



We blew it! E42 000 goes missing in referee association's account

By Lwazi Dlamini
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A FRAUD scandal has hit local football after a sum of E42 000 from the Eswatini Referees Association (ERA) grant account grew legs. The money is part of the annual grant of E186 000 given to the ERA by the mother body, Eswatini Football Association (EFA) in two batches of E93 000 each. The first batch is handed out at the end of February and the other batch in August.

■ SEE FULL STORY ON PAGE 2



Fake scholarship syndicate targeting EMCU students

Page 2



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WE BLEW IT!

E42 000 goes missing in referee association's account

By Lwazi Dlamini
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A fraud scandal has hit local football after a sum of E42 000 from the Eswatini Referees Association (ERA) grant account grew legs.

The money is part of the annual grant of E186 000 given to the ERA by the mother body, Eswatini Football Association (EFA) in two batches of E93 000 each. The first batch is handed out at the end of February and the other batch in August.

Eswatini Daily News has reliably gathered that two Executive Committee members, (names deliberately withheld as they have not been formally charged) who were signatories to the grant account allegedly helped themselves on the money, taking home E42 000 between October and December in small batches of between E3 000 to E6 000.

The transactions were mostly made on Fridays through online banking.

The two Executive Committee have left the association with a sum of E51 000 and the depleted money was discovered when the association intended to undertake a project to empower its members a week ago.

The association, our sources revealed, has two accounts – one for the grant money from the EFA and the other account for the subscriptions of members.

As a result of the fraud saga and the immediate resignation of the two committee members fingered as suspects in the

... Two Executive Committee members, signatories in the Eswatini Referees Association (ERA) grant account resign as investigations reach a conclusion

disappearance of the funds in the account, an extraordinary meeting will be convened on Saturday at Sigwaca House.

“This is scandalous and it shows the level of corruption that is embedded in our football where people who are supposed to lead by example can conspire to steal funds from an association’s account and hope they don’t get caught. It’s unbelievable,” our deep throat at Sigwaca House said.

ERA secretary Mbongeni Shongwe declined to comment on the matter.

“I don’t have a comment on what you are asking me. What I know is that we have an extraordinary meeting on Saturday and yes two executive committee members resigned on Sunday,” Shongwe said briefly.

EFA Chief Executive Officer Frederick Mngometulu said they will only await a report from the ERA if there is a matter of this nature.

“I know that they are having an extraordinary meeting because they sent a request for the venue but I am not aware of the issue you are asking me. We will wait for a report from them as it is within their constitution to have the extraordinary meeting. If there are issues, I am certain they will send a report and then we will take it from there,” Mngometulu said.



▲ EFA CEO Frederick Mngomezulu.

PUBLIC PUT ON HIGH ALERT...

Fake scholarship syndicate targeting EMCU students

By Bahle Gama
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UNSCRUPULOUS individuals are preying on poor students who are desperately looking for government scholarships and running away with their money.

It was revealed on Tuesday that a syndicate is going around promising to award a scholarship to students at a fee. According to the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, there are people demanding payment from students who were not awarded government scholarships in exchange for an award.

In a statement by Principal Secretary (PS) Anthony Masilela, the Ministry disclosed that most students who are affected and falling victim to this scam are those studying at the Eswatini Medical Christian University (EMCU).

The Ministry stated that the awarding of scholarship support to a student is a cost-free service offered by the government to emaSwati through the Ministry.

“The public is therefore advised to desist from permitting such an act to continue unabated. The Public is requested to report such activities to law enforcement



authorities for appropriate steps to be taken,” reads the statement.

The Ministry further distanced itself from such atrocious acts and advised the public that processes for scholarship awards were undertaken at specific periods, from June to December, an exercise performed by the Scholarship Selection Board appointed by

the Minister.

EMCU Student Representative Council (SRC) President Samukeliso Maseko said they only learned of such an act towards some of his colleagues when the statement was released by the Ministry on Tuesday morning.

“As yet we have nothing factual, and when

we spoke to the school, they too said would look into it and get back to us. For now, we do not have much to say on the matter,” Maseko said.

The country has been dealing with several syndicates in the past that have been targeting vulnerable people desperate for jobs, making quick cash, grants, and securing scholarships amongst other things.

Two weeks ago, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) issued a similar warning to the public about a group of people who were claiming to be from the government offering a fake E10,000 grant from a non-existent fund for the youth.

Every year, entities like the Royal Eswatini Police Service (REPS) issue warnings to the public to be vigilant and pay attention to anything and anyone that offers a service that requires that they fork out money, especially if it is from a public office.

Instead, they should call and confirm whether that information is truthful or not before making any payments to criminals. EmaSwati have also been advised to be calm when receiving any message or phone call concerning the aforementioned, and then pay attention to any reports from the media as it is unlikely that there will not be adverts or articles about grants or scholarships of any kind.

Quality education paves path to shared prosperity – King

By Bahle Gama
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HIS Majesty King Mswati III says the role of quality education and skills development in paving a path to the shared prosperity envisioned for Eswatini cannot be overemphasised.

This he said during the official opening of the first session of the 12th Parliament last Friday. The King said in reflecting on the country’s journey to meeting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Eswatini took pride in the strides made in sectors such as health and education amongst others.

His Majesty further applauded the African Union (AU) for declaring 2024 the year of education and undertook that Eswatini would remain focused on this ambitious plan and work tirelessly towards a more sustainable, equitable, just, and prosperous nation.

“Our goal towards the SDGs and agenda 2063 is a collective responsibility. Let us reaffirm our commitment to this ambitious plan and work tirelessly towards a more sustainable, equitable, just, and prosperous nation,” His Majesty said.

The SDGs consist of 17 goals, including education which is Goal 4 which looks at

... applauds AU for declaring 2024 a year of education



▲ His Majesty King Mswati III during the opening session of the 12th Parliament.

quality education that ensures inclusive and equitable quality education and promotes lifelong learning opportunities. SDG 4 talks about an inclusive and quality

education for all, which eliminates school segregation, which is an essential element of sustainable development.

SDG 4 aims to ensure that by 2030 all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care, and pre-primary education so they are ready for primary education.

His Majesty emphasised that creating employment opportunities for young people hinges on the quality of education, right from the lowest grade to the highest level.

“We extend heartfelt gratitude to all our development partners who have been unwavering in supporting the government’s efforts,” The King said.

His Majesty stated that the country would continue with full participation and shall learn from the great experiences of interactions with international and regional organisations.

The King further reiterated that the country’s youth stand as the architects of the nation’s future and, “are at the core of our Vision to make Eswatini a world-class country.”

Cholera precaution: Vendors advised to practise safe hygiene during Buganu festival

By Nokunceda Magagula
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THE Ministry of Health has advised vendors participating in the Buganu festival to practise good and safe hygiene to prevent the spread of Cholera.

Speaking on behalf of the Ministry during Letishisako with the Eswatini Broadcasting Information Service (EBIS), Siyabonga Lukhele emphasised the importance of taking precautionary measures to protect festival attendees from the current Cholera outbreak.

The country is expected to come together to celebrate the ‘first fruits’ at Buhleni Royal Residence from February 16 to 18. Lukhele stated that vendors should use running water to wash their offerings to minimise the risk of bacterial infections.

“People who will be selling at Buhleni during the Buganu festival this weekend should wash their hands and the items they will be selling with running water, especially fruits and vegetables,” Lukhele asserted.

He emphasised that if anyone at the festival experiences any signs and symptoms of Cholera, they should rush to medical personnel who will be present at the festival.

Lukhele explained that Cholera is an infectious disease that can cause severe watery diarrhoea, dehydration, and even death if left untreated. He added that individuals with compromised immune systems, such as malnourished children or people living with HIV, are at a higher risk



▲ Minister of Health Mduuzi Matsebula.

of fatality if they become infected. “The diarrhoea associated with Cholera often appears pale and milky, resembling water in which rice has been rinsed, known

as rice-water stool,” he said. Lukhele mentioned that while most infected individuals experience symptoms within a few days, only about one in 10 develop the typical signs and symptoms of Cholera.

“It is important to note that Cholera is most common in areas with poor sanitation, urbanisation, conflict zones, and famine. To protect oneself, it is recommended to use boiled water, chemically treated water, or bottled water,” he said.

Before Lukhele’s statement, the Minister of Health Mduuzi Matsebula, urged the public to be vigilant for Cholera symptoms and to seek immediate medical attention if they suspect infection.

“Those experiencing watery diarrhoea should visit the nearest health facility for a diagnosis, as it could be an indication of Cholera,” Matsebula said.

Matsebula highlighted the Ministry’s commitment to monitoring the Cholera outbreak in the SADC region. Stating that the outbreak has affected several countries, including Zambia and Zimbabwe. ‘

“As of January 15, 2024, more than 200,000 Cholera cases and over 3,000 deaths have been reported cumulatively. Zambia has been severely impacted, with over 9,500 cases and 374 deaths, primarily concentrated in the district of Lusaka,” he said.

In Zimbabwe, there have been over 18,000 cases and 71 confirmed deaths, with the provinces of Harare and Manicaland experiencing the highest impact.

By Lwazi Dlamini
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AFTER attaining victory in the Industrial Court, erstwhile Status Capital Building Society Managing Director Michael Mbetse has fired a salvo on the direction of the Board of Directors of the organization, calling upon them to resign en masse.

Mbetse's contract termination was declared unlawful by the Industrial Court a fortnight ago.

The Status Capital Building Society Board, which now consists of supposedly self-appointed Executive Director Nomfundo Fakudze, Sabelo Msibi and Almon Mbingo, was left with an ostrich egg splashed all over their faces when Judge President Velaphi Dlamini ruled that they had committed a contempt of court for having gone ahead to terminate Mbetse's contract when they had made an undertaking which was later turned into an order of the court that they will not proceed with the disciplinary hearing when there is another pending matter in court.

Reflecting on the Industrial Court judgement and all the drama that has been ongoing at Status Capital Building Society, Mbetse said corporate governance has not been observed at the organization, in that Nomfundo Fakudze as a Board Member, together with the other two colluded and resolved to suspend him without a formal board meeting and they didn't even form a quorum according to the corporate governance policy moreover the current Board had overstayed its welcome.

Resigned

"From the onset, the Board was supposed to go when the Chairman resigned but it didn't happen, and you have a situation when one board member appointed herself in the Executive having awarded herself a hefty salary with no Board resolution. The other one had put as a condition of withdrawing his resignation from the Board that he be appointed as an Executive Director. These two have self-serving interests, just like the Chairman who directed Members' payouts through MoMo, without their consent, so much for conflict of interest and breaking of operational procedures. These two were always at loggerheads with me, punching holes in everything I did at any given opportunity to the extent that Board Member Sabelo at one stage referred to me as "rubbish" when I enquired from him why he kept visiting my workplace, especially during my absentia. They then instructed my subordinates to investigate me and came up with a chain of baseless accusations including fraud, which I surely want them to show the transactions that substantiate this allegation.

My suspension was unlawful too – Status Capital MD, Mbetse

... Erstwhile Managing Director Michael Mbetse says the current Board has no interest in serving members and has overstayed its welcome

tion. My image has been tainted, no doubt, a lot of people see a Fraudster when they look at me. I have been insulted by Management and the Board, yet I have never deviated from the procedures and policies of my Employer. These two were paving an opportunity for themselves. They have no interest in the success of the Society. They bypass Mr. Almon Mbingo, a Founding Member who has invested millions in the Society.

Mbetse said he feels happy to have been exonerated by the Industrial court ruling and is now even more confident that even the suspension will be declared unlawful.

"First, when they suspended me they did not form a quorum and one of the Board members, Almon Mbingo was not even consulted. This Board is not adding any value to the Society," he said.

Suspension

The letter of suspension was drafted during my absentia whilst on royal duties, yet I carried my electronic gadgets and was working throughout. It turned out that I was also accused of having forged that letter, yet it was from the King's Office duly signed by Chief Magwagwa the CEO of the King's Office and was delivered to the HR Specialist at Status by the representatives from the King's Office.

"This was a ploy which was flawed from the onset, and it was pure powerplay by the Board clearly to serve their interest. From being requested to assist in the preparation of the AGM for a maximum period of six months Nomfundo saw an opportunity to take over and appoint herself and allocated herself a hefty salary plus accommodation benefits at Malkerns, at the Members expense. Where have you seen an MD of any organization suspended through a letter served by the Messenger of the Court and then immediately replaced before even being served with a notice of disciplinary? This is quite weird and a clear violation of employment policies and procedures. How can a person of this calibre be trustworthy in this industry?

I am confident that justice will be served because I was treated unfairly and the suspension was unlawful too," he added. Mbetse added: "No prior discussion or a hint of any misconduct was ever discussed with me.

This was meant to undermine my intel-



▲ Suspended Status Capital Managing Director Michael Mbetse has fired a salvo on the direction of the Board of Directors of the organization, calling upon them to resign en masse.

ligence and embarrass me, obviously I was fresh from a grievance with the Chairman of the Board in which the whole board sided with him from the onset, yet he embarrassed me and accused me of engaging my contractors for renovating of the branches, which was a green lie, but they supported him for obvious reasons. I have been accused of all the charges available in the corporate space and not even one am I guilty of. This board forgot their oversight role and meddles in the management affairs, all of them except for Mr Almon Mbingo,"

He continued: "Now they are colluding with Management to prevent Members from converging a meeting to the extent of going to court just to stop a meeting. What are they afraid of? They even refused to allow a representative of Dave Van Niekerk to partake in the meeting or at least hear the message from Dave. The big question is what are they hiding, same though they refused Mr. Almon Mbingo, a Board Member, Deputy Chairman and Founder of the society, to address the Members, the question still stands, Why?"

Mbetse was suspended in mid-May through a letter that was served by Deputy Sheriff Sandile Dlamini at the behest of the former Board Chairman, Wandile Mtshali, who is also MTN Eswatini Chief Executive Officer. He was hauled to a disciplinary hearing on June 23, 2023. Mbetse did not appear before the independent disciplinary committee's chairman, and he sought to stay the disciplinary hearing. He challenged his

suspension, arguing about the process and the board's oversight. Status Capital refuted this in their answering affidavit, stating that he ultimately reports to the board and therefore it has the necessary mandate to suspend him.

Criticize the process

The Board maintained that since Mbetse had not appeared before the independent disciplinary committee's chairman, he had no grounds to criticize the process, nor could the court interfere in an incomplete process. Amidst the proceedings, Mbetse laid accusations against the Board of the Status Capital, which have been refuted by the Building Society, leading to it also seeking an order to strike them out from the record as "they are scandalous, vexatious and or/ irrelevant and aimed to muddy the waters and defame Status Capital."

