreams in Gauteng. Collaborating with a close friend, Sdala B honed his skills as a composer and singer, eventually establishing himself as a full-time professional musician.

Sdala B's debut single, 'Ghanama,' alongside Paige, which was a cover of Makhadzi's original song, propelled him into the spotlight, earning him widespread acclaim.

Sdala B invades Eswatini with Easter Tour



► Sdala B.

His unique style and ability to infuse his music with emotion have solidified his place in the industry, making him a force to be reckoned with.

War Words 4 adds stellar poets to its line-up

WAR Words 4 has added two exceptional poets, Nkundu and Titi, to its already stellar line-up.

These poets, known for their powerful words and captivating performances, are set to take the stage at this highly anticipated event. Nkundu, hailed as one of the best poets in the industry, wields his pen like a loaded gun, delivering thought-provoking poems that leave a lasting impact. His words have the power to ignite emotions and inspire change.

On the other side of the poetic battlefield, Titi is a dynamite of a poet, exploding with passion and creativity. Her verses are a force to be reckoned with, leaving audiences in awe of her talent. Notably, the event has already revealed the headliner, Poetic General, and supporting acts Chie and OPK.

Poetic brilliance

War Words 4, scheduled for March 23, 2024, promises an afternoon of poetic brilliance that will leave the audience spellbound. As the doors to this poetic battleground open at 1:30 pm, attendees are encouraged to dress in casual black and camouflage or opt for an all-black ensemble. This dress code sets the tone for an atmosphere charged with intensity and creativity, creating the perfect ambience for a battle of words.

Attendees must prepare to be captivated by the punchlines that will reverberate through the hearts of the audience. This battle of poetic brilliance will showcase the power of language and the ability of poets to evoke emotions and spark inspiration. War Words 4 is not just about showcasing the talent of seasoned poets; it also provides a platform for emerging voices to shine.

Anthonimass, the organizer of the event, emphasized the inclusivity of War Words 4, celebrating the diversity and creativity within the poetry community. By blending both novice and seasoned poets, the event ensures a dynamic and captivating show where new perspectives intertwine with established artistry.

M Nation added to the Makoti Festival

SENSATIONAL Eswatini Gospel artist, M Nation, is the latest addition of acts to grace the stage at the highly anticipated Makoti Festival.

This exciting addition to the lineup has sent waves of excitement throughout the country, as fans eagerly await the opportunity to witness her incredible talent firsthand. The Makoti Festival, known for its celebration of Eswatini culture and its homage to modern women, is scheduled to take place on April 27, 2024, at Malkerns Country Club.

With Mthandeni SK already confirmed as the headliner, the festival promises to be a memorable event that showcases the best of music and pays tribute to the strength and beauty of women.

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

While the music performances are

undoubtedly the highlight of the festival, the Makoti Festival goes above and beyond to offer a diverse range of experiences. Attendees will have the opportunity to explore vibrant fashion and food stalls, providing a platform for local entrepreneurs to showcase their creativity and culinary skills. From traditional attire to contemporary fashion trends, the festival embraces the rich diversity of women from all walks of life.

Soulful

Wandile Ndlovu, popularly known as M Nation, has been making waves in the music industry since his debut in 2015. Hailing from the town of Piggs Peak in Eswatini, his soulful voice and unique musical style have won the hearts of audiences worldwide.

Last year, his talent was recognized when he emerged as one of the top ten winners of the prestigious MTN Bushfire Firefly competition. This achievement opened doors for him to perform at various high-profile events, further solidifying his success.



◀ Titi for War Words 4.

► M Nation.

Michael Jackson catalog stake sold to Sony, valued at whopping \$1.2 Billion

IN what is likely the largest transaction for a solo musician’s body of work, Sony completed an agreement to acquire half of Michael Jackson’s publishing and recorded masters. The deal values the music assets at above \$1.2 billion, sources told Billboard. The outlet also estimated that Sony will pay at least \$600 million for its stake. An attorney for Jackson’s estate declined to comment to Rolling Stone.

Negotiations

Last February, Variety reported that Jackson’s estate was in negotiations seeking \$800 million-\$900 million for half of its interests in the singer’s music catalog. At the time, Billboard assessed that the estate earned about \$75 million annually, with assets including ownership of master recordings, publishing for Jackson’s share of his songs, the singer’s Mijac publishing catalog, and royalties from theatrical shows based on his iconic music.

In 2016, 21 years after Jackson and Sony formed Sony/ATV Music Publishing, Sony bought out his half of the company in a deal netting the Jackson estate \$750 million. Jackson first acquired ATV Music Publishing, which owned the publishing rights to the majority of the Beatles’ music, in 1985 for \$41.5 million. The singer merged his stake in ATV with Sony Music to form Sony/ATV eleven years later.

Legacy

Although Jackson’s legacy has faced multiple allegations of child sexual abuse, he continues to be one of best-selling artists of all time.