While the matter is pending in court, subject to various postponements, the Board of Directors resolved to summarily terminate the MD's services, which he argued, through an urgent application filed on September 8, 2023, was unfair and unlawful.

Status Capital Building Society's legal counsel then made an undertaking that they would not proceed with Mbetse's disciplinary hearing pending the finalization of the main matter. In his judgement, Industrial Court Judge President, Velaphi Dlamini ruled that the erstwhile Managing Director's letter of termination of services was stayed and declared unlawful.

Stakeholders partake in border congestion alleviation

By Silindzelwe Nxumalo
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DIFFERENT stakeholders met at the Ngwenya/Oshoek border post to assess issues that cause traffic and hinder trade flow between Eswatini and South Africa.

Business Eswatini (BE), through the co-chair of the National Trade Facilitation Committee, joined the leadership cadre of Eswatini Revenue (ERS), South Africa's Border Management Authority (BMA), South African Revenue Service (SARS), World Bank officials, and the Road Transport Association at the Oshoek border post.

Also gracing the meeting was the Minister of Home Affairs Princess Lindiwe who made an impassioned plea for a 24-hour border operation at Lavumisa.

BMA Chief Commissioner, Dr David Masiapato, undertook to work on the minister's request as a matter of priority.

The site tour began on the side of Eswatini where operational issues that cause bottlenecks to traffic flow were identified, debated, and possible solutions recommended.

Every process, be it immigration or commercial, was meticulously assessed with the view of simplifying process flows. The team then moved to the SA side for the same process.

The end goal for the assessment is to establish a single window clearance mechanism that will culminate in a seamless flow of traffic thereby alleviating congestion.



▲ Participants after the meeting posing for a group picture.

The World Bank was facilitating this escape under the National Trade Facilitation Committee (NTFC) framework which is

co-chaired by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Business Eswatini, the Principal Secretary from the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Trade, and the Commissioner General of Eswatini Revenue Service.

By Bahle Gama
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THE office of the Master of the High Court at Hlatsi has been instructed to close and ensure that it winds up and distributes a soldier's estate appropriately.

This follows a report made before the Judicial Commission of Inquiry by Amen Mayisela who reported that his nephew Nkosinathi Dlamini died in 2022 whilst his cattle were being looked after at his (Dlamini) homestead, which have not been returned in full.

Mayisela told the Commission that he knew Dlamini who was a soldier through an extended family member and sister to the late UEDF member who helped look after his homestead at Nhletjeni as he spent most of his time at Mbabane at the time.

After a while, Dlamini's sister acquired land and had to leave Mayisela's homestead. His cattle had no one to look after them and it was decided that they would be transported to Dlamini's homestead at Mahlabatsini.

At the time Dlamini's first wife resided at Mahlabatsini and was responsible for transporting the cattle from Nhletjeni.

According to Mayisela, Dlamini resided with another wife at Phocweni, and eventually, the other wife left the homestead at Mahlabatsini leaving the children to man the homestead.

When Dlamini passed on, his two wives including the one who had reportedly left for over 12 years were appointed as executors of his estate. Mayisela said he wrote an affidavit to the office of the Master of the High Court to explain that his cattle were part of the estate and requested that they be returned to him.

"When Dlamini was alive, despite his first wife leaving the homestead, he ensured that his children would look after my cattle. All the problems began when he died," he said.

Mayisela told the Commission that he met Dlamini's first wife at the funeral and she said she did not know him but was aware of his cattle being manned at her homestead at Mahlabatsini as she brought them herself.

She then told Mayisela that all the cattle had died.

Homestead

Mayisela said he questioned how such was possible as he would constantly check on his cattle in the duration which the wife had been away from the homestead when Dlamini was still alive.

He opted to request a report from the veterinary office for records and explained to the office of the Master of the High Court that it would present as evidence whether any of his cattle had died.

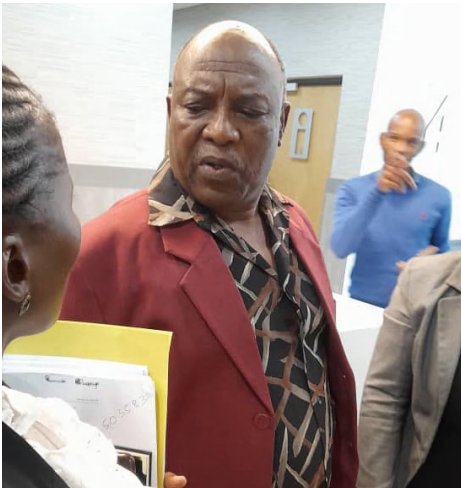
"Master then told me that Dlamini's children were slaughtering and selling the cattle so I should come and get those that were remaining. There were six," he submitted. He stated that the first wife and executor of the estate could not take care of Dlamini's property because she had been away for a long time and when she was appointed as executor she returned with a child from her new relationship, therefore could not reside at Dlamini's homestead anymore.

Officers from the office of the Master of the High Court went to see the cattle and found that there were 28 and three calves at the time. After an inventory, it was decided that Mayisela would get six but ended up getting four cows. He liaised with town rangers from the municipalities and officers from the local dip tank to help him take the cattle through their offices instead of at the dip.

Later on, he received a call from Dlamini's son Ntokozi who told him some of the cattle



▲Members of the Judicial Commission of Inquiry listening to submissions.



▲Amen Mayisela reacting after the day's session.

were missing and he explained that four had been taken by him as per a directive by the office of the Master of the High Court.

"I then received a call from Master who told me the Dlaminis were alleging that I took extra cattle from the ones allocated to him, which was not true. Before Dlamini's death the cattle had no identification tags and were never reported when they were alleged to be missing," he said. Mayisela said he also questioned where the calves birthed by his cattle belonged to and was told that they never had, "and I asked if the cattle were on family planning, preventing to give birth," he said leaving the room in stitches.

Later on, he found out that one of his cattle was missing and at the same time, Dlamini's first wife had reportedly acquired about E10,000 and it was unknown where she got that money. The Commission instructed the office to ensure that the matter is concluded and Mayisela receives what belongs to him.

He was also advised to always report theft cases to the police so that the perpetrators can be brought to justice and in the process quickening the distribution process.

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Kombi conductor arrested for allegedly raping 15-year-old

Stories by Nokunceda Magagula
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A kombi operator is facing a statutory rape charge after being arrested for allegedly sexually assaulting a 15-year-old.

The suspect, Mlungisi Shodi Mayisela appeared before Acting Judge Fikile Nhlabatsi at the Mbabane Magistrate's Court on Tuesday.

It is alleged that on May 11, 2023, in Luve, Mayisela engaged in sexual intercourse with 15-year-old Nomsa*, who was unable to fully comprehend the nature of the act due to her young age.

Mayisela pleaded not guilty to the charge of rape. Two witnesses were paraded by the Crown.

The first witness was the survivor's mother, who on the day in question, *Dudu Dlamini was reported missing from school. Dlamini began searching for her daughter around Tshaneni bus rank and was informed by a bus marshal that she had been seen earlier with Mayisela.

Concerned, Dlamini promptly contacted the police in Tshaneni to report her daughter's disappearance. She then returned home to wait for Nomsa's return. Dlamini highlighted that this was not the first time Nomsa had gone missing and was suspected to be with Mayisela.

"Your worship, it was not the first time Mayisela had abducted my child, as she had previously skipped school to be with him," Dlamini asserted. "I suspect that he began having sex with her when she was only 12-years-old, as there were instances when she would go missing," she added.

Dlamini stated that Nomsa returned at around 6pm but went to her grandmother's place. Nomsa's grandmother contacted Dlamini (Dudu) to inform her of Nomsa's return. Dlamini spoke with her daughter over the phone, whereby Nomsa confessed to spending time with Mayisela. Dlamini then informed the police officer who had previously assisted her, and they referred her to another officer at Mliba Police



Station.

The assisting officer called Nomsa and asked her to come to the police station. She arrived with *Londiwe, who is her sister and they were directed to go to Dvokolwako Health Centre for a medical assessment. Dlamini later received a call from a doctor at the health centre, informing her that Nomsa was refusing the assessment. Dlamini went to the hospital to ensure that Nomsa underwent the examination, and afterward, they returned to Mliba Police Station to provide the police with the doctor's report.

Trial

During the trial of Mayisela, Investigating Officer Constable Shelton Mthethwa said that the doctor's report confirmed that the victim had been raped.

Mthethwa, stationed at Mliba's Domestic Violence Department, testified that he received an inquiry docket on May 15, 2023, regarding Nomsa's reported disappearance on May 11, 2023, in Tshaneni.

Acting on the information that Mayisela, a kombi conductor, had allegedly abducted the minor, Mthethwa received information from Londiwe, Dudu's sister, that the minor had been found. He instructed Londiwe to bring the minor to the police station. Upon their arrival, Mthethwa interviewed them and obtained information that implicated the accused in a sexual assault case. Mthethwa provided the victim with a medical form and instructed her to go to Dvokolwako Health Centre.

"As they went to Dvokolwako Health Centre, I called Dlamini to also go to the health centre," he said. "The victim was examined there, and upon the return of the RSP 88, it was confirmed that she had been sexually assaulted. The inquiry docket was then converted to a criminal docket. I subsequently located the accused, arrested him, and charged him with contravening Section 3(1) of the Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence Act," Mthethwa concluded. **Not real names*

Two men arrested for assaulting four others at Nkoyoyo

IN a disturbing incident, two men have been apprehended for allegedly subjecting four individuals to a brutal assault at Nkoyoyo Farm.

Simpfiwe Shabangu (27) and Thamie Madanoni Mavuso (27) appeared before Magistrate Sifiso Vilakati, facing charges of assault with intent to cause grievous harm.

According to the charge sheet, Shabangu and Mavuso are both accused of assaulting others and causing grievous bodily harm in the process.

They were charged with three counts of assault to grievous bodily harm after they allegedly acted together with a common purpose and assaulted Morakeng Hlanze, Sabelo Ndlangamandla and Francois Groening.

Hlanze was allegedly assaulted with a sjambok and bush knife, inflicting harm all over his body, Ndlangamandla was also assaulted with a sjambok and open hand all over his body, and Groening was assaulted three time with a bush knife of the head, a sjambok, fist sand open hands.

The fourth count relates to the accused persons allegedly harassing Lindelwa Nkua in the presence of her children, carrying a sjambok and bush knife, which constituted the alleged offence.

● They were charged with three counts of assault to grievous bodily harm after they allegedly acted together with a common purpose and assaulted Morakeng Hlanze, Sabelo Ndlangamandla and Francois Groening.

4 SODV cases heard in one day at Mbabane Magistrate's Court

THE Mbabane Magistrate's Court on Monday witnessed a day of notable legal proceedings as four cases related to the contravention of Section 77(1) of the Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence Act were heard.

These cases shed light on instances of alleged sexual offences and domestic violence within the jurisdiction. Philile Vilakati from Mahhwalala was the first one to stand before Magistrate Sifiso Vilakati, facing charges of unlawfully assaulting Nelisiwe Dlamini, with fists and open hands all over her body.

The charge sheet revealed that Vilakati had also bitten Dlamini on her arm. During the Court session, the prosecution requested that the accused be granted bail to a fixed amount set at E1 000.

Mlondi Kunene from Nkoyoyo was also charged with contravening the Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence Act. According to his charge sheet, Kunene unlawfully assaulted his girlfriend, Nomvuselelo Magagula, on January 5, 2024, in the Mantabeni area of the Hhohho



▲ Philile Vilakati who was one of the four who appeared in court after allegedly contavening Section 77(1) of the SODVA.

region. The assault involved the use of open hands all over Magagula's body, coupled with threats to her life.

The prosecution sought to have Kunene

remanded into custody pending his trial, and his bail application would not be opposed. Kunene moved his bail application, and it was granted at a fixed amount of E1 000.

The accused is scheduled to return to Court on March 24, 2024, to stand trial.

Nduduzo Thwala from Makholokholo also appeared in Court after being accused of assaulting his girlfriend. The charge sheet stated that on January 5, 2024, near Mantabeni, Thwala unlawfully assaulted Tandzile Nhlabatsi, his girlfriend, with fists all over her body, which constituted a violation of the aforementioned Act. Thwala was not in custody when he appeared in court and was subsequently remanded out of custody until March 14, 2024, pending his trial.

The final suspect to be alleged of contravening the Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence Act was Samson Dlamini who is also from Makholokholo.

According to the charge sheet, Dlamini unlawfully assaulted his stepdaughter with a wooden spoon on the forehead on February 6, 2024, in Makholokholo. The accused was remanded out of custody until March 29, 2024, when his trial is scheduled to take place.

BUSINESS BRIEFS

Intaka Investments wins by-laws drafting tender

EZULWINI Municipality has awarded a tender worth E148,000 to Intaka Investments (Pty) Ltd JV Nhlengwetfwa N. Attorneys for the provision of consultancy services for the legislative drafting of town council by-laws.

ESERA, ESWASA to develop technical standard for ESI

The Eswatini Energy Regulatory Authority (ESERA) and Eswatini Standards Authority (ESWASA) are in the process of developing three sector standards that seek to ensure safety, reliability, and quality in the operation and use of electrical equipment in the Electricity Supply Industry (ESI).

OPEC sticks to oil demand view, sees better economic growth

LONDON — OPEC on Tuesday stuck to its forecast for relatively strong growth in global oil demand in 2024 and 2025 and raised its economic growth forecasts for both years saying there was further upside potential.

South African rand flat before mining data

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EswatiniBank

FX RATES

| Notes/Cash | Buy | Sell |
|-------------|---------------|---------|
| U.S. Dollar | 18.4219 | 18.8878 |
| G.B. Pound | 23.2617 | 23.9457 |
| EURO | 19.8229 | 20.4305 |
| 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 | |

Eswatini out of the woods from El Niño

By Silindzelwe Nxumalo

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THE country can breathe a sigh of relief as Eswatini Meteorological Services has announced that Eswatini is now out of the woods from El Niño as of next season.

Eswatini Meteorological Services Director Duduzile Hlengethwa said they had previously announced in 2023 that there were risks that the country would experience the El Niño season again just like it had been the case in 2014, 2015, and 2016.

The director stated that currently as per their observations and monitoring Eswatini is safe for the next season.

"Through the ways we use to monitor we can see where we stand as a country and since El Niño happens as a cycle it's easy for us to monitor," he said.

Hlengethwa said in the first part of the season, they were able to notice that the rainfall was normal and later changed drastically.

"However, this does not mean that the country experienced only the bad rains. As of November 2023, the country experienced great sunny weather with no rain, and overall we can say the rains were dominated with abnormal rains till December 2024," she said.