These claims were the subject of renewed scrutiny following the 2019 release of HBO’s documentary, Leaving Neverland, in which Wade Robson and James Safechuck claimed Jackson, who died in 2009, groomed and sexually abused them for years while they were boys. Jackson and his estate have repeatedly denied the allegations.

(Rolling Stone)



▲Late singer Michael Jackson.

More trouble for artist King Monada after another no-show

Controversial pop artist King Monada, real name Khutso Steven Kgatle, is embroiled in yet another scandal after he failed show to up for a scheduled performance on Friday.

The Limpopo-born singer and songwriter was billed to perform at a Valentines pre-party in Madupa Lodge, situated in Bokhuta village, Tzaneen.

On Sunday, the Malwedhe hitmaker issued a statement through his company King Monada Music accusing the owner of the lodge, Peter Madupa of intimidating and harassing him and his family for his no-show.

According to the statement, Madupa allegedly drove to King Monada’s place of residence with a truck full of passengers who seemed to be highly intoxicated.

“They intimidated and harassed King Monada and his family. They violated the freedom of security and maliciously damaged the property of the family,” the statement said.

King Monada said he did not pitch for the gid due to overbooking and apologised to his fans.

“We had many gigs to attend at various places, and due to the distance and time constraint we were not able to make it,” the statement said.

The statement also admonished Madupa for his conduct, saying the company is considering taking legal action against Madupa to protect the rights of King Monada and his family.

“We urge our fans to not be distracted by any negativity that may be caused by this. We remain committed to provide entertainment



▲Controversial artist King Monada.

services to our fans,” it said.

Sunday World contacted one of the organisers who said the owner had given them an order to not engage on the matter until they have a meeting.

“We can confirm that he did not honour the booking, however, we are not at liberty to comment on the allegations,” said the organiser.

Meanwhile, Sunday World reported on Sunday that King Monada’s family recently blocked the sheriff of the court from delivering the summons at his fancy mansion in Tzaneen.

This after Limpopo Legends Awards (Lilas) sued the Oskabhora Moreki star for failing to honour his booking to perform at its show after he was paid R35 000 as appearance fee.

A lawyer from the Lilas said King Monada thinks he is above the law.

“The sheriff left without delivering the summons. Now we have instructed the sheriff to return there and affix the summons on the gate and state that in his return of service,” said Harry Thobejane of Thobejane Inc.

(Sunday World)

Kim, Odell Beckham Jr aren’t rushing to make things official

KIM Kardashian’s relationship with sports star Odell Beckham Jr is still “pretty casual”.

The 43-year-old beauty and the 31-year-old sports star are “still hanging out” - but they aren’t rushing to make things official.

A source told PEOPLE: “Neither of them are in any big hurry to jump into something serious.” Kim previously attended Odell’s 90s-themed birthday party in New York City.

The reality star was joined at the bash by the likes of Lori Harvey, Ashley Graham, and Emily Ratajowski - but Kim’s presence prompted speculation about her relationship status.

An insider shared: “It was a very fun party with a lot of fun people.”

Kim split from comedian Pete Davidson in 2022, and the bru-

nette beauty previously insisted that she wasn’t in a hurry to find love.

Kim - who has North, 10, Saint eight, Chicago, six, and Psalm, four, with her ex-husband Kanye West - told the ‘On Purpose’ podcast: “I definitely will take my time, and I think there’s so many factors, especially when you have kids and being mindful of people that enter in your life.”

Kim is also determined to learn from her past mistakes. The reality star - who was married to Kanye between 2014 and 2022. If I can look at everything that I did wrong and try to not make the same mistakes and really take my time, I think it just has to be different for me.

“It’s obviously such a hard place to be in because how do you go about it?

(Bang Showbiz)



▲Kim Kardashian and Odell Beckham Junior.

EVEN small increases in cardiorespiratory fitness may lower a man's risk of developing prostate cancer, a new study showed.

Swedish researchers found that an annual increase in cardiorespiratory fitness of 3 per cent or more was linked to a 35 per cent lower risk of developing prostate cancer, after accounting for potentially influential variables.

Cardiorespiratory fitness is the ability of the heart and lungs to deliver oxygen to the muscles and organs during physical activity.

"The results highlight the importance of [cardiorespiratory fitness] for prostate cancer risk, which has been challenging to determine with single time point studies," the authors of the study write.

"Improvements in [cardiorespiratory fitness] in adult men should be encouraged and may reduce the risk of prostate cancer," they added.

The study was published January 30 in the British Journal of Sports Medicine.

HOW TO LOWER RISK OF PROSTATE CANCER

The new findings fit with research showing that regular physical activity is linked to a lower risk of developing other cancers, including breast, colon, and kidney cancer.

However, the link with prostate cancer is less clear-cut, the authors of the new paper write.