She stated that on Wednesday they will be meeting several of their stakeholders delivering this report.

"We have reached a point where I can say is similar to 2014 and 2015 where the second season will not be dominated by rainfall which means the rains will now be normal," she said.

She added the country's stance on El Niño means that Eswatini will not have an experience similar to 2015 and 2016.

Meanwhile, the Principal Secretary (PS) in the Ministry of Agriculture Sydney Simelane said this was good news to them as a Ministry and the country because they have always preached and encouraged the emaSwati to continue farming even in the mists of these El Niño scares.

Simelane stated that as a Ministry they have never believed that the country would experience this disaster hence they ensured that farmers were farming.

"We are happy to hear this and it has made our statements come true as we have been telling the nation not to worry about this," he said.

According to online



▲ Eswatini Meteorological Services Director Duduzile Hlengethwa

research, Historically, El Niño has been associated with record heat temperatures and droughts in the southern African region, where rainfall typically falls in summer.

According to ScienceDirect.com, the 2015/16 El Niño broke warming records in the central Pacific, represented by the NINO3.4 and NINO4 indices. At its peak in November 2015, the NINO3.4 SST anomaly reached 3.0°C, breaking the previous record of 2.8°C set in January 1983.

The 2015-16 El Niño, which peaked in January 2016, was longer lasting and was larger in area than the 1997-1998 episode. In 2014-2015 there

▼ El Niño, a natural climate phenomenon in which surface waters of the central and eastern Pacific become unusually warm, causing changes in global weather patterns, is expected to hit crop yields during the 2023/24 farming season in parts of Africa.

was a weak, central Pacific El Niño, so the El Niño of 2015-16 had a jump start.

Weather-related emergencies have become recurring phenomena over most of the Southern African region with the 2015-16 El Niño-induced drought emergency highlighted as the worst such phenomena in 35 years. The impacts of the 2015 and 2016 drought were widespread and diverse including on food and nutrition security.

The effects of El Niño included below or above-average rainfall, flooding, increased food insecurity, higher malnutrition rates, and devastated livelihoods.

The El Niño event also contributed to the Earth's warming trend, with 2014 and 2015 being two of the warmest years on record.



Intaka Investments wins by-laws drafting tender at Ezulwini

By Silindzelwe Nxumalo
silindzelwen@rubiconmedia.group

EZULWINI Municipality has awarded a tender worth E148,000 to Intaka Investments (Pty) Ltd JV Nhlengwetfwa N. Attorneys for the provision of consultancy services for the legislative drafting of town council by-laws.

According to the intention to award issued by ESPPRA on their website, Intaka Investments (Pty) Ltd was awarded the tender in terms of Section 45 of the Public Procurement Act No. 7 of 2011, following a competitive bidding process, and scored 93.82 per cent beating Howe Masuku Nsibande Attorneys.

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

According to the Request for Proposal (RFP) the Urban Government Act, of 1969 gives the Council the power to make By-Laws in respect of such matters as are necessary for the maintenance of the health, well-being, and safety of the inhabitants of the Municipality, for the good order and government as well as for the prevention and suppression of nuisances in the Municipality.

The RFP said the objective is to draft By-laws for Ezulwini Town Council and submit them to the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development for Gazetting.

“The Consultant shall finalize the drafted By-laws which include Occupational Safety and Health By-law, this By-law specifies workplace safety, health, and wellness



▲An aerial view of part of Ezulwini Town.

requirements,” read part of the RFP.

Another By-law is the Ezulwini Parking By-law which seeks to regulate parking within the area of jurisdiction of the Town to provide a safe environment for parking and ensure availability of parking within the Town in accordance with the Ezulwini Town Planning Scheme.

The RFP stated that the third By-law is the Gated Community By-law which is used to guide the control and management of gated communities and shall form an integral part for all property owners wishing to own properties in the gated communities of Ezulwini.

“The consultant will also look into the Informal trading By-law and its purpose is to regulate Informal Trading within the jurisdictional area of Ezulwini through the integration of Municipal planning, trading regulations, licensing, and control of undertakings that sell food to the public, markets, public places, and street trading,” read part of the RFP.

There are many other By-laws that the consultancy will look into.

Ezulwini is situated along the Mbabane – Manzini corridor in the backdrop of Mbabane, and the industrial town of Matsapha. Ezulwini was declared a town in

November 1995 through Legal Notice No. 117 of 1995.

Ezulwini can be best described as a residential town with limited economic activity. For that reason, most of its residents work in neighboring towns. The town is also host to a complex number of hotels and restaurants, a characteristic which makes Ezulwini a natural tourist center of the country.

The town also has a reputation for being an entertainment hub of the country. Ezulwini has only one primary school. This situation forces most children to attend school in neighbouring towns.

ESERA, ESWASA to develop technical standards for ESI

THE Eswatini Energy Regulatory Authority (ESERA) and Eswatini Standards Authority (ESWASA) are in the process of developing three sector standards that seek to ensure safety, reliability, and quality in the operation and use of electrical equipment in the Electricity Supply Industry (ESI).

According to the statement, ESERA in the exercise of its mandate and collaboration with the ESWASA and industry stakeholders will be conducting a stakeholder consultation on this development.

The three sector standards include Mini-grid and Off-grid Systems Standard (SZNS 075: 2023) which will be responsible for specifying the minimum technical requirements for mini-grid and off-grid systems design, construction/installation, operation, and maintenance.

The second standard is the Electricity Safety Standard (SZNS 077: 2023) which will guide the minimum safety requirements

for the construction, installation, operation, and maintenance of power systems infrastructure in Eswatini.

The third standard is the one for Solar Photovoltaic Systems Equipment, Design, and Installation Standard (SZNS PAS 076: 2023) which will be responsible for specifying the minimum requirements for the design, equipment specification, and installation of Solar PV systems.

“This covers both grid-tied and stand-alone supply schemes from pico-scale to utility-scale,” read part of the statement.

The notice added that the draft standards have been developed and consequently, the Authority hereby invites all stakeholders and interested persons to submit their written comments.

“Comments must be submitted to ESERA no later than 4:00pm on February 29, 2024 via email to info@esera.org.sz and copy to info@swasa.co.sz or by post,” read the notice.



▲ESERA Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Sikhumbuzo Tsabedze.

OPEC sticks to oil demand view, sees better economic growth

By Alex Lawler

LONDON — OPEC on Tuesday stuck to its forecast for relatively strong growth in global oil demand in 2024 and 2025 and raised its economic growth forecasts for both years saying there was further upside potential.

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, in a monthly report, said world oil demand will rise by 2.25 million barrels per day (bpd) in 2024 and by 1.85 million bpd in 2025. Both forecasts were unchanged from last month.

A further boost to economic growth could give additional tailwind to oil demand. OPEC’s 2024 demand growth forecast is already higher than that of other forecasters such as the International Energy Agency, although the wider OPEC+ alliance is still cutting output to support the market.

OPEC said a “positive trend” for economic growth was expected to extend into the first half of 2024 and raised its economic growth forecasts for 2024 and 2025 by 0.1 percentage points.

“Global economic growth remains robust,” OPEC said in the report. “Further upside potential could materialise in all major OECD and non-OECD economies.”

Oil prices have found support in 2024 from conflict in the Middle East and supply outages, although concerns about continued high interest rates have weighed. Brent crude



▲ The logo of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) is seen outside of OPEC’s headquarters in Vienna, Austria.

on Tuesday was trading around \$82 a barrel, up 0.5 per cent.

A rise in prices last month stemmed from a range of factors including easing speculative selling pressure, supply disruptions, stronger-than-expected macroeconomic data and signs of robust oil market fundamentals, OPEC said.

OPEC now sees world economic growth of 2.7 per cent this year and 2.9 per cent in 2025, supported by the expectation of a continued easing in general inflation throughout this year and next.

Gap with IEA

For this year, OPEC’s expectation of oil demand growth is much more than the expansion of 1.24 million bpd so far forecast by the IEA. The IEA, which represents industrialised countries, is scheduled to update its forecasts on Thursday.

OPEC and the IEA have clashed in recent years over issues such as long-term demand and the need for investment in new supply. The IEA sees oil demand peaking by 2030 as the world shifts to cleaner energy, a view OPEC dismisses. Earlier on Tuesday,

OPEC’s Secretary General Haitham Al Ghaiss told Reuters he believed OPEC’s long-term demand outlook, which looks to 2045 and sees no peak in demand, is robust.

OPEC and the wider OPEC+ alliance have implemented a series of output cuts since late 2022 to support the market. A new cut for the first quarter took effect last month.

The OPEC report said that OPEC oil production fell by 350,000 bpd to 26.34 million bpd in January as the latest round of voluntary output cuts took effect. (Reuters)

South African rand flat before mining data



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

JOHANNESBURG — The South African rand was little changed in early trade on Tuesday before the release of local mining production figures.

At 0710 GMT, the rand traded at 18.90 against the U.S. dollar, compared with its previous close of 18.91.

Statistics South Africa will publish December mining output around 0930 GMT, after upbeat November data showed a 6.8 per cent expansion in overall output.

“December will provide evidence of whether some resilience is emerging in the industry. South Africa’s myriad crises, such as load-shedding (power cuts), rail logistics and port backlogs, weigh on productivity and throughput,” ETM Analytics said in a research note.

On the Johannesburg Stock Exchange, the Top-40 index was up 0.1 per cent in early trade. The benchmark 2030 government bond was marginally firmer, the yield falling 2 basis points to 10.025 per cent. (Reuters)

US dollar hits three-month peak after inflation data, tops 150 yen

By Gertrude Chavez-Dreyfuss

NEW YORK — The dollar rose to three month peaks on Tuesday, after data showed U.S. inflation rose more than expected in January, reinforcing expectations that the Federal Reserve will hold interest rates in March.

The greenback also topped 150 yen for the first time since November following the data. Tuesday’s data showed that the Consumer Price Index (CPI) rose 0.3 per cent on a monthly basis in January, above the 0.2 per cent increase expected by economists polled by Reuters. On a year-on-year basis, it gained 3.1 per cent versus the 2.9 per cent estimated growth.

Excluding the volatile food and energy components, the CPI increased 0.4 per cent last month after rising 0.3 per cent in December. The core CPI advanced 3.9 per cent year-on-year in January, matching December’s increase.

The greenback surged to 150.58 yen, a three-month peak. It was last up 0.7 per cent at 150.44 yen. That 150 level is likely to trigger further jawboning from Japanese officials in an attempt to support the currency, analysts said.

The yen, which has tumbled more than 5 per cent against the dollar so far this year, is under persistent pressure as investors pare

back their expectations of the scale and pace of the Federal Reserve’s easing cycle.

The dollar index turned positive after the inflation data, touching a three-month high of 104.87. It was last up 0.6 per cent at 104.80.

“The Fed has indicated that they’re going to take it slow, and I think today’s data as well as last week’s employment data, shows that they’re right in doing so,” said Russell Price, chief economist, Ameriprise Financial in Troy, Michigan.

“Their message, I think, has been correct and the markets message of cuts coming sooner seems to be incorrect.”

Federal funds futures on Tuesday had priced in no rate cut in March and a lower than 50 per cent chance of easing in May, according LSEG’s rate probability app. The first rate cut by the Fed is now expected to occur at the June meeting, with a roughly 80 per cent probability.

In other currencies, the euro dropped 0.6 per cent to \$1.0705, after earlier falling to \$1.0700, the lowest since mid-November.

In cryptocurrencies, bitcoin touched its highest since December 2021 at \$50,383, but fell below \$50,000 after the CPI data. It was last down 1.0 per cent at \$49,307.

The world’s largest cryptocurrency has risen nearly 18 per cent this year, helped by last month’s regulatory nod for U.S.-listed exchange traded funds designed to track its price. (Reuters)

APPLE has won an exemption for its iMessage and Microsoft for its Bing search engine from new EU tech rules after the companies convinced antitrust regulators their services are not gateways for businesses to reach end-users. The European Union's Digital Markets Act, which takes effect in three weeks' time, requires Microsoft, Apple, Alphabet's Google, Amazon, Meta Platforms and ByteDance to allow third-party apps or app stores on their platforms and make it easier for people to switch to rivals.

Services

The companies are also prohibited from favouring their services over rivals. Following a five-month investigation, the European Commission found iMessage, Bing, Edge and Microsoft Advertising "did not qualify as gatekeeper services," the EU executive said in a statement. The Commission said Apple's App Store, iOS operating system and Safari browser will continue to be classified as gatekeepers as

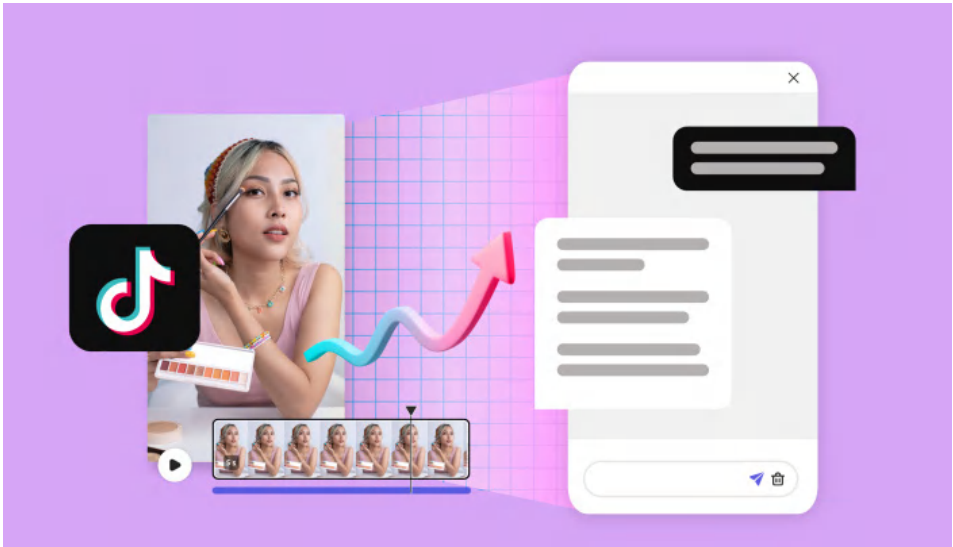
Apple, Microsoft win exemptions for iMessage, Bing from EU rules

will Microsoft's LinkedIn social network and Windows operating system. It made "a thorough assessment of all arguments, taking into account input by relevant stakeholders", the Commission said without providing details of the companies' arguments. Apple had said iMessage usage is negligible, even on its devices, compared to rival messaging services in the EU and that iMessage is not an important channel for businesses to reach users in the bloc. "Consumers today have access to a wide variety of messaging apps, and often use many at once, which reflects how easy it is to switch between them," an Apple spokesperson said. Microsoft said that Bing, Edge and Microsoft Advertising operate

as challengers in the market and are of relatively small scale, meaning they are not important gateways for business users. "We will continue to engage with the Commission and industry at large to ensure Microsoft's other designated platforms comply fully with the DMA," a Microsoft spokesperson said. **Decision** The Coalition for Open Digital Ecosystems (CODE), whose members include Google, Meta Platforms and Qualcomm, criticised the Commission's decision. Listen to the latest songs, only on JioSaavn.com "Today's surprising decision undermines the objectives of the DMA, as well as its potential to improve choice and contestability for all Europeans," it said in a statement. (Reuters)



▲A woman uses an iPhone mobile device as she passes a lit Apple logo at the Apple store at Grand Central Terminal in New York City, U.S.