To better understand this connection, they examined data on 57,652 men from a Swedish occupational health profile assessment database for the period 1982 to 2019.

This included information on men's physical activity; lifestyle; perceived health; and height and weight measurements, which were used to calculate body mass index (BMI).

All men also had at least two cardiorespiratory fitness tests, which involved riding a stationary cycle. This test measures the amount of oxygen used while a person exercises at maximum effort.

During an average follow-up period of 7 years, an increase in absolute cardiorespiratory fitness was linked to a 2 per cent lower risk of developing prostate cancer.

This was after researchers took into account other factors that could potentially affect the risk of prostate cancer, including age, education level, year the test was taken, BMI, and smoking status.

However, no link was found between a change in cardiorespiratory fitness and the risk of dying from prostate cancer.

Researchers next divided men into three groups based on whether they increased their cardiorespiratory fitness by 3 per cent or more; decreased their fitness by 3 per cent or more; or remained about the same. This is a relative change in fitness.

Men whose fitness improved 3 per cent or more a year on average were 35 per cent less likely to develop prostate cancer when researchers took into account all the other factors.

How much exercise is needed to get this kind of cardio boost? Research shows that a person can improve their cardiorespiratory fitness by up to 16 per cent by doing certain exercise programs

Improving cardiac fitness by 3% can drop prostate cancer risk

● Improvements in [cardiorespiratory fitness] in adult men should be encouraged and may reduce the risk of prostate cancer



for one year or less.

WHAT PUTS YOU AT RISK FOR PROSTATE CANCER

When researchers grouped men based on cardiorespiratory fitness during their first cycle test, the results were only statistically significant for the group that started with a moderate level of fitness.

This shows there was a clear link between improved fitness and lower prostate cancer risk for this group — in this case, a 15 per cent lower risk on average.

However, it doesn't mean that more fit or less fit men won't benefit from a cardio boost, just that the data from the study couldn't say either way. The results of the study should be viewed with some caution. First, it is an observational study, so it can't show cause-and-effect. Other factors — in particular, genetics — play a major role in determining a person's risk of developing prostate cancer, as well as their cardiorespiratory fitness, the researchers write.

Dr. Will Jin, an assistant professor of clinical radiation oncology at the Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine, also pointed out that men who started with higher cardiorespiratory fitness had a lower body mass index (BMI), were more likely to have never smoked, exercised more often during the week, and were younger than the other groups. These differences from the other groups could affect their prostate cancer risk, as well as their cardiorespiratory fitness. In addition, the average age of participants

in the study was 41 years old. In comparison, the average age when men are first diagnosed with prostate cancer is 67 years old, according to the American Cancer Society.

"Knowing that this is a low-risk cohort for prostate cancer, we must have different expectations for how this study can be applied to an average man," said Jin.

"For example, a prostate cancer diagnosed at age 36 will likely behave differently than one diagnosed at age 86, in terms of its aggressiveness and origins," he told Healthline.

FUTURE RESEARCH ON WHY BETTER FITNESS LOWERS CANCER RISK

While the study has limitations, it provides additional support for the benefits of cardiorespiratory fitness — which in addition to a lower risk of certain cancers, includes a lower risk of heart attack and stroke.

Still, more research is needed to understand why men who improved their fitness had a lower risk of prostate cancer.

"What does a change in [cardiorespiratory fitness] actually represent that could impact cancer risk?" said Jin, pointing out that fitness variables are sometimes a proxy for other, more direct factors.

"We need to identify something measurable that can lead to reduced prostate cancer risk," he said, "and then we need to know what the intervention is." For example, did men who improved their cardiorespiratory fitness have access to healthier food and a community that encouraged healthy behaviors? Or were

other factors involved that lowered the risk of prostate cancer and improved men's cardiorespiratory fitness at the same time?

"While this study had an impressive population size and strong credibility, I'm left with more questions than answers," said Jin. "But that's not a bad thing."

The research group he is involved with at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine is trying to identify dietary behaviors or measures related to body composition that might predict who has a higher risk of developing prostate cancer and how well they do with treatment.

"For patients, there aren't many things that they can do to affect their prostate cancer outcomes," he said. "So, identifying a risk factor that's modifiable would be a game changer."

TAKEAWAY

Research has shown that physical activity is linked to a lower risk of certain cancers, such as breast, colon, and kidney cancer. However, the link with prostate cancer is less clear.

To understand this connection, researchers examined data on over 57,000 men and found that those who improved their cardiorespiratory fitness saw decreases in their prostate cancer risk. No similar link was seen for the risk of dying from prostate cancer.

The study is observational, so can't show cause and effect. Other factors, especially genetics, play a role in determining a man's risk of prostate cancer and cardiorespiratory fitness. **Healthline**



AS we move further and further into the digital age, it's important to be aware of how the technology we use impacts our mental health and cognitive function.

Dementia is an umbrella term that describes a decline in the ability to think and affects memory, language, and reasoning, due to changes in the brain.

Symptoms of dementia range from mild to severe and can have a significant impact on someone's functioning and quality of life.

Some experts use the term "digital dementia" to describe cognitive changes associated with technology overuse. While digital dementia isn't an actual condition, research does suggest that excess technology use can lead to dementia-like changes and possibly even increase dementia risk.

Below, we'll explore more about what digital dementia is, including steps you can take to reduce the potentially harmful effects of excess screen time.

IS "DIGITAL DEMENTIA" A REAL CONDITION?

Digital dementia, a term coined by German neuroscientist and psychiatrist Manfred Spitzer in 2012, describes changes in cognition as a result of overusing technology.

Although digital dementia is not an actual diagnosable health condition, the theory that technology overuse negatively impacts cognition may have scientific merit. In fact, several studies have found a link between internet use, "screen time," and cognitive changes.

One study from 2022 explored the impact of sedentary behaviors, including using the computer and watching TV, on overall dementia risk.

According to the results, more time spent on cognitively passive behaviors — like watching TV — led to an increased risk of dementia, regardless of physical activity levels. However, cognitively active passive activities — like using the computer — were associated with a lower dementia risk.

In another review from 2023, researchers found evidence that excess screen use negatively impacts executive functioning and working memory, among other changes, in both children and teenagers.

Another large study published in 2023 analyzed the relationship between screen-based sedentary activities and dementia risk in over 462,000 participants. In this study, the researchers assessed both computer use and television viewing.

Results of the study found that more than 4 hours of screen time a day was associated with an increased risk of vascular dementia, Alzheimer's disease, and all-cause dementia in participants. Additionally, higher levels of daily screen time were also linked to physical changes in certain areas of the brain.

SYMPTOMS OF DIGITAL DEMENTIA

Digital dementia isn't a diagnosable condition, so it's difficult to say exactly

Can excessive screen time cause 'digital Dementia'?

● Digital dementia, a term coined by German neuroscientist and psychiatrist Manfred Spitzer in 2012, describes changes in cognition as a result of overusing technology



what the symptoms are. However, as the name implies, some of the symptoms may be similar to those of dementia, such as:

- problems with short-term memory
- easily losing or forgetting things
- having difficulty recalling words

► experiencing trouble with multitasking

Similar to dementia, digital dementia may also cause changes in communication, focus, reasoning, and more. It's also not uncommon for excess screen time to result in sleep and mood changes, which also have a significant

effect on brain function.

HOW DO YOU PREVENT DIGITAL DEMENTIA?

Technology has afforded us the ability to make huge strides in society — from connecting us with people across the world to improving efficiency in our classrooms and hospitals, and more.

But there's no denying that excessive technology use has a negative impact on our brains. With research suggesting that teenagers spend roughly 6 hours a day on their phones, it's clear that moderation is the key to combatting digital dementia.

So, here are a few steps you can take to break away from the screen and offset the negative impact of technology overuse:

Limit phone notifications: One way to avoid constantly being on your phone or in front of a screen is to limit the number of notifications you receive. If a certain notification isn't urgent, consider silencing it — or getting rid of it altogether.

Limit passive media time: This may look different depending on how you spend your time. There are apps that can limit excessive scrolling time. Or you could combine time spent watching your favorite show with using a stationary bike or set of small weights.

Find other things to focus on: We're all guilty of reaching for a phone or remote when bored, but when was the last time you read a book or went for a walk? While these activities may require more effort, set yourself up for success by having a good book handy or a fun destination already picked out.

Set aside time to relax and connect: Reducing your screen time doesn't mean getting rid of it altogether. Consider setting aside a chunk of time each day to scroll, play video games, or watch TV. Setting a timer can help.

And if you're a parent who is looking for ways to reduce your child's screen time, start by opening up the conversation on why moderation is important. Explain that you're also trying to limit your screen time, and practice monitoring and making changes together, as a family.

TAKEAWAY

Several large studies have shown that excess screen time can have hugely negative effects on cognition, especially in children. And while there's no official diagnosis for digital dementia, research shows a strong link between technology overuse and dementia symptoms and risk. Whether you're looking for ways to reduce your own screen time or are interested in making changes as a family, even the smallest changes can have huge benefits for your health. **Healthline**

ODDEST PICTURES OF THE WEEK



▲ Colombia’s Melisa Ceballos Correa And Estefania Roa Bernal perform during the women’s duet free finals at the World Aquatics Championships, Doha, Qatar



▲ A diver dressed as a “mermaid of the dragon seas” swims at the oceanarium in Manila Ocean Park, as part of its Lunar New Year celebrations in Manila, Philippines.



▲ A reveller in a rabbit costume walks during a celebration of “Weiberfastnacht” (Women’s Carnival), marking the start of the street Carnival festivals in Cologne, Germany.