▲The Creative Assistant add-on in Adobe Express aims to reduce the time and effort required when working across different platforms when creating content.

TikTok's AI-powered Creative Assistant now available directly in Adobe Express

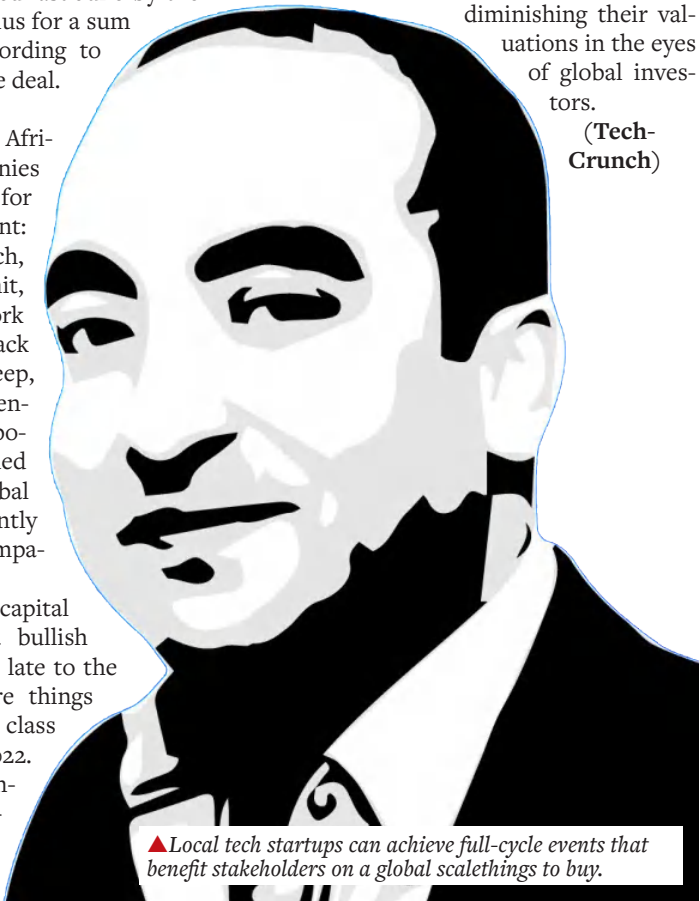
ADOBE and TikTok announced today that TikTok's AI-powered Creative Assistant is now available directly within Adobe Express. The two companies say the integration will help businesses and creators make and market content more effectively. Creative Assistant is available now in English as an add-on in Adobe Express for both free and Premium users. The Creative Assistant add-on in Adobe Express aims to reduce the time and effort required when working across different platforms when creating content. With Adobe Express, creators have access to templates, Adobe Stock video clips, audio, stickers and an Adobe Express TikTok video creator. With the new Creative Assistant add-on, creators will get access to TikTok insights about trending hashtags and AI-powered tools all within Adobe Express. The Assistant can also brainstorm creative ideas or even write out video scripts. The integration also allows businesses and creators to schedule and publish content directly to TikTok, without having to leave Adobe Express. "The new Creative Assistant add-on in Adobe Express reduces the time, effort and resources required to work across

different platforms for each stage of the content ideation, creation and distribution process," said Stacy Martinet, Adobe's VP Marketing Strategy and Communications, in a statement. "We see tremendous value in being the first to collaborate with TikTok's Creative Assistant, bringing together our unique creative tools and their extensive knowledge of a highly engaged, global audience and platform, to help make content that delivers real business value for our customers." To get started, you need to go to the add-ons section in Adobe Express and find the Creative Assistant and install it. Say you're a brand looking to create a Valentine's Day TikTok to promote a special sale. You can browse through the templates to find one you like. You can then view the trending hashtags to see what sort of content is getting the most views, and then type in a prompt into the Assistant to get some creative inspiration. For instance you can ask the Assistant to "write a script for a Valentine's Day offer for my plant shop. 20% off all plants." Based on that prompt, you will get a suggested script to help you structure your approach for the ad. (TechCrunch)

African product, global market: Expensya employees cashed out \$10M from 2023 acquisition

WHAT's more rewarding for an angel investor than paper returns in a start-up? An acquisition that turns those paper returns into a cash payout while still maintaining shares in the company. "The return after dilution was eight times my investment," said Selma Ribica in an interview with TechCrunch recently. "I kept some stock of the new entity, but a big majority was cash." Ribica currently serves as the general partner at First Circle Capital, a venture capital firm specializing in fintech SaaS, or fintech 2.0 as she terms it. She made her angel investment in Expensya, an expense management startup based in Tunis and Paris, which was acquired last June by the private equity firm Medius for a sum over \$100 million, according to sources familiar with the deal. **Amount** Only a few African or Africa-focused tech companies have been acquired for more than that amount: InstaDeep to BioNTech, Sendwave to WorldRemit, DPO Group to Network International and Paystack to Stripe. Like InstaDeep, the acquisition of Expensya underscores the potential of Africa-founded products to serve global markets and subsequently get bought by larger companies. For years, venture capital globally experienced a bullish trend, and Africa, albeit late to the party, caught on before things went south for the asset class in the latter half of 2022. Before the bust, local investors mainly encouraged African startups to focus on building

solutions for the continent, with the promise that capital would follow. Building global products was often an afterthought, particularly as local solutions, especially fintechs, demonstrated exit opportunities by just targeting markets within the continent. However, there has been a notable shift in this narrative in the last 18 months. As African startups strive to develop solutions for local challenges, they now confront headwinds and macroeconomic challenges beyond their control. The economies of the continent's most prominent tech markets — Nigeria, Kenya and Egypt — are currently grappling with currency devaluation issues, resulting in stagnant or slower revenue growth in dollar terms for startups operating in these markets, thereby diminishing their valuations in the eyes of global investors. (TechCrunch) **Local tech startups can achieve full-cycle events that benefit stakeholders on a global scale things to buy.**



Senegal suspends internet access

DAKAR - Senegal's communications ministry told mobile operators to suspend internet access on Tuesday, ahead of a planned silent march by activist groups, which was banned by authorities, over the abrupt postponement of a presidential election.

The announcement just weeks ahead of the planned Feb. 25 vote that it would be postponed, triggered violent clashes last week that resulted in the death of three young people and multiple arrests. Parliament has voted to hold the election on Dec. 15.

The delay spurred opposition members' concerns as it extended President Macky Sall's mandate in an unprecedented break with Senegal's democratic tradition.

It was unclear whether the march would take place after authorities on Monday banned it, citing logistical concerns.

The civil society and religious groups that called the demonstration will hold a press conference later on Tuesday to announce next steps, spokesman Amadou Samb told Reuters.

The vote's postponement dismayed many in Senegal, one of West Africa's more stable democracies, in a region where military takeovers and constitutional manoeuvring have forced democracy into retreat in many countries in recent years.

In a statement, the ministry blamed hateful online messages for



▲ Senegal President Macky Sall.

the deaths and material damage incurred during the recent demonstrations.

In the capital Dakar, police in riot gear on Friday fired tear gas, stun grenades and what appeared to be rubber bullets at protesters who were burning tyres and throwing stones, a Reuters reporter said.

Amnesty International and the U.N. human rights office called on the Senegalese government to investigate the killings and police brutality

against protesters.

At least 266 people have been arrested across the country, including journalists, spokesperson for the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights Liz Throssell said.

West Africa's regional bloc ECOWAS on Monday sent a parliamentary diplomatic mission to Senegal to discuss the political situation in the country.

(Reuters)

SA to deploy 2,900 troops to fight armed groups in eastern Congo

JOHANNESBURG - South Africa will send 2,900 troops as part of its contribution to the Southern African Development Community (SADC) force deployed to tackle armed groups in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, the president's office said in a statement on Monday.

The one-year deployment will cover the period between Dec. 15, 2023 and Dec. 15, 2024, and will cost around 2

billion rand (\$105.75 million), the statement said.

The 16-member state SADC approved the eastern Congo mission in May last year to help Congo, the world's top supplier of cobalt and Africa's top copper producer, address instability and deteriorating security in its restive eastern region.

Decades of conflicts in eastern Congo between myriad rival armed groups over land and resources has killed hundreds of thousands of people

and displaced more than 7 million.

The SADC force has an offensive mandate to support Congo's army fight armed groups. It will include troops from Malawi, South Africa and Tanzania.

The deployment comes as Congo battles Tutsi-led M23 rebels whose attacks and advances in recent days, is threatening the North Kivu provincial capital, Goma.

(Reuters)



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South Africa asks World Court to weigh Israel's Rafah offensive

JOHANNESBURG, - South Africa said on Tuesday it had asked the World Court to consider whether Israel's plan to extend its offensive in Gaza into the city of Rafah requires additional emergency measures to protect Palestinians' rights.

The International Court of Justice (ICJ) last month ordered Israel to take all measures within its power to prevent its troops from committing genocide against Palestinians in Gaza, in a case brought by South Africa. Israel has denied all allegations of genocide in connection with its war against Gaza's ruling Palestinian Islamist group Hamas and asked the court to reject the case outright, saying it respects international law and has a right to defend itself.

Israel has said it is planning to expand its ground assault into Rafah, where over 1 million Palestinians have sought refuge from the offensive that has laid waste to much of the

Gaza Strip since Hamas militants attacked Israel on Oct. 7. "In a request submitted to the court yesterday (Feb. 12), the South African government said it was gravely concerned that the unprecedented military offensive against Rafah, as announced by the State of Israel, has already led to and will result in further large-scale killing, harm and destruction," a statement issued by South Africa's presidency said.

"This would be in serious and irreparable breach both of the Genocide Convention and of the Court's Order of Jan. 26." The Hague-based ICJ declined to comment on whether it had received the request.

In past cases the ICJ has sometimes granted additional emergency measures when circumstances on the ground changed.

The court has not yet ruled on the core of the case brought by South Africa - whether genocide has occurred in Gaza. But it recognised the right of Palestinians in Gaza to be protected from acts of genocide.

(Reuters)



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Record number of migrants died or went missing off Tunisia in 2023

A record 1,313 migrants were reported to have died or went missing off the Tunisian coast last year, a rights group said on Tuesday, highlighting the worsening migrant crisis in the North Africa country.

The number represented about 75% of the number of dead or missing off the coasts of Italy, Libya and Malta, Ramadan Ben Amor, an official at the Tunisian Forum for Economic and Social

Rights told Reuters Tunisia has replaced Libya as north Africa's main departure point for people fleeing poverty and conflict elsewhere in Africa and across the Middle East in the hope of a better life in Europe.

And with improving weather since January, the influx of African migrants, including Tunisians, in boats heading for Italy has increased.

About 100 migrants have died or gone missing off the Tunisian coast since mid-January. (Reuters)



▲ A record 1,313 migrants were reported to have died or went missing off the Tunisian coast last year, a rights group

US Senate passes \$95 bln aid bill for Ukraine, Israel and Taiwan

WASHINGTON - The Democratic-led U.S. Senate on Tuesday passed a \$95.34 billion aid package for Ukraine, Israel and Taiwan, amid growing doubts about the legislation's fate in the Republican-controlled House of Representatives.

The lawmakers approved the measure in a 70-29 vote that exceeded the chamber's 60-vote threshold for passage and sent the legislation on to the House. Twenty-two Republicans joined most Democrats to support the bill.

"It's certainly been years, perhaps decades, since the Senate has passed a bill that so greatly impacts not just our national security, not just the security of our allies, but the security of western democracy," Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said.

The Senate vote occurred before sunrise, after eight hardline Republican opponents of Ukraine aid held an overnight marathon of speeches that dominated the chamber floor for more than six hours.

Democratic President Joe Biden has been urging Congress to hurry the new aid to Ukraine and U.S. partners in the Indo-Pacific, including Taiwan, for months. After Hamas' Oct. 7 attack on Israel, he also requested funds for the U.S. ally, along with humanitarian aid for Palestinians in Gaza.

Ukrainian officials have also warned of weapons shortages at a time when Russia is pressing ahead with renewed attacks.

Both houses of Congress must approve the legislation before Biden can sign it into law.



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Schumer said he believes the measure would receive the same strong bipartisan support if it came to a vote in the House.

But the bill appears to face long odds of getting to the floor of the House, where Republican Speaker Mike Johnson faulted it for lacking conservative provisions to stem a record flow of migrants across the U.S.-Mexico border.

"In the absence of having received any single border policy change from the Senate, the House will have to continue to work its own will on these important matters,"

Johnson said in a statement issued late on Monday.

"America deserves better than the Senate's status quo," said Johnson, who has suggested in the past that the House could split the legislation into separate bills.

Senator John Thune, the chamber's No. 2 Republican, said it was not clear what Johnson would do.

"The House, I assume, is going to move on something. Obviously, they're going to address Israel," Thune said.

Hardline Republicans predicted that the

Senate legislation would be dead on arrival in the House.

"The bill before us today ... will never pass in the House, will never become law," Republican Senator Rick Scott of Florida said in an early morning floor speech.

The legislation includes \$61 billion for Ukraine, \$14 billion for Israel in its war against Hamas and \$4.83 billion to support partners in the Indo-Pacific, including Taiwan, and deter aggression by China.

It would also provide \$9.15 billion in humanitarian assistance to civilians in Gaza and the West Bank, Ukraine and other conflict zones around the globe.

Republicans have demanded for months that the foreign aid bill include border restrictions.

But a bipartisan border deal, negotiated over the course of months, ran afoul of most Senate Republicans after it was rejected by Donald Trump, the party's leading White House candidate.

Schumer stripped the border security language from the bill last week.

Trump, who hopes to use the border issue to unseat Biden in the November election, has since turned his criticism on the foreign aid bill, saying on social media that aid to U.S. allies should instead take the form of loans.

Aid to Ukraine faces powerful headwinds in the House, where Trump's interests hold greater sway with Republicans who control the chamber by a thin majority.

(Reuters)

Russia puts Estonian PM on wanted list for 'desecration of historical memory'

MOSCOW - Russian police have put Estonian Prime Minister Kaja Kallas, its state secretary and Lithuania's culture minister on the wanted list, according to the Russian Interior Ministry's database.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Kallas is wanted for "desecration of historical memory". Russian state agency TASS said the Baltic officials were accused of "destroying monuments to Soviet soldiers".

As well as Kallas, Estonian State Secretary Taimar Peterkop and Lithuanian Culture Minister Simonas Kairys were placed on the list, according to the ministry database.

Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said: "This is only the beginning".

"Crimes against the memory of the world's liberators from Nazism and fascism must be prosecuted," Zakharova said.

A spokesperson for Kallas was not immediately available for comment. A spokesperson for Lithuania's Kairys could not confirm the order to Reuters.

Baltic nations which were formerly part of the Soviet Union have announced plans to demolish Soviet-era monuments. Kallas said in 2022 that Estonian authorities would dismantle 200 to 400 such monuments.



▲ Russian police have put Estonian Prime Minister Kaja Kallas, its state secretary and Lithuania's culture minister on the wanted list, according to the Russian Interior Ministry's database.

In response, the head of the Russian Investigative Committee, Alexander Bastrykin, ordered a criminal investigation into the matter. The Baltic politicians risk being placed under arrest only if they cross the Russian border, otherwise declaring them wanted will have no real consequences. Estonian and Lithuanian authorities have not commented on the latest development.

In total, Russia has put several

dozen Baltic politicians of various levels on the wanted list - from municipal deputies of cities to members of national parliaments. In addition, former Latvian Interior Minister Marija Golubeva was put on the list, the independent Russian media project Mediazona reported. The Interior Ministry database does not specify under which article of the criminal code they are being prosecuted.

(Reuters)

Russia preparing for military confrontation with the West

VILNIUS - Russia is preparing for a military confrontation with the West within the next decade and could be deterred by a counter build-up of armed forces, Estonia's Foreign Intelligence Service said on Tuesday.

A growing number of Western officials have warned of a military threat from Russia to countries along the eastern flank of NATO, calling for Europe to get prepared by rearming.

The chief of the intelligence service said the assessment was based on Russian plans to double the number of forces stationed along its border with NATO members Finland and the Baltic States of Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia.

"Russia has chosen a path which is a long-term confrontation ... and the Kremlin is probably anticipating a possible conflict with NATO within the next decade or so," Kaupo Rosin told reporters at the release of Estonia's national security threats report.

A military attack by Russia is "highly unlikely" in the

short term, he said, partly because Russia has to keep troops in Ukraine, and would remain unlikely if Russian buildup of forces was matched in Europe. "If we are not prepared, the likelihood (of a military Russian attack) would be much higher than without any preparation," Rosin added.

Estonia and the other Baltic States have increased their military spending to over 2% of the value of their economies after Russia annexed Crimea in 2014, and NATO allies have raised their presence in those countries.

Germany plans to have 4,800 combat-ready troops in the region by 2027, in its first permanent foreign deployment since World War Two, and Rosin said NATO and its allies were moving in the right direction to counter the Russian threat. Rosin does not expect a Russian breakthrough in Ukraine before its presidential election in March, as it would need to mobilise significantly more troops to achieve that goal.

(Reuters)

Young Zesh unpacks 'Ungangikhaleli' single

Stories by Siphesihle Dlamini
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ESWATINI'S rising artist, Young Zesh, has shared the inspiration behind his highly anticipated song, 'Ungangikhaleli,' set to be released on Friday, February 16.

In the song, with his characteristic honesty and vulnerability, Young Zesh addressed the presence of adversaries in his life, urging his listeners not to shed tears for him.

Despite facing numerous doubters and naysayers, Young Zesh remains determined to succeed in the face of adversity. He acknowledged the perception surrounding his financial stability but revealed that he is still striving to achieve his desired level of success. He said 'Ungangikhaleli' delves into the challenges he faces, particularly in juggling his aspirations with the responsibilities of fatherhood.

The song beautifully captured the struggle of finding joy and laughter amidst the constant demands of his child. Young Zesh opened about the burden of necessities like nappies and his son's occasional illness, which weigh heavily on his heart. However, he adamantly asserted that pity or sympathy is not what he seeks. Instead, he vowed to ensure the well-being of his child and pledged to demonstrate his unwavering commitment to parenthood.

When asked about the creative process behind the song, Young Zesh revealed



▲ Young Zesh's new hit single 'Ungangikhaleli' cover art.

that it came about after receiving a call from his son's mother, requesting various items. Collaborating with the talented Liz Harris on production, 'Ungangikhaleli' became a poignant representation of shared responsibility and the sacrifices Young Zesh makes for his son.

Describing the musical style of the song, Young Zesh explained that it is an AfroBeat track with special sounds that evoke a sense of sadness, particularly through the

lead guitar. Engineered by the renowned Sean Cast HQ, the song promises to be a masterpiece that showcases Young Zesh's unique talent. 'Ungangikhaleli' will be released under the Upscale Live SZ label.

In a humble plea to his fans and fellow emaSwati, Young Zesh kindly requested everyone to stream his upcoming song. He said he hopes that many will relate to its powerful message, as it touches on various issues we all face in life.



▲ Lodanda neMalangeni added to the Makoti Festival line-up.

Lodanda neMalangeni added in Makoti Festival line-up

THE country's legendary traditional group, Lodanda neMalangeni, has been added to the already impressive line-up of the Makoti Festival.

Renowned for their undiluted pure Swati music, Lodanda neMalangeni promises to bring an authentic African vibe to the stage, captivating audiences with their soulful beats, enchanting voices, and mesmerising tunes. Their songs tell the stories of Swati women through the art of dance.

The Makoti Festival, known for its celebration of Eswatini culture and its homage to modern women, is set to take place on April 27, 2024, at Malkerns Country Club. With the recent confirmation of Maskandi artist Mthandeni SK, Gospel sensation Ntokozo Mbambo, and local music sensation M Nation, the festival's line-up is shaping up to be a star-studded affair that promises to leave a lasting impression on attendees.

Tickets for the Makoti Festival are now available for purchase, with early bird prices starting at E200. Music enthusiasts are encouraged to secure their spot at this extraordinary event through Howler, Computickets, and Galitos outlets.

Performances

By attending the Makoti Festival, guests will not only be treated to exceptional musical performances but will also be able to immerse themselves in a diverse range of experiences. The festival goes beyond the realm of music, offering attendees the chance to explore vibrant fashion and food stalls.

This platform allows local entrepreneurs to showcase their creativity and culinary skills, further enriching the festival experience. From traditional attire to contemporary fashion trends, the Makoti Festival embraces the rich diversity of women from all walks of life, celebrating their strength, beauty, and unique contributions to society.

The Makoti Festival is a true celebration of Eswatini's vibrant culture, providing a space for artists, entrepreneurs, and music lovers to come together and honour the essence of womanhood.

Gospel Worship Clinic line-up unveiled

FUN lovers will be uplifted and inspired as the Gospel Worship Clinic and Festival reveals the full line-up for its inaugural edition.

This extraordinary event promises to be a night of soul-stirring worship and praise, featuring an impressive array of local and international gospel artists that will leave audiences in awe.

Headlining the Gospel Worship Clinic and Festival are renowned gospel sensations Dumi Mkokstad, Ncandweni Christ Ambassadors, and Londiwe KaMasondo.

These talented artists, known for their powerful voices and heartfelt performances, are sure to create an atmosphere of reverence and spiritual connection. Joining them on stage will be Bhekekazi, Phetsile Masilela, Nhlakanipho, Sphiwo Indoni, Siya, Mzayoni, and Senzo, each bringing their unique style and passion for gospel music to the event.

The Gospel Worship Clinic and

Festival is scheduled to take place on March 23, 2024, at Mavuso Trade Centre, Hall one, in Manzini.

The early bird tickets to this event have already sold out, but gospel enthusiasts need not worry, as general tickets are still available for E199. For those seeking an elevated experience, VIP tickets are also on sale for E399, offering exclusive perks and access to prime seating. Tickets can be purchased through Computickets and Shoprite stores.

The Gospel Worship Clinic and Festival aims to provide a platform for gospel lovers to come together and experience the power of worship in a vibrant and uplifting environment. With a line-up that showcases the diversity of gospel music, attendees can expect an unforgettable night of praise, worship, and spiritual connection.



▲ Sphiwo Indoni is one of the acts revealed for the Gospel Clinic Worship and Festival.

Linda Dlamini for live CD/DVD Recording

Stories by Siphesihle Dlamini
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HEAVENS shall descend and gospel fanatics are in for an unforgettable evening as Eswatini Gospel artist, Linda Dlamini, prepares to host his highly anticipated Live CD & DVD recording event.

Taking place at The Luke Commission Auditorium in Sidvokodvo, ‘The More Than Enough’ live CD and DVD recording will feature a special performance by the renowned Manzini Choir.

Linda Dlamini is a true luminary in the Eswatini Gospel music scene, boasting multiple awards and recognition for his exceptional talent as a singer, composer, performer, and community builder.

The dress code for this extraordinary event is elegance, promising attendees a red-carpet experience like no other. Scheduled for May 4, 2024, the festivities will kick off at 5pm with a red-carpet affair, followed by the main event at 6 p.m.

Presale tickets for this highly anticipated event will be available starting next week on Monday, priced at E250. Tickets can be purchased at all Galitos outlets. Worth noting is that no tickets will be sold at the gate, so attendees should make sure that they secure their spots early.

In an exclusive interview, Linda Dlamini expressed excitement about this one-of-a-kind event. After a three-year hiatus from releasing new music, he revealed that fans have been eagerly anticipating a live recording. However, he assured everyone that the evening would be more than just a recording session. Linda Dlamini promised a night filled with surprises, including the



▲ Linda Dlamini to host Live CD and DVD recording at The Luke Commission Auditorium at Sidvokodvo.

launch of a new group.

He encouraged attendees to dress to impress, as the red-carpet experience would add an extra touch of glamour to the occasion.

In addition, Linda Dlamini shared that he is collaborating with a top-notch production team to ensure a visually stunning and

musically captivating experience. He said the inclusion of the renowned Manzini Choir on stage guarantees a soul-stirring performance.

Furthermore, Linda Dlamini tantalised fans with the promise of unexpected acts that he is keeping under wraps, adding an air of anticipation and intrigue to the evening.

‘Ngedwa’ music video garners over 6 000 views on YouTube

LOCAL musician Sancheziey and producer Milton B are celebrating a remarkable achievement as their music video for the song ‘Ngedwa’ has amassed an impressive 6 000 views in just five days on YouTube.

Titled ‘Ngedwa,’ this captivating blend of SiSwati and English incorporates elements of dancehall, Amapiano, and Afro music, resulting in a groovy yet melancholic anthem for all the single people out there.

In an exclusive interview with Sancheziey, he attributed the song’s success to a higher power. He humbly admitted that he couldn’t provide a reasonable explanation for the overwhelming response they had received.

Sancheziey expressed joy and gratitude for the song’s success, emphasising that it has motivated and humbled him and his team.

He believes that the rise of ‘Ngedwa,’ is a testament to the hard work, tears, and investments of time, money, and relationships that they have poured into



▲ Eswatini artist Sancheziey and producer Milton B.

their craft.

When asked about the factors contributing to the song’s meteoric rise, Sancheziey mentioned several key elements. Firstly, he credited the creation of the song itself,

highlighting its unique and fresh sound.

Project

Additionally, he acknowledged the creative team behind the project, emphasising the power of collaboration in achieving success.



▲ Carreny will drop a song titled Posa.

Carreny to unleash new song ‘Posa’

EXCITEMENT is building as Eswatini artist, Carreny, prepares to release his single titled ‘Posa.’

According to the artist, ‘Posa’ will serve as his first musical offering of the new year and will be launched on his ‘Love Month Tour.’ The song delves into the emotions of a guy yearning for his girlfriend and pleading with anyone who can assist in bringing her closer to him, hence the title ‘Posa’. Carreny also drew inspiration from his late friend, Mageez, to create this heartfelt track.

The underlying message of ‘Posa’ is simple yet powerful - it encourages individuals to bring their loved ones closer and highlights the lengths people are willing to go to be reunited with those they miss.

When asked about the recording process, he expressed enthusiasm, stating that it was a fun and exciting experience.

Known for his versatility, Carreny experimented with different sounds, so that he could surprise listeners with a fresh approach in ‘Posa’. He revealed that the song carries elements of Kwaito, guaranteeing its popularity among fans, especially in the townships.

Collaborating with the talented artist and producer King Kangaroo, proved to be a formidable combination for Carreny.

Their creative synergy is evident in the song, promising a captivating and memorable musical experience. Carreny urged his followers to rally behind him and make ‘Posa’ a resounding success once it becomes available on all major streaming platforms.

Sancheziey also revealed that the strategic promotion of the song, coupled with the captivating video, played a significant role in capturing the attention of viewers.

He described the decision to unveil the video behind the scenes as a stroke of genius, as it sent a powerful statement to the world.

Furthermore, he pointed out that the song’s storyline resonates with many people, and the timing of Illa Penboy’s highly publicised break-up with his longtime girlfriend, Lolo, only added fuel to fire.

Swizz Beatz praises Alicia Keys, Usher’s Super Bowl performance

ONE thing Hollywood husbands do is defend their spouses which is exactly what musician Swizz Beatz did following all the internet had to say about his wife’s performance during Usher’s Apple Music halftime show of Super Bowl LVIII.

Beatz, whose real name is Kasseem Daoud Dean, shared his support for Alicia Keys and Usher Raymond following their performance on Sunday.

The celebrity power couple has been married for 13 years, they are rumoured to have only begun dating in 2009 after Keys split from her partner Kerry Brothers Jr. and Swizz separated from wife Mashonda Tifrere.

Keys during the performance played on a red piano and sang a rendition of her hit song ‘If I Ain’t Got You’ before the duo sang their iconic duet ‘My Boo’.

At the start of her performance Keys’s voice cracked a bit and her closeness with Usher during the performance had internet users commenting on X.

The music producer in his clap back to all the negative talk regarding the performance reminded fans they are talking about the wrong thing.

“Y’all talking about the wrong damn thing !!! y’all don’t see that amazing dress covering the entire stadium “Tonight’s performance was nothing but amazing with 2 amazing Giants ! Congrats @usher and my love @aliciakeys that song is a classic. We don’t do negative vibes on this side we make histor ”

The slow jam king held his own as he captured the magic of his late-1990s, early-aughts fame with a 13-minute, career-spanning medley including hits like ‘Love In This Club’ and ‘OMG’.