▲ Mattie the clown blows bubbles as clowns and entertainers attend the annual service of remembrance in honour of British clown Joseph Grimaldi who died in 1837, at All Saints Church in Haggerston, London, Britain.



▲ Enrico Braun imitates a male deer call with an outlet pipe during the German deer-calling championships in which 16 competitors jostled for the best imitation of a male deer call, a hunting trick that has been used for centuries, in Dortmund, Germany.



▲ A dog wears a costume at the “Blocao” dog carnival parade, during pre-carnival festivities in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.



▲ Dawn Richard poses on the red carpet as she attends the 66th Annual Grammy Awards in Los Angeles, California, U.S.



▲ A woman exits a sauna during the European Sauna Marathon in Otepaa, Estonia.

Arsenal smash six past West Ham to send title message

DECLAN Rice scored on his return to West Ham as Arsenal smashed David Moyes' men 6-0 in a statement of intent in the Premier League title race on Sunday.

Bukayo Saka struck twice, while Leandro Trossard and centre-backs William Saliba and Gabriel Magalhaes were also on target in a ruthless display from Mikel Arteta's men as they set a new club record for a Premier League away win.

Victory takes the Gunners back to within two points of Premier League leaders Liverpool and behind Manchester City only on goals scored.

The wheels of Arsenal's challenge for a first league title in 20 years appeared to be coming off when they lost at home to the Hammers amid a run of one win in seven games either side of the new year.

However, they have bounced back emphatically since a two-week winter break to lay down the gauntlet to perennial title challengers City and Liverpool at the top of the table.

West Ham had beaten the Gunners twice this season, also dumping them out of the League Cup in November.

But they were outclassed to up the scrutiny on Moyes, who is out of contract at the



▲ Declan Rice scored on his return to West Ham as Arsenal smashed David Moyes' men 6-0 in a statement of intent in the Premier League title race on Sunday.

end of the season.

Arsenal's title challenge last season began to wobble when they blew a 2-0 lead at the London Stadium last season.

This time there was never any doubt of the outcome once Saliba headed home Rice's corner to open the floodgates on 32 minutes. Saka missed a penalty in that draw last

April, but made no mistake from the spot after he had been brought down by Alphonse Areola.

Rice led West Ham to Europa Conference League glory in his final game for the club before moving to north London for a fee in excess of £100 million.

The England international was given a clear demonstration of why he had to make the move to fulfil his ambition of more silverware as another wicked Rice delivery was nodded in by Gabriel.

Trossard pilled on the West Ham pain in first-half stoppage time as he cut inside to fire brilliantly into the top corner.

That goal was the trigger for many of the home support to leave for the afternoon as the second half was played out in front of vast swathes of empty seats.

Moyes made two changes at halftime to try and stop the bleeding as Calvin Phillips and former Arsenal defender Konstantinos Mavropanos were introduced.

By the visitors cut loose again with two goals in two minutes just after the hour mark. Saka's first had been his 50th Arsenal goal and he cut inside to fire home in trademark fashion on his left foot.

Rice then rubbed salt in West Ham wounds with a stunning finish into the top corner from outside the box. (Reuters)



▲ Jude Bellingham suffered an ankle sprain during Saturday's 4-0 victory over Girona, Real Madrid said on Sunday.

Bellingham suffered ankle sprain during Girona win

ENGLAND international Jude Bellingham suffered an ankle sprain during Saturday's 4-0 victory over Girona, Real Madrid said on Sunday.

The injured midfielder left the field in the 57th minute, soon after scoring his second goal of the night in the top-of-the-table clash where leaders Real went five points clear with the win.

"After the tests carried out to-

day by the Real Madrid medical services, our player Jude Bellingham has been diagnosed with a high grade sprain in his left ankle," the club said in a statement.

Bellingham leads the scoring chart in LaLiga this season with 16 goals, which is double the goals scored by Real's second-most prolific scorer Rodrygo. Real, who have 61 points from 24 matches, visit Rayo Vallecano on Feb. 18.

(Reuters)

UFC fighter rushed to hospital with testicular injury

UFC fighter Qileng Aoriqileng was rushed to hospital after receiving a devastating low blow from Daniel Marcos during their clash in Las Vegas on Saturday.

The Chinese fighter, who was fighting on the undercard of Jack Hermansson vs Joe Pyfer, was taken to the emergency room immediately after the bout.

Aoriqileng underwent a testicular ultrasound and a precautionary CT scan of his head and face after the fight - which was deemed a no-contest.

Thankfully, Aoriqileng's manager, Wang Le, confirmed the Chinese fighter was okay but revealed 'the tubes around his testicles were swollen'.

Aoriqileng's manager told MMA Mania: 'He is okay. The structure of his testicles is okay, but the tubes around his testicles are swollen.'

The fight on Saturday night saw four illegal moves made - with three low blows and an eye poke forcing referee Jason Herzog to call the bout off.