(Bang Showbiz)



▲Super-producer Swizz Beatz. (Right) US singer-songwriter Usher performs with US singer-songwriter Alicia Keys during Apple Music’s halftime show of Super Bowl LVIII.

Drake wins big with \$1.15m bet

DRAKE has emerged victorious after betting \$1.15 million on the Kansas City Chiefs to win the 2024 Super Bowl.

On Sunday, Drake hopped on his Instagram Story following the dramatic ending to the 2024 Super Bowl, in which the Chiefs and San Francisco 49ers went into overtime before the Chiefs emerged victorious with a 25-22 win. Drizzy had bet a whopping \$1.15 million on the game on Saturday (Feb. 10), and things had gone his way.

“Yo, that’s how it is right there,” Drake said in the clip below, before showing that he accidentally broke a plate during all the commotion of the final quarter.

“Got ‘em though,” Drake concluded as he complimented the crepes he was enjoying. “Got ‘em!” The 6 God won an estimated \$2.3 million from the massive bet.

Drake may have won this round, but the 6 God has lost big bucks in the past. In November of 2022, Drizzy lost \$2 million on the UFC middleweight title fight after middleweight champion Israel Adesanya beat Alex Pereira.

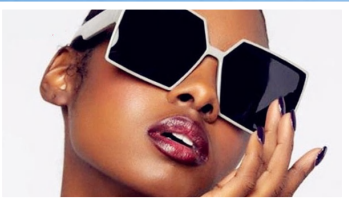
Drizzy has actually lost so much at sporting events in the past that social media created the “Drake Curse.” The belief is that any athlete or team supported by The Boy ends up losing. Regardless, it appears the curse was finally broken on Super Bowl Sunday.

(XXL Magazine)



▲Hip hop star Drake.

Fashion choices to avoid this Valentine’s Day



▲Research indicates that wearing Crocs on a V-Day date is seriously frowned upon. (Inset) Apparently, large sunglasses are a no-no on a first date.

VALENTINE’s Day is the most romantic day of the year – research has found that more dates take place on February 14 than any other day of the year.

In fact, dating site Hinge has revealed that 35% more dates are arranged on this day compared to any other day.

Valentine’s Day is also peak dating season on Tinder as the platform witnesses a whopping 11.4 million more messages sent from the start of January up to February 14.

And while the day itself can prove to be a stressful event for many, new research has also found that certain fashion choices can sabotage your Valentine’s date.

A study conducted by BestBettingSites.com has uncovered the biggest fashion faux pas you should avoid this Valentine’s in order to boost the likelihood of a successful date. Some of the key findings was that around one in three people will turn down a second date due

to fashion disparities.

In addition, wearing a full tracksuit was discovered to be the biggest fashion red flag on first dates, followed by full designer outfits and Crocs. The study also revealed that one in nine people deem bad fashion sense a non-negotiable deal-breaker when seeking a partner and that most Gen Zs can’t tolerate a partner with opposing fashion habits, whereas millennials tend to be more laid-back.

Apart from full athleisure attire and head-to-toe designer outfits, the BestBettingSites.com research revealed that wearing Crocs on a Valentine’s date was regarded by its 3 000 participants as the third highest fashion red flag.

This was followed by oversized sunglasses, large logos, too tight shirts and tops and high socks with low trainers.

In addition, ripped skinny jeans, roll-neck tops and flared pants rounded off the top 10 of fashion

faux pas that people can make on Valentine’s Day.

And when it comes to which fashion trends should be avoided on a Valentine’s date, maximalist ranked first, followed by streetwear, grunge, athleisure and then bohemian.

In addition, when the study’s participants were asked how important their current or hypothetical partner’s taste in fashion is, 30% said that they don’t notice fashion sense, whether good or bad; 24.8% regarded it as fairly important; 19.4% said “it’s a little important”; 14.2% believes “it’s not important at all” and 11.6% said it’s a “deal-breaker”.

“While you might breathe a sigh of relief realising the majority of respondents don’t care about how their partners dress, trailing closely behind are another 24.8% who consider their partner’s fashion sense to be fairly important,” researchers explained. (Bang Showbiz)



SEVERAL natural remedies may help you to sleep better, including melatonin, magnesium, and valerian root. But even natural sleep aids should not replace good sleeping habits.

Getting good quality sleep often starts with good sleep practices and habits. However, for some people, that's not enough.

If you need a little extra help to get a good night's sleep, consider trying the following 10 natural sleep-promoting supplements.

1. Melatonin

Melatonin is a hormone your body produces naturally that signals to your brain that it's time to sleep. Time of day influences this hormone's cycle of production and release — melatonin levels naturally rise in the evening and fall in the morning. For this reason, melatonin supplements have become a popular sleep aid, particularly in instances where the melatonin cycle is disrupted, such as jet lag. Several studies report that melatonin improves daytime sleep quality and duration. This is particularly beneficial for individuals whose schedules require them to sleep during the daytime, such as shift workers.

Melatonin may improve overall sleep quality in individuals with sleep disorders. Specifically, melatonin appears to reduce the time people need to fall asleep (known as sleep latency) and increase the total amount of sleep time. While some other studies have not found that melatonin has a positive effect on sleep, they are generally few. Those that have observed beneficial effects generally provide participants with 3–10 milligrams (mg) of melatonin before bedtime.

Melatonin supplements appear to be safe for adults when used for short periods, although more research is needed on their long-term effects. Furthermore, melatonin is not recommended for people who are pregnant or nursing, because there is limited research on its safety and effectiveness.

2. Valerian root

Valerian is an herb native to Asia and Europe. Its root is commonly used as a natural treatment for symptoms of anxiety, depression, and menopause.

Valerian root is also one of the most commonly used sleep-promoting herbal supplements in the United States and Europe. However, study results remain inconsistent.

Menopausal and postmenopausal women have seen their sleep quality and sleep disorder symptoms improve after taking valerian, according to one research review.

Another small study found that taking 530 mg of valerian per night for 30 days led to significant improvements in sleep quality, latency, and duration compared with a placebo in people who had undergone heart surgery. A study in 39 people undergoing hemodialysis found that taking 530 mg of valerian root before bed for 1 month improved sleep quality, anxiety, and depression compared with a placebo.

Nevertheless, most observed improvements in these trials and studies were subjective. They relied on participants' perception of sleep quality rather than on objective measurements taken during sleep, such as brain waves or heart rate.

Other studies have concluded that valerian's positive effects are negligible at best. For instance, it may lead to a small improvement in sleep latency.

Natural sleep aids for better sleep in 2024



Regardless, short-term intake of valerian root appears to be safe for adults, with minor, infrequent side effects. Despite the lack of objective measurements behind valerian, adults may consider testing it out for themselves. However, the safety of valerian remains uncertain for long-term use and use in certain populations, including people who are pregnant or nursing.

3. Magnesium

Magnesium is a mineral involved in hundreds of processes in the human body, and it's important for brain function and heart health. In addition, magnesium may help quiet the mind and body, making it easier to fall asleep. Studies show that magnesium's relaxing effect may be partly due to its ability to regulate melatonin production. Magnesium is known to relax muscles and induce sleep.

Many forms of magnesium supplements are available, including some that combine magnesium with other sleep-promoting ingredients such as glycine or melatonin.

One study found that a combination of magnesium, melatonin, and vitamin B was effective in treating insomnia regardless of the cause. Magnesium also appears to increase levels of gamma aminobutyric acid (GABA), a brain messenger with calming effects.

Studies suggest that insufficient levels of magnesium in the body may be linked to troubled sleep and insomnia.

On the other hand, increasing your magnesium intake by taking supplements may help you optimize the quality and quantity of your sleep. One review of three studies in older adults found that magnesium supplementation could help reduce the amount of time it takes to fall asleep compared to a placebo.

It's worth noting that this review focused on older adults, who may have had lower blood magnesium levels to start with. It's uncertain whether these effects would be as strong in individuals with a higher dietary magnesium intake. In another study, supplementing with 250 mg of magnesium and melatonin for 8 weeks significantly improved sleep quality in people with polycystic ovary syndrome.

However, more research is needed to understand how magnesium supplements could impact sleep when taken alone.

4. Lavender

The lavender plant can be found on almost all continents. It produces purple flowers that, when dried, have a variety of household uses.

Moreover, lavender's soothing fragrance is believed to enhance sleep. In fact, several studies suggest that simply smelling lavender oil shortly before sleep may be enough to improve sleep quality in those with or without insomnia. A small study in older adults with dementia also suggests that lavender aromatherapy is effective at improving sleep disturbance symptoms. Participants' total

sleep time increased, and fewer people woke up very early and found themselves unable to get back to sleep. Another study found that lavender aromatherapy improved sleep quality and reduced anxiety after 15 days in 60 people with coronary artery disease.

Though lavender aromatherapy is considered safe, the oral intake of lavender has been linked to nausea, belching, and diarrhea in some cases. Essential oils are intended for aromatherapy, not oral ingestion. It's also worth noting that only a limited number of studies are available on the effects of lavender supplements on sleep. Thus, more research is needed before strong conclusions can be made.

5. Passionflower

Passionflower, also known as *Passiflora incarnata* or maypop, is a popular herbal remedy for insomnia. The species of passionflower linked to sleep improvements are native to North America. They're also currently cultivated in Europe, Asia, Africa, and Australia. Passionflower's sleep-promoting effects have been demonstrated in animal studies. However, its effects in humans appear to depend on the form consumed. One older study in humans compared the effects of a passionflower tea with those of a placebo tea made from parsley leaves. Participants drank each tea about 1 hour before bed for a period of 1 week, taking a 1-week break between the two teas. Each tea bag was allowed to steep for 10 minutes, and researchers took objective measurements of sleep quality. At the end of the 3-week study, the objective measurements indicated that participants had not experienced improvements in sleep.

However, when they were asked to rate their sleep quality subjectively, they rated it around 5% higher following the passionflower tea week compared with the parsley tea week. In a recent study of people with insomnia, those who took passionflower extract over a 2-week period saw significant improvements in certain sleep parameters compared with a placebo.

Those parameters were:

- ▶ total sleep time
- ▶ sleep efficiency, or the percentage of time spent sleeping as opposed to lying awake in bed
- ▶ wake time after sleep onset

Though more studies are needed, it's worth noting that passionflower intake is generally safe in adults. For now, it seems that passionflower may provide more benefits when consumed as a tea or extract as opposed to a supplement.

6. Glycine

Glycine is an amino acid that plays an important role in the nervous system. It may also help improve sleep.

Exactly how this works is unknown, but glycine is thought to act in part by lowering body temperature at bedtime, signaling that it's time to sleep. In one 2006 study, participants experiencing poor sleep consumed 3 grams (g) of glycine or a placebo immediately before bedtime.

Those in the glycine group reported feeling less fatigued the next morning. They also said their liveliness, peppiness, and clearheadedness were higher the next morning. A 2007 study also investigated the effects of glycine in participants experiencing poor sleep. Researchers took measurements of participants' brain waves,



heart rate, and breathing while they slept.

Participants who took 3 g of glycine before bedtime showed improved objective measures of sleep quality compared with the placebo group. Glycine supplements also helped participants fall asleep faster. Glycine also improves daytime performance in individuals who are temporarily sleep deprived, according to one small study from 2012. Participants had their sleep restricted for three consecutive nights. Each night before bedtime, they took either 3 g of glycine or 3 g of a placebo. The glycine group reported greater reductions in fatigue and daytime sleepiness.

You can buy glycine in pill form or as a powder that can be diluted in water. Taking up to 0.8 g per kilogram of body weight per day appears to be safe, but more studies are needed. Many sleep study participants took only 3 g per day.

You can also increase your glycine intake by eating foods rich in the nutrient, including:

- ▶ animal products such as bone broth, meat, eggs, poultry, and fish
- ▶ beans and legumes
- ▶ spinach
- ▶ kale
- ▶ cabbage
- ▶ fruits such as bananas and kiwis.

7. Cannabidiol (CBD)

Cannabidiol, or CBD, is a compound derived from hemp, which is featured in many products including oils and capsules. Because it contains low amounts of tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) — the psychoactive compound in cannabis — using CBD products doesn't cause the same high as other cannabis products. Interestingly, some studies have found that CBD could relieve anxiety and act as a natural sleep aid. For instance, one review of 34 studies concluded that CBD could help alleviate symptoms of insomnia when used alone or with equal amounts of THC. Another study in 72 people with anxiety found that using CBD enhanced sleep quality and reduced anxiety within the first month in nearly 67% and 79% of participants, respectively. On the other hand, a 2020 research review concluded that more high quality research is needed before CBD can be routinely recommended for the treatment of sleep disorders. Note that there is also limited research on the long-term safety of CBD and it is not recommended for people who are pregnant or breastfeeding. Furthermore, CBD is still classified as a controlled substance in some states, so its legality may vary depending on where you live.

8-10. Other supplements

There are many additional sleep-promoting supplements on the market. However, not all are supported by strong scientific research.

The following supplements may be beneficial for sleep but require more scientific investigation:

- ▶ Tryptophan: One review of four studies found that taking at least 1 g of tryptophan per day could help improve sleep quality and reduce the amount of time participants spent awake in the middle of the night.
- ▶ Ginkgo biloba: According to older studies, consuming around 240 mg of ginkgo biloba 30-60 minutes before bed may help reduce stress, enhance relaxation, and promote sleep. Animal studies are also promising.
- ▶ L-theanine: Consuming a daily supplement containing up to 200 mg of L-theanine may help improve sleep and relaxation. Animal studies suggest it may be more effective when combined with GABA or magnesium. Kava is another plant that has been linked to sleep-promoting effects in some studies. It originates from the South Pacific islands, and its root is traditionally prepared as a tea. It can also be consumed in supplement form.

Healthline

Work canteen, homemade sandwiches or grab-and-go

... which is REALLY the healthiest lunch?

GRABBING a quick bite from a cafe is wonderfully convenient, allowing you to bin the laborious evening task of preparing a packed lunch.

And, for most office workers, it's a lot more tempting to sneak out to Pret or Leon for something hearty, as opposed to gambling on a suspicious-looking dinner plated up in the work canteen.

But, perhaps unsurprisingly, it might not be so good for your waistline...

So, what do dietitians say is the answer? Should you desert your beloved high street lunch provider and pack your own sandwiches instead? And what should you pick in each scenario?

Well, luckily for you, MailOnline has asked four of the best in the business for their thoughts. Here's what they said...