Aoriqileng had tried to carry on after being caught in the groin by Marcos, but after being having taken the full five count... he was unable to continue.

Therefore, the fight was officially waved off and deemed a no-contest at 3:28 in the second round - leaving both fighters distraught.

Aoriqileng wasn't the only UFC fighter to head to the hospital on Saturday night. Both Ihor Potieria and Fernie Garcia were both taken in for precautionary CT scans.



▲ UFC fighter Qileng Aoriqileng was rushed to hospital after receiving a devastating low blow from Daniel Marcos during their clash in Las Vegas on Saturday.

Meanwhile, Pyfer's role as the new UFC golden boy got knocked down a few pegs on Saturday, when he suffered a unanimous-decision loss to Hermansson.

The five-round headlining fight saw Hermansson dominate the last three rounds of the fight to earn a 48-47 verdict on all three judges scorecards.

Pyfer appeared to run out of steam in the third five-minute round after getting the better of Hermansson with strikes during the first 10 min-

utes of the fight.

This was Pyfer's first loss with the promotion and his first scrap inside the Octagon that went to the judge's scorecards.

The bout in Las Vegas on Saturday night also marked the first time Pyfer had headlined an event for the promotion.

Hermansson has been with the UFC since 2016 and was by far the most experienced fighter Pyfer has faced with the promotion.

(Daily mail)



Nsue wins TotalEnergies CAF AFCON Golden Boot

EQUATORIAL Guinea captain Emilio Nsue emerged as the top scorer at the TotalEnergies CAF Africa Cup of Nations, despite his side crashing out in the last 16.

Nsue netted five goals in just three games to win the Golden Boot, despite the Nzalang National failing to progress further.

The forward made a blistering start, hitting the tournament's first hat-trick against Guinea Bissau.

He then scored twice more in a historic 4-0 humbling of hosts Cote d'Ivoire to finish as

leading marksman.

Nsue's exploits join a prestigious list of previous AFCON top scorers, including Samuel Eto'o, Didier Drogba and Odion Ighalo.

Yet his goals could not inspire Equatorial Guinea beyond the second round, where they lost 1-0 to Senegal. Angola's Jacinto Dala pushed him closest in the scoring charts, netting four times before his side lost to Nigeria.

But Nsue stood alone with five goals total despite playing only three matches. His goals per game ratio of 1.67 underlined his lethal touch.

(Supersport)



▲Equatorial Guinea captain Emilio Nsue emerged as the top scorer at the CAF Africa Cup of Nations.



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INGWENYAMA CUP LAST 8 ACTION IN PICTURES



▲ Mbabane Swallows players celebrate the 4-0 win over Pigg's Peak Rangers in the Ingwenyama Cup quarter-finals on Sunday at Mavuso Sports Centre.



▲ Ezulwini United goal scored by Mphucuko Dlamini against his former team, Mbabane Highlanders. However, they lost 3-4 in penalties.



▲ Mbabane Highlanders Primpong runs with the ball during the game against Ezulwini United.



▲ Leaders from five African countries who were present at the official opening of the Transform Africa Summit 2023



▲ Mbabane Highlanders supporters celebrate the equalising goal against Ezulwini United.



▲ Mbabane Highlanders Banele 'Pupu' Sikhondze under pressure from Ezulwini United player.



▲ Mbabane Swallows Siyabonga Zwane who score a brace celebrates with the fans after the match.



▲ National pool player Nkosinathi 'Bhubesi' Sihlongonyane.

It's a dream come true – 'Bhubesi'

Stories By Sibusiso Masilela
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NATIONAL pool player Nkosinathi 'Bhubesi' Sihlongonyane has described his upcoming trip to China to attend the International 8 ball tournament as a dream come true for his career. This follows the announcement of the player as the local representative by the Eswatini Cue Sports Association for the international assignment scheduled between March 15 and 20 at Beijing, China.

"This is a dream come true for me as I have always wanted to compete abroad. I will take this opportunity with both hands to showcase my talent at the big stage," he said. This will be Sihlongonyane's third international tournament within four months as he was part of the national team that attended the 2023 All Africa Black championships in Johannesburg. He further attended the Hawley Cup together with his female compatriot Ncobile Dlamini.

Taekwondo trio crash out of Olympic Qualifiers

IT'S a dream shattered for the Taekwondo trio of Carlota Munave, Nonhle Maduma and Mfanewekhaya Dube. The three athletes lost out in the 2024 African Games qualifiers currently taking place in Senegal on Saturday. The country is now pinning its hopes of male star Wandile Maziya who will be in action on Sunday evening. Eswatini Taekwondo Federation (ETF) Vice Secretary Mbongeni Sibandze confirmed the results. "It's true, three of our athletes are now out of the Olympic Games qualifiers. We will continue and we will continue grooming them for other international assignments," he said.