Homemade lunch

A homemade lunch is likely the healthiest option for most people, as they can make a balanced meal and avoid adding too much salt and sugar, experts say.

'The advantage of homemade food is that one knows what is in it and can make sure it is healthy. There is less control on other foods — takeaways are often high in fat or salt,' says Dr Gunter Kuhnle, a food scientist at the University of Reading.

He recommends bringing a salad to work, made with pasta, rice or couscous.

People should include plenty of complex carbs, such as wholegrain products, legumes and apples, as they take longer to digest and leave people feeling fuller for longer, Dr Kuhnle says.

Even a sandwich can be healthy but it depends on what is inside it, he notes. People should avoid too much butter, mayonnaise and processed meat, Dr Kuhnle says.

Work canteen

The options at work canteens can vary drastically, from freshly made soup to fish and chips.

That means the nutritional status of a workplace lunch depends on what is ordered.

On top of that, there will never be a one size fits all approach, with some canteens offering bigger portions and using different ingredients.

Dr Mellor recommends steering clear of chips and other stodgy foods and instead focus on the salad counter and vegetable section.

Miss Pearson suggests including a protein, such as an egg or tuna, alongside veg to reduce hunger levels and eat a piece of fruit for dessert.

Meanwhile, Mr Hobson recommends selecting a stir fry with rice or a soup made with lentils or grains and served with a wholemeal roll and salad, if they



are available.

He notes that these dishes provide several servings of vegetables and plenty of fibre, which is needed to provide a more sustained release of energy.

Cafes and restaurants

High streets are littered with cafes and restaurants offering tempting cakes, toasties and main meals with a side of chips for lunch.

It's still possible to eat out healthily — but you'll have to choose wisely, according to Dr Hobson. 'You can't go wrong with an omelette and salad,' he says.

He suggests choosing ones made with tomatoes and red peppers.

'This is a cheap and tasty way to get a good source of protein to keep you feeling full through the afternoon and a great source of nutrients including B vitamins that are needed to covert food into energy in the body,' he added.

Salads and soups are among the best options when eating out, according to Ms Pearson. But she recommends swapping any offerings of chips for vegetables or salad and switching out salad dressing for olive oil.

Dr Mellor notes that it's the combination of foods served together at cafes and restaurants that can make it tricky to eat healthily.

While an all-day breakfast can be high in calories, salt and refined carbohydrates, simply switching some of the meat items for extra mushrooms, tomatoes and beans can make it much healthier, as can choosing poached eggs and wholemeal toast, he suggests.

'The aim is to try to include vegetables and go light on sauces and extras, such as chips and garlic bread,' he adds.

Takeaway

A pizza, burger or kebab is obviously not a healthy lunch choice. As well as being calorific, they are often high in salt and saturated fat.

But it is possible to choose a healthier option when grabbing a takeaway during your lunch break, such as curry or street food.

'Basic street and traditional foods can work well, such as chickpea curries as well as soups and dahls,' says Dr Mellor.

If you are going to opt for a takeaway experts say to avoid pizza and Chinese and go for chickpea curries, dhal or Lebanese food

Ms Pearson recommends Poke, a Polynesian dish made with fish, rice and vegetables, or Lebanese salads, made with grilled protein like prawns or lamb.

However, she notes that these are more readily available in big towns and cities.

'Outside of cities, options are more limited and you might struggle to find something healthy from your local Chinese or pizza takeaway,' she admits.

But some chains, such as Pret, offer a range of healthy salads and high-protein options, Ms Pearson says.

Mr Hobson agrees that one of the healthiest takeaway options is Lebanese food.

'There are lots of healthy options to choose from such as dips and vegetable sides like tabbouleh, baba ghanoush or stuffed vine leaves,' he says.

'Main dishes tend to be grilled lean meats like chicken, fish or grilled halloumi as a veggie option served with salad, pickled vegetables and couscous.'

He explains the cuisine has a 'Mediterranean style' which is known to provide a good balance of healthy foods and is 'renowned for its health and disease preventing benefits'.

MailOnline



▲ Australia’s Rhiannan Iffland in action during the women’s 20m round at the World Aquatics Championships in Doha, Qatar.



▲ A firewoman drinks water whilst extinguishing a fire near houses in hot and dry conditions in Kalk Bay, Cape Town, South Africa.



▲ A pedestrian stands as the snow falls during a Nor’easter winter storm in New York City.

AROUND THE WORLD IN PICTURES



▲ Model Irina Shayk presents a creation from the Carolina Herrera Fall/Winter 2024 collection as Vogue Editor-in-Chief Anna Wintour, Demi Moore, Diane Kruger and Becky G attend the show during New York Fashion Week, in New York City.



▲ Palestinian fishermen work on a boat amid the ongoing conflict between Israel and Palestinian Islamist group Hamas, in Rafah, in the southern Gaza Strip.



▲ A reveller from Vila Isabel Samba School performs during the night of the Carnival parade at the Sambadrome, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Bafana players to pocket R1m each for outstanding AFCON performance

THE 23 Bafana Bafana players will split half of the R47 million prize money that the SA Football Association (SAFA) will receive from the Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) competition.

This was the deal reached during negotiations between the federation and the players, who were led by the team's senior members before the team left for the continental tournament in Ivory Coast.

The host nation won the competition after defeating Nigeria in a tense final on Sunday night.

The South Africans will receive \$ 2.5 million (R47 million) for making it to the semi-finals, where they were defeated by Nigeria. The players and SAFA will split the money equally.

Accordingly, each of the 23 players will receive R1 million each, with the federation keeping the remaining funds.

Bronze medal

Bafana surprised football fans by securing third place and capturing their first bronze medal since 2000 in Mali after beating the Democratic Republic of the Congo 6-5 on penalty kicks on Saturday night.

The South Africans were not considered serious contenders coming into the competition.

Bafana will touch down at the OR Tambo International Airport at 4 am on Wednesday morning.

"That is true. All 23 players that were registered with CAF for the AFCON will share half of the prize money with the federation," said a well-placed SAFA official.

"We sat at the table and settled on that agreement. It is a win-win situation for all



▲ The 23 Bafana Bafana players will split half of the R47 million prize money that the SA Football Association (Safa) will receive from the Africa Cup of Nations (Afccon) competition.

parties – the players and the national association.

"The players did extremely well, and they deserve to be rewarded. This will guide and make the next crop of players perform better, with the knowledge that if they can go further than this current team, they will be handsomely rewarded."

Every time a major tournament occurs, disputes arise regarding bonus negotiations, match fees, and performance allowances.

Following their highly successful Fifa Women's World Cup in Australia and New Zealand last year, Banyana Banyana also found themselves in a sticky bonus situation.

Hugo Broos, a Belgian, is the team's coach. After losing to Mali 2-0 in their opening group stage game, Bafana had a difficult start to the competition.

In their following game, they got back up and destroyed Namibia 4-0. A goalless draw

against Tunisia was enough for Bafana to advance to the knockout stages, where Morocco was waiting for them.

They defeated the Atlas Lions 2-0 before playing Cape Verde in the quarterfinals. Thanks to an incredible four penalty saves from captain Ronwen Williams, they advanced to the final four. Following that, Bafana scheduled a date with the Super Eagles of Nigeria, who ended their hopes of making it to the final. (Sunday World)

EPL ratify Ratcliffe's Man Utd stake

LONDON - British billionaire Jim Ratcliffe's acquisition of a 25% stake in Manchester United was ratified by the Premier League on Tuesday after he passed the organisation's owners' and directors' test.

The \$1.25 billion deal, in which the INEOS chairman will also invest \$300 million into club infrastructure and take charge of the club's soccer operations, was struck in December.

"Sir Jim Ratcliffe's acquisition of 25 per cent of Manchester United FC, and further investment of \$300 million in the club, has been approved by the Premier League Board following the completion of the OADT," a statement read.

"The Board agreed to the change of the club's ownership structure last week, and this has now been officially ratified by an Independent Oversight Panel. The Premier League's Owners Charter has also been signed.

"The Premier League now awaits confirmation of the transaction's completion."

The Football Association still needs to rubber-stamp the 71-year-old's investment in United but that is seen as a formality.

Lifelong supporter Ratcliffe's buy-in ended more than a year of uncertainty after majority owners, the Glazer family, said in November 2022 they were looking at strategic options for investment into the club they took control of in 2005.

The American Glazers have come under heavy criticism from fans who blame them



▲ British billionaire Jim Ratcliffe's acquisition of a 25% stake in Manchester United was ratified by the Premier League on Tuesday after he passed the organisation's owners' and directors' test.

for a steady decline in the fortunes of the 20-time English league champions after a period of domination under manager Alex Ferguson who retired in 2013.

In its statement, the Premier League said it was the first acquisition of control to be reviewed and approved by a new Independent Oversight Panel following changes to the process which were agreed by Premier League clubs in March 2023. (Reuters)

Alcaraz says he would pick Paris Olympics gold over French Open crown

CARLOS Alcaraz will have the chance to win the Olympic tennis title at Roland Garros this year as well as the French Open crown and while he will be gunning for both the Spaniard said if forced to choose he would pick the Paris Games gold.

The Olympic tennis tournament will take place in July, a month after the year's second Grand Slam on the same claycourts in the French capital.

"For me, it's a dream to bring a medal to my country and winning gold is one of the greatest things that can happen to you in the world of sport," Alcaraz told reporters in Buenos Aires, where he will defend his title this week.

"This year, if you gave me a choice, I'd say that I will keep the Olympic gold, although I would like to win both. I'm not going to lie."

The 20-year-old won the U.S. Open in 2022 and Wimbledon last year but failed to add to his Grand Slam collection last month after going out in the Australian Open quarter-finals to Alexander Zverev, who won Olympic gold in Tokyo.

While German Zverev leads their career meetings 5-3, Alcaraz said world number one Novak Djokovic and Melbourne Park champion Jannik Sinner were top of the tree.

"I think Djokovic and Sinner are the rivals to beat, there is no doubt, both for me and for everyone," world number two Alcaraz added.



▲ Carlos Alcaraz will have the chance to win the Olympic tennis title at Roland Garros this year as well as the French Open crown

"Zverev also has the winning head-to-head against me, he's a rival I have very much in my mind, but I do think that Djokovic and Sinner are at the top right now."

(Reuters)

TENS of thousands of jubilant fans crammed the streets of Abidjan on Monday for the Ivory Coast’s victory parade after the hosts’ remarkable Africa Cup of Nations triumph on Sunday.

Just as in 2015 for their last Afcon triumph, the Elephants roamed the streets of the country’s economic capital.

Sebastien Haller, who scored the decisive goal in Sunday’s 2-1 final win over Nigeria, and the rest of the squad were perched on a truck fitted out for the occasion with a three-star sign to mark the Ivorians’ third title.

With Monday declared a special holiday fans massed on bridges and avenues, many ignoring the oppressive heat to run alongside the victors’ mechanical chariot.

Festive

After a festive four-hour parade the team, under heavy police escort, arrived at the Felix Houphouët-Boigny stadium.

Wearing ‘African champions’ t-shirts the 2024 Afcon champions did a lap of honour to stands packed with fans - all decked out in orange - the national colour.

Some players were clearly moved by the welcome accorded them.

“The overwhelming feeling is one of pride,” said Junior Djedjess, one of the fans on hand to soak in the national team’s astonishing run after a terrible group stage.

“With three stars we have now joined the great African nations,” he added with only Egypt (seven titles), Cameroon (5) and

I. Coast parade through Abidjan as champs of Africa

Ghana (4) boasting better records in the continental showpiece.

After their lap of honour the players stepped onto the pitch, one by one, with Max-Alain Gradel, the only survivor along with Serge Aurier from the last Ivorian team to win the title in 2015, presenting the trophy to the crowd.

“Ivory Coast, here is your African cup. May God bless the Ivory Coast,” the 36-year-old captain said before handing the trophy to the Prime Minister Robert Beugre Mambe.

Three weeks ago no one, not even the most ardent Elephants supporter, could have dreamt of this day.

They should have really been knocked out in the group stage after losing 4-0 to Equatorial Guinea on 22 January, their heaviest-ever home defeat.

Their group-stage showing led to the departure of veteran French coach Jean-Louis Gasset, who had been in charge since May 2022.

He was replaced by Emerse Fae, a former Ivorian international who had never coached before.

Yet Fae oversaw an incredible turnaround in the team’s fortunes, as the Ivorians came



▲Ivory Coast national team players parading with the AFCON trophy.

from behind to beat holders Senegal in the last 16 and overcame a 1-0 deficit with 10 men to beat Mali in the quarterfinals.

After beating the Democratic Republic of Congo 1-0 in the last four they duly completed their fairytale run on Sunday night against Nigeria.

“After that 4-0 defeat I was downhearted but we were still in it and a new team was born,” reflected Junior Djedjess.

The celebrations continue for the team on Tuesday when they will be received by the country’s president Alassane Ouattara.

(Supersport)



Ferrari’s new F1 car unveiled for final season before Hamilton’s arrival

FERRARI unveiled their new SF-24 car on Tuesday, ready for the upcoming Formula One season which will be the last before Lewis Hamilton joins the Italian team from rivals Mercedes.

The team head into their 2024 campaign, which has been overshadowed by seven-time F1 champion Hamilton agreeing to join next year, trying to recover ground on all-conquering Red Bull.

Ferrari unveiled the SF-24 to their legion of fans with a short and low-key video, adding in a statement that “a small audience of guests” were given a live viewing of the new car.

Among those present were Ferrari’s Team Principal Frederic Vasseur and drivers Charles Leclerc and Carlos Sainz, who will race together for the last time this season.

Ferrari said that “the positive feeling the drivers had in the cockpit over the final few races of last season” was the starting point for the new car, with the aim being “a car that is easy to drive and that reacts predictably”.

“This year, we must start off where we left off at the end of last season when we were consistent front runners,” said Vasseur.

“The longest-ever F1 season awaits us and Charles, Carlos and I all agree, we must be more clinical and effective in how we manage the races.”

The new 24-race campaign kicks off in Bahrain on March 2 with Ferrari not having won a drivers championship since 2007 and a constructors since 2008.

Ferrari finished miles behind Red Bull in both championships in 2023, with Leclerc closing the season 369 points behind champion Max Verstappen in fifth and Sainz seventh. “I like the look of the car a lot... But of course, what really interests me is how it will perform on track, as that’s all that matters,” said Leclerc.

“This season the aim is to be front runners all the time and I want to give our fans plenty to cheer about.”

Briton Hamilton will partner Leclerc when he joins Ferrari – replacing Sainz whose contract is up come the end of the season – hoping to finally claim a record-breaking eighth F1 title.

The 39-year-old won the last of his world crowns in 2020 but lost the 2021 championship in controversial fashion to Verstappen when the race director ignored the safety car rules in Abu Dhabi, effectively blocking the Briton’s route to victory in both that Grand Prix and the championship.

Dutchman Verstappen has dominated F1 since, romping to the last two championships in a powerful combination of great car and driver. (Supersport)

Mbappe back for PSG Champions League tie with Real Sociedad

KYLIAN Mbappe sat out Paris St Germain’s Ligue 1 game at the weekend, but their top scorer is set to return for the Champions League last 16 tie with Real Sociedad, manager Luis Enrique said on Tuesday.

Mbappe, who has scored 30 goals in 29 games this season, was an unused substitute in Saturday’s 3-1 win over Lille, a precaution taken after he took a knock to his ankle three days previously in another 3-1 win, over Brest in the Coup de France.

The French forward has played the full 90 minutes in all six Champions League games this season for PSG and that doesn’t look like changing when they host the Spanish side in Wednesday’s first leg.

“When a team has a player like Kylian

Mbappe, of course we know that the more he plays the better, because we all benefit from that,” Luis Enrique told a press conference.

“There is no doubt about it. He could have played (on Saturday) if it had been a final, but it wasn’t, it was not worth the risk. Kylian Mbappe is available, just like the other players.”

The manager could afford to rest Mbappe in the league, where PSG now have an 11 point advantage at the top over Nice, and have gone 16 games unbeaten, but in the Champions League it hasn’t all been plain sailing.

PSG finished second in their group behind Borussia Dortmund and lost to Newcastle United and AC Milan. They are also without a win in their last three games in the competition, a sharp contrast to Real Sociedad.

Real may be struggling domestically, seventh in LaLiga, but they topped their Champions League group, which included Inter Milan, and are undefeated in Europe this season.

“Real Sociedad have a tight defence in the Champions League, they don’t give the ball away easily. We have to press them aggressively,”

Luis Enrique said. (Supersport)



▲PSG forward Kylian Mbappe.

Liwakawaka crowned Hub Utility Lobamba champion

Stories by Ntokozo Magongo
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LIWAKAWAKA Under-17 team were crowned champions of the Hub Utility Regional Under-17 tournament under Lobamba.

They beat Buka Stars 2-1 in the finals. They have also booked a spot for the Champs of Champs to be played late in March. Four teams were participating in the Lobamba region.

Liwakawaka won E1 000 first prize while Buka Stars received E600 for being the runner-up. The champions first beat Emaselesele 4-0 in the first semi-finals while Buka Stars won 2-1 against Fast Reaction to reach the finals.

Five regionals will be taking part in the tournament sponsored by Hub Utility to the tune of E80 000 under the Hhohho Regional Football Association (HRFA). Each region consists of four teams that reigned supreme during the leagues.

The next stop is Mdzimba where four teams will be competing and the other regions are Maphalaleni, Mbabane and Sigangeni.

The winners of these regions will then compete in the Champ of Champs to be held on March 23 where the winner will be awarded a full set soccer kit. The kit is excluded from the E40 000 prizes.

These programmes fall under the Liyasikwa Liyamila Hhohho Youth Development

Present during the regional tournament under Lobamba was Hub Utility Stores Chief Brand and Customer Experience Officer Khumbu Dlamini.



Remaining regional tournaments:
Mdzimba 17/02/24
Maphalaleni 24/02/24
Mbabane 02/3/24
Sigangeni 09/03/24

The weekend results:
Buka Stars 2-1 Fast Reaction
Liwakawaka 4-0 Emaselesele

Finals
Liwakawaka 2-1 Buka Stars

▲ Liwakawaka Under-17 team were crowned champions of the Hub Utility Regional Under-17 tournament under Lobamba.

Chad Ning dreams of competing in the Olympics

SWIMMER Chad Ning is dreaming big in his swimming career.

He has set his eyes on competing in the biggest competition in the world, the Olympic Games. Ning is currently in Doha, Qatar where he is competing in the World Aquatics Championships with Siwakhile Dlamini.

Interviewed after competing in the 100m breaststroke on Sunday, he said he would be working on improving his performance and make sure that one day he represents the country on the biggest stage.

Ning had his first race in the 100m breaststroke, where he delivered an exceptional performance, clocking a Personal Best (PB) time of 1:10.55 minutes, improving his time from 1:10.68 minutes. He broke the PB he swam at the African Junior Swimming Championships in Mauritius last year. “I’m very happy with my performance getting a personal best this



▲ Swimmer Chad Ning (r) is dreaming big in his swimming career

early in the season means there is room for major improvement for me especially when I get back to training and work my way up to my peak performance I hope to one day be representing

Eswatini in the Olympics as my main goal,” he said. Ning is led by Coach Mark Hoare. Siwakhile Dlamini is set to compete on Thursday in the 100m freestyle.

EFA to host basic coaching course

THE Eswatini Football Association (EFA) has given aspiring coaches the chance to acquire the basics of coaching.

The basic coaching course will start on March 2, 2024, and registration is now open in the four regions of the country. Those interested will be registering at the Lubombo Regional Football Association (LRFA), Hhohho Regional Football Association (HRFA), Shiselweni Regional Football Association (SRFA) and Manzini Regional Football Association (MRFA). The course will be eligible for people who have completed high school. According to the statement released by EFA Marketing and Communication Officer Muzi Radebe, 10 years of experience in coaching will be an advantage.

“Are you passionate about being a Football coach, and have completed high school, with 10 years playing experience, and have enabling body, contact the Regional Football Associations clerks for registrations,” reads the statement. As per the Football International Federation Association (FIFA) Club Licensing exercise, coaches are mandatory to aquaria certificates before they can practise.



▲ The EFA Club Licensing Online Platform (CLOP) National Workshop was officially opened by the EFA President Mr. Peter Simelane at Esibayeni Lodge in this undated picture.

Stories by Sibusiso Masilela
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THE Eswatini Olympic and Commonwealth Games Association (EOCGA) have finally named a 13-member squad for the 2024 Africa games.

The squad comprises of athletes from five disciplines such as Athletics, Swimming, Boxing, karate, and taekwondo for the continental games scheduled for March 8-13 in Accra, Ghana.

The squad is headlined by male sprinter Sibusiso ‘Swazi Bolt’ Matsenjwa together with his female compatriot Bongiwe Mahlalela under the athletics categories.

Matsenjwa and Mahlalela will be coached by Athletics Eswatini Chief Operation’s Officer Thoba Mazibuko, during the assignment in the absence of the suspended Muzi Mabuza.

Simanga Dlamini is the only swimmer in the team following the missing of female star Hayley Hoy.

Taekwondo has the highest number of athletes in the team with six athletes.

Four of the athletes such as Wandile Maziya, Carlota Munave, Saneliso Masuku and Sivunolesihle Dlamini will compete in the general category.

The quartet will be under the guidance of the internationally recognised coach Mancoba Motsa.

Two veteran players in Sizwe Mabuza, Nkosinathi Mthembu will be competing in

EOCGA names 13 member Africa Games squad

the Poomsae category.

The team will be led by EOCGA board member Zakhele Zulu together with Eswatini Sports and Recreation Council Business Development manager Zama Tsabedze who is the squad manager.

Nomvula Dlamini will be the squad’s physiotherapists during the five-day spectacle.

EOCGA President Adam ‘Bomber’ Mthethwa said they are happy with the announcement of the squad on Tuesday at their head offices in Lobamba.

“We are pleased to announce the team in collaboration with the games commission which is an independent standing committee,” he said.

Mtsetfwa was in the company of board member Nhlanhla Maphanga and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Maxwell Jeje.

THE FULL TEAM ESWATINI:

Athletics

Sibusiso ‘Swazibolt’ Matsenjwa

Bongiwe Mahlalela

Coach/ Manager – Thoba Mazibuko

Swimming

Simanga Dlamini

Coach: Welcome Nhlabatsi

Boxing



▲ Bongiwe Mahlalela.

Thabiso Dlamini

Sibongiseni Shongwe

Coach: Muzi Shongwe

Karate

Lwazi Dlamini

Melusi Dlamini

Coach: Victor Gwebu

Taekwondo

Carlotta Munave



▲ Sibusiso ‘Swazi Bolt’ Matsenjwa.

Wandile Maziya

Saneliso Masuku

Sivunolesihle Dlamini

Coach: Mancoba Motsa

Nkosinathi Mthembu (poomsae)

Sizwe Mabuza (poomsae)

Chef de mission: Zakhele Zulu

General Manager: Zama Tsabedze

Physiotherapist: Nomvula Dlamini



▲ EOCGA President Adam ‘Bomber’ Mthethwa (middle) flanked by board member Nhlanhla Maphanga and CEO Maxwell Jeje during the announcement of the Africa Games squad on Tuesday.

Chess, Volleyball miss out on African Games

CHESS and volleyball missed a chance to be part of the team Eswatini during the 2023 African games.

The Eswatini Chess Federation and Eswatini National Volleyball Association were both earmarked to form part of the disciplines which were expected to represent the country in the continental games.

ECF did not attend their continental qualifiers which were held in South Africa

while the volleyball beach national team lost out in the qualifiers recently held in Namibia.

EOCGA Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Maxwell Jeje confirmed the news.

“We had initially included Chess and volleyball in our disciplines for the African games and they did not qualify during their respective international qualifiers,” he said.

Jeje further stated that they will certainly consider the two associations for future assignments,” Jeje said.

Notable absentees from Africa Games squad

SWIMMING sensation Hayley Hoy has been left out of the team Eswatini African games squad.

Hoy is still undergoing special training program at the Tshwane High Performance Centre in preparations for the 2024 Olympic Games in July.

Other notable absentees include top boxer Zweli Dlamini and female high jumper and 2018 champion Erikah Seyama, who will not take part in the quadrennial continental games.

Zweli is one of the experienced boxers in the country and he has represented the country in various international assignments such as the 2023 African championships and world

championships, among others.

Two taekwondo artists Mfanewakhaya Dube and Nonhle Maduma did not make it to the final team despite participating in the recent 2024 Olympic Games qualifiers in Senegal.

EOCGA CEO Maxwell Jeje said the team has been selected by the respective various associations.

“The selection exercise has been done by using a criterion used by the associations and the athlete’s commission. The two parties have worked jointly in the selection process before submitting their final list to the board,” he said.

◀ Swimmer Hayley Hoy.



Government pumps in over E1 million for Africa Games

Stories By Sibusiso Masilela
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GOVERNMENT through the Eswatini Sport and Recreation Council has pumped in E1 million towards the country's participation in the 2024 Africa games.

The continental assignment is scheduled to take place between March 8 and 23 in Accra, Ghana.

The council has bankrolled the 21-member delegation with a total of E1.1 million together with Eswatini Olympic and Commonwealth Games Association (EOCGA) who have contributed E600 000 to make the funding E1.7 million.

The EOCGA contribution has been reduced by 50 percent as they had initially budgeted for E1.2 million for the continental assignment during their annual General Meeting (AGM). EOCGA Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Maxwell Jele confirmed the fees during the

announcement of the squad on Tuesday. "The trip will be funded to the tune of E1.7 million by both Government and EOCGA. We are grateful for the support that we have received from the Eswatini Sport and Recreation Council," he said.

Jele further stated that the team will travel in stages to the West African country.

"The squad will not travel as a group instead they will travel in stages pending to the schedules of the various sporting codes. This has been made to reduce the costs of the games," he said.

The former Eswatini National Tennis Association President further stated that they will have a training camp for the team before departing to the West African country. "We will certainly have a camp for the team and details will be revealed in due course," Jele said.

Eswatini will partake in five disciplines during the continental spectacle in Athletics, Swimming, Boxing, Karate and Taekwondo in the quadrennial multi-sports spectacle.



▲EOCGA CEO Maxwell Jele.



▲Members of the Ingweyama Cup Management Committee.

Teams cry foul over soaring match-day costs

PREMIER League teams have cried foul over soaring match expenses in the ongoing SMVAF Ingwenyama Cup. The teams say they no longer make profits from gate collections after noticing this in the prestigious knockout tournament. Some of the costs include referees' allowances, amounting to E1 500 per game for each team, stadium booking fees, security fees and ball boys fees, among others.

Contest

The richest knockout tournament has now reached the semi-finals, with four teams in Green Mamba, Young Buffaloes, Mbabane Swallows and Mbabane Highlanders still in the contest for the E1.4 million first prize money.

Some team officials, who preferred to

speak on condition of anonymity, revealed the disgruntlement.

"We are not happy with the escalating costs we incur while hosting matches in the Ingwenyama Cup. We feel as though we are drained by the Premier League of Eswatini as we rely on gate collections to run the day-to-day expenses in our clubs," he said.

Another official said the matter should be addressed urgently.

"We feel neglected by the PLE as we tried to raise this matter during the recent PLE Special Meeting and nothing has been done to solve it up to now," said another official.

Premier League of Eswatini (PLE) Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Kenneth Makhanya said he was yet to receive formal complaints from clubs.

"I am not in receipt of these concerns.

66
We feel neglected by the PLE as we tried to raise this matter during the recent PLE Special Meeting and nothing has been done to solve it up to now
99

Please advise the clubs to lodge concerns through proper channels so that they can be presented to the Ingwenyama Cup Management Committee," he advised.

James out of E7.3m Dimension tourney

By Ntokozo Magongo
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THERE will be no LiSwati in the Dimension Data Pro-Am after James Pennington was beaten in the qualifiers on Tuesday.

The Eswatini Royal Insurance Corporation (ESRIC) Brand Ambassador took it to the field on Tuesday the qualifiers and finished 65th out of the 75th golfers who took part. Only the top 10 made it to main tournament that will be played for over four days, starting on Wednesday.

The main tournament will be played from February 15th to 18th at the Montagu Golf Course, Fancourt and Outeniqua Golf Course. The winner is set to pocket over E500 00 as the tournament is sponsored to the tune of E7.3 million.

Pennington was the only LiSwati to play in the qualifiers as the duo of Mandla Dlamini Jnr and Brandon-Jude Rennie.

The next challenge for Pennington will be the NMB Championships Qualifier to be played on February 20 at the PE Golf Club.



▲Golfer James Pennington.



**Bafana Bafana
players to
pocket R1m
each**

Page 20

**Teams cry foul
over soaring
match-day
costs**

Page 23



Eswatini Wednesday 14
Daily News February, 2024

Sport



**Govt
pumps in
over E1m
for Africa
Games**

... The Eswatini Sport and Recreation Council has contributed the biggest share in the E1.7 million budget for the 21-member delegation to represent the country in the 2024 Africa Games in Accra, Ghana from March 8 to March 23, 2024. **Page 23**