He further stated that they were adamant that Wandile Maziya will perform well in the tournament. "We are confident that Wandile will do well in his fight," he said. Meanwhile, the squad head coach Mancoba Motsa could not be reached for comment at the time of compiling this report. The trip for the four member to Senegal team is funded by the Eswatini Olympic and Commonwealth Games Association to the tune of E140 000. The Taekwondo National team is also expected to be part of team Eswatini during the African Games in March at Ghana. Other upcoming international competitions include the World championships and the World Junior championships.



▲ The taekwondo squad that travelled to Senegal.

Hard work pays – Green Mamba coach, Ernest

GREEN Mamba head coach Ernest Mavuso has commended his charges for having resilience against Nsingizini Hotspurs in the crunch Ingwenyama Cup quarterfinal. Mavuso said after watching his charges beat the cup specialist by 1-0 on Saturday at Mayaluka Stadium.

"I am pleased with the performance of my players as they showed character throughout the match. We managed to grab the match with the lone goal as we still trying to regroup from our recent slump," he said. The interim Sihlangu assistant Coach also stated that they were ready to take any team in the quarterfinals.

Meanwhile, his Nsingizini counterpart Alexis Sergion applauded his players despite the loss. "We did our best and mother luck was not on our side. This was a very tough match as both teams were hungry for positive results. We will



continue working hard in the league where we are targeting a respectable finish," he said. A Sabelo 'Sikhali' Ndzinisa first half goal ensured that the defending champions book their semi-finals spot in front of about 2 000 fans.



▲ Green Mamba striker Sabelo 'Sikhali' Ndzinisa celebrate the goal he scored in the 1-0 win over Nsingizini Hotspurs. (Left) Green Mamba Coach Ernest Mavuso.

AFCON 2023 Final:

Haller inspires Elephants to glorious AFCON triumph

COTE d'Ivoire sealed a magnificent TotalEnergies CAF Africa Cup of Nations title triumph after coming from behind to beat Nigeria 2-1 in Sunday's gripping final.

Sebastien Haller proved the hero, scoring the decisive goal as the Elephants completed a sensational comeback.

The hosts looked doomed after William Troost-Ekong's first half opener for Nigeria in Abidjan.

But Frank Kessie levelled right after the break before Haller, who recovered from cancer last year, sparked ecstatic scenes by firing the late winner.

It capped an incredible turnaround for Cote d'Ivoire after almost crashing out in the group stages. Their campaign appeared over after a disastrous 4-0 loss to Equatorial Guinea.

Yet interim boss Emerse Fae inspired a spirited fightback to reach the final. This resilient collective spirit shone through again as they recovered from Troost-Ekong's opener. Nigeria's defence looked typically defiant until Kessie rifled in a crucial equaliser. With penalties looming, Haller then struck the decisive blow, firing home



▲ Cote d'Ivoire's Sebastien Haller.

with 13 minutes remaining.

His winner sealed a historic comeback amid emotional scenes in Abidjan. Eight years after their last title, Cote d'Ivoire reign again as kings of Africa.

This triumph represents vindication for

Fae after stepping in following a desperate start under Jean-Louis Gasset.

Left seemingly down and out, the Elephants have instead rediscovered their roar to win the AFCON on home soil in the most dramatic fashion. **CAF Online**

'Bull' squeeze to Ingwenyama Cup semis

By Lwazi Dlamini
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(At Mavuso Sports Centre)
Mbabane Swallows..... @ 4,
Thami Zulu 90+4
Ezulwini United..... @ 1,
Mphucuko Dlamini 58th

CAPITAL City giants, Mbabane Highlanders needed a nerve-wrecking penalty shoot-out for the second time in the sixth edition of the Ingwenyama Cup to advance to the semi-finals after overcoming an unlucky Ezulwini United 4-3 at Mavuso Sports Centre on Sunday.

Having seen National First Division side, Louis XIV on penalties in the Last 16 stage, the 'Black Bull' rode their luck again, beating the 'Stingers' to join the likes of Green Mamba, Young Buffaloes and Mbabane Swallows in the semi-final stage.

Highlanders converted all their penalties through Vusumuzi Vilakati, Philani Mkhonto, Kenneth Moloto and Siwakhile Shongwe while Mphucuko Dlamini, Mangaliso Nkambule, Vusi Mavuso converted for United but Simphiwe Makhanya and substitute goalkeeper, Samkelo Shongwe missed. In the end, Ezulwini United were left cursing their gods and wondering what might have been after conceding a goal with only a minute left in referee Thulani Sibandze's five minutes added time when towering defender Thami Zulu floated like an eagle to nod home a Kenneth Moloto cross when it all looked like the 'Stingers' had managed to record one of the biggest shocks of the richly sponsored tournament.

Ezulwini United had taken the lead two minutes before the hour-mark with



▲ Mbabane Highlanders beat Ezulwini United 4-3 after penalties to reach the semi-finals of the Ingwenyama Cup.

a scorcher of goal via the tournament's leading goal-scorer with six goals Mphucuko 'Smoothies' Dlamini, who from 25-yards, unleashed a rocket which hit the inside of the post before settling into the back of the net. Every bone in the body of Highlanders goalkeeper Khanyakwezwe Shabalala was stretched to the limit but still he could not stop the treacherous shot. He was not to be blamed. Goalkeepers to save such kind of rockets are yet to be born.

Dominated

Highlanders dominated the first half, creating better goal-scoring opportunities with Ghanaian midfielder Emmanuel Ansah firing over the bar from six yards out after Banele 'Pupu' Sikhondze beautifully weighted pass in the 14th minute. Ezulwini United goalkeeper, Siyabonga Magagula saved a point-blank Philani Mkhonto shot two minutes later. Lanky striker Kwadwo Frimpong thought he had opened the

scoring sheet only to see his glancing header ricochet off the bar in the 22nd minute after a 'Pupu' cross.

Then 'Smoothies' scored his wondrous goal two minutes before the hour mark and the 'Stingers' looked to have done enough to hold on to the lead even when they had defender Henock Mukaka sent off in the 74th minute and also had goalkeeper Siyabonga Magagula pull off a daring one-hand save from a 'Pupu' sumptuous volley. With a minute left before the five minutes added time and a section of Highlanders fans already leaving in droves, Thami Zulu rose the highest to power home a Moloto cross, sending the stadium into raptures. Highlanders held their nerves to win the penalty shootout with goalkeeper Khanyakwezwe Shabalala emerging the hero saving a meekly taken spot kick from his counterpart Samkelo Shongwe who had been brought in during the added time.

'Birds' fly into Ingwenyama Cup semis in style

By Sibusiso Masilela
sibusisom@rubiconmedia.group

(At Mavuso Sports Centre)
Mbabane Swallows..... @ 4,
Ayanda Gadlela 39th, Siyabonga Zwane 65th, 78th, Sizolwethu Shabalala 85th
PP Rangers..... @ 0,

MBABANE Swallows made light work of Pigg's Rangers when they booked a place in the Ingwenyama Cup semi-finals after outclassing National First Division side with a 4-0 drubbing during a game played on Sunday at Mavuso Sports Centre.

A brace from Siyabonga Zwane, goals from Ayanda Gadlela and Sizolwethu 'Nunu' Shabalala were enough to ensure Swallows, the three-successive-times champions, sealed their ticket to the semifinals in front of over 3 000 fans.

Rangers failed to come to the party despite having some ex-Premier League players in their starting XI, such as Mathokoza 'Tokyo' Thwala, Lindokuhle 'Ntolo' Fakudze and Mancoba Malindzisa, among others.

Swallows showed an upper hand from the onset, with the likes of Leon Manyisa asking a few questions from the opposition goalkeeper Lindani Dlamini.

Deadlock

The crowd-pullers finally broke the deadlock in the 39th minute through a glancing header from Ayanda Gadlela, who finished off a Newman Philiso well-placed cross.

The goal gave Swallows a slender advantage heading to the breather.

Swallows head coach Caleb Ngwenya made a double change at restart, bringing in Siyabonga Zwane and Sizolwethu 'Nunu' Shabalala for Khayaletu Zitha and Sibusiso Masuku respectively.

The double change paid dividends five minutes into the hour-mark through a well-taken 25-yards stunner from Zwane, that left Lindani sprawling like a new-born kitten.

The marauding Zwane completed his brace in the 78th minute with another well-taken strike from the edge of the box.

Another second half substitute 'Nunu' Shabalala put the final nail in the Northern Hhohho outfit's coffin five minutes from time with a simple tap-in from Ayanda Gadlela's low cross.

THE TEAMS

Mbabane Swallows

Sandanezwe Mathabela, Ayanda Gadlela, Siphosethu Mabilisa, Kingsley Kwakyi, Kwakhe Tfwala, Sibusiso Masuku (Sizolwethu Shabalala), Khayaletu Zitha (Siyabonga Zwane), Newman Philiso, Neliswa Dlamini, Leon Manyisa, Nhlanhla Ngwenya

PP Rangers:

Lindani Dlamini, Sifiso Dlamini, Mancoba Maseko, Ncaba Matsebula, Mbuso Dladla, Mthokozisi Nhlabatsi, Celucolo Siphepho, Mancoba Malindzisa, Mthokozisi Thwala, Junior Dlodlu, Lindokuhle Fakudze.



**Arsenal
send title
message**

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**Birds fly into
Ingwenyama Cup
semis in style**

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Eswatini
Daily News

Monday, 12
February, 2024

Sport

Elephants crowned AFCON 2023 champions

... Cote d'Ivoire sealed a magnificent TotalEnergies CAF Africa Cup of Nations title triumph after coming from behind to beat Nigeria 2-1 in Sunday's gripping final. *Page 23*